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“FOR THE VOICES”: THE LETTERS OF JOHN WIENERS

by

MICHAEL SETH STEWART

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
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ABSTRACT

“FOR THE VOICES”: THE LETTERS OF JOHN WIENERS

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MICHAEL SETH STEWART

Adviser: Ammiel Alcalay

American poet John Wieners is thoroughly disenfranchised from the modern poetic establishments because he is, to those institutions, practically illegible. He was a queer self-styled poète maudit in the fifties; a protégé of political-historical poet Charles Olson who wrote audaciously personal verse; a lyric poet who eschewed the egoism of the confessional mode in order to pursue the Olsonian project of Projective (outward-looking) poetics; a Boston poet who was institutionalized at state hospitals. Wieners lived on the “other side” of Beacon Hill, not the Brahmin south slope, but the north side with its working-class apartments and underground gay bars. Though Wieners’ work is considered preeminent by many of the second half of the century’s most important poets, the ahistoricizing process of literary canon-building has kept him at the fringes of not just the canon, but the established taxonomy of the all the great post-war undergrounds – the mimeo revolution, the San Francisco Renaissance, Black Mountain, New York, and Boston poetry communities that he moved through. Why was Wieners so disenfranchised? How can we make him manifest within the discourses of twentieth-century poetry?

My dissertation, a comprehensively edited and annotated Selected Letters with a critical introduction situating Wieners and his correspondence, will provide Wieners’ readers and literature scholars with an invaluable resource, an autobiography in letters. To quote the mission Duncan urged upon Wieners for his magazine Measure, these Selected Letters will be a “ground of work” for many different kinds of readers, with enough annotation and context
for the most curious, but edited in such a way that it’s Wieners himself one is reading, a
direct address with minimal editorial intrusion. Wieners dedicated his second book, 1964’s
Ace of Pentacles, “for the voices,” and that is the title I take for this collection – for all the
voices in Wieners’ world, within and contemporaneous with the poem. With these Selected
Letters, we can see Wieners’ growth as a poet and as a person, as he cycles through his
different selves and relationships.
Preface: Habeas Corpus

I was already ten years out an MFA in poetry, focusing in the lyric mode, when I first encountered the verse of John Wieners. A friend handed me a copy of his slim book *The Hotel Wentley Poems* in the lounge of the doctoral program where I’d come to study 19th-century fiction, and I sat and read the poems in one breath, then read them again. I was enraptured in a way I’d never experienced before with poetry, and rapture through poetry had been an ongoing quest for me for decades.

At first, after I’d calmed down, I was angry – at myself for never having sought Wieners out, and at the literature programs and anthologies that had never shown him to me. But moving on, looking him up in books and online over the next few days, my frustration expanded outward, to whatever forces there were that kept Wieners virtually invisible. There were no biographies, no collections of letters or essays or collected poems, no books on his poetics, very few articles available online and in scholarly databases. “Official verse culture,” as Jed Rasula calls it, had left Wieners out of the picture almost completely.

There were several exceptions to this of course, poets and friends who fought to keep Wieners’ unique, uncompromising work in some sort of public eye – British writers like Jeremy Prynne and John Wilkinson, and Americans like Bootstrap Press’s Derek Fenner, which printed two of his journals; William Corbett, Michael Gizzi, and Joseph Torra, who edited *The Blind See Only This World*, a poetic tribute to Wieners; Jim Dunn, a longtime friend of Wieners who edited one of those journals and introduced the other; and Micah Ballard, whose *Negative Capability in the Verse of John Wieners* remains one of the most perspicacious and sensitive treatments available on Wieners’ verse, though like many of Wieners’ books, it is, sadly, out of print. These friends and scholars – and others – helped keep the flame flickering.

The goal of this project, the *Selected Letters of John Wieners*, is to make Wieners visible, through his own words, previously dispersed throughout dozens of libraries around the country. Together with his *Selected Journals*, which I also edited parallel to this, and the upcoming *Collected Poems* of Wieners, edited by my friend Robert Dewhurst, John Wieners is being brought into the poetic conversation in a new way. I consider these projects together as a *habeas corpus* mission, an effort to “produce the body” of Wieners’ thought, works, and life, liberating him from the institutions that subsumed him, that “official verse culture” that
could not accommodate a poor, homosexual, visionary poet who refused to be simply one of those things.

John Wieners is thoroughly disenfranchised from the modern poetic establishments because he is, to those institutions, practically illegible. He was a queer self-styled poète maudit in the fifties; a protégé of political-historical poet Charles Olson who wrote audaciously personal verse; a lyric poet who eschewed the egoism of the confessional mode in order to pursue the Olsonian project of Projective (outward-looking) poetics; a Boston poet who was institutionalized, but not at the expensive McLean Hospital, where the mainstream confessions of mental illness. Wieners lived on the other side of Beacon Hill, not the Brahmin south slope, but the north side with its working-class apartments and underground gay bars. Rather than McLean, Wieners – like his friends, fellow poor queer writers Steve Jonas and Michael Rumaker – was put in factory-system state institutions that administered repeated electroshock and insulin coma treatments. Though Wieners’ work is considered preeminent by many of the second half of the century’s most important poets, ranging from Olson, Creeley, and Duncan to Ginsberg, di Prima, and Baraka, the ahistoricizing process of literary canon-building has kept him at the fringes of not just the canon, but the established taxonomy of the all the great post-war undergrounds – the mimeo revolution, the San Francisco Renaissance, Black Mountain, New York, and Boston poetry communities that he moved through. He is rarely anthologized; he’s been claimed as a language poet because of the textual playfulness and challenging obscurity of his later work especially, and dismissed outright by the few academics who have written about him (called “sweetly demented” by one, “detrust of a world” by another). While Wieners’ stature has always been unassailable among his contemporaries, further interest in his work has finally begun to move out of cult status and towards a wider readership. For many years following his death, estate issues held up various publishing projects, but a steady stream of unauthorized work appeared in both the United States and the UK.

There are as many communities, or “schools,” of American poetry as there are critics to taxonomize them, and so every grouping must be taken as provisional. However, it is useful to begin with a look at modern American verse through the apparatus offered by Jed Rasula in The American Poetry Wax Museum (1995). In his self-declared polemic, Rasula breaks
down the post-War American poetry scenes into two basic groups (which are then of course destabilized). The first group is the establishment poets who secured tenured professorships at major universities – Allen Tate at Vanderbilt and Princeton, John Crowe Ransom at Kenyon, Richard Wilbur at Harvard, for example – and the poets they chose for their house organs of the New Critical verse, the non-experimental, formalist, and conservative poetry they favored. The reasons behind this rigidly established poetic hegemony need not be seen as a nefarious plot; rather, their taste was established and maintained by the critical ideology they set up for themselves – namely, the assumptions of New Criticism in the highly politicized context of the Cold War: that the work of art is an hermetically sealed object, the author dead and all critical roads leading to fundamental ambiguity and ultimate artistic unity, all emanating from an authentic “voice.” The off-shoots of this lineage has been usefully called “official verse culture” by critic and translator Eliot Weinberger; such canonization and its institutional buttressing has created the completely ahistorical conditions of twentieth-century American literary history, making it impossible, for example, to encounter a poet like Wieners in any major anthologies or in the curriculum of creative writing or English programs.

When a class is taught about the poets who were not in line with this agenda, the syllabus is usually a specific group, or lineage, of the “others” – the Imagists or Beats or New York School writers, the Berkeley Renaissance or Black Mountain poets, the Black Arts Movement or feminist or gay undergrounds – that were, for different and overlapping reasons, largely excluded from the canon-making establishment. In reaction and resistance to this disenfranchisement, the “other” poets formed their own living canons through the media of small magazines (the mimeo revolution), grassroots distributorships, and bookstores. These provisional groupings were just that – provisional – and highly permeable, but the decades since have hardened those formerly permeable boundaries, and critics have often come to see them as discrete groups. To modern critics and readers, the New York School and the San Francisco Renaissance, for example, can seem like different planets of poetry; never mind that Frank O’Hara and Jack Spicer spent formative time together in Boston, or that the same magazines that published one group often had representatives of the other on facing pages. Anthologies, having ripped those poems out of their original placements, only harden these divisions further.
The best way to dissolve these illusory, counter-productive boundaries is to follow one poet through his or her own unique trajectory. John Wieners’s journey, in his own words, through all the twists of his own itinerary – from Boston to Black Mountain to San Francisco to New York to Boston, always circling – demonstrate the permeability and cross-fertilization of all these groups, simply by showing Wieners do his work with those people. His small magazine Measure is the perfect example of this: O’Hara, Ginsberg, Spicer, Olson, Larry Eigner, and William Burroughs (who published in Measure, under the pseudonym William Lee, one of the first excerpts from Naked Lunch in 1958) all published together, juxtaposed provocatively by the logic of the poems themselves according to Wieners’ vision, not divided according to a geographical or cultural classification. I chose to follow Wieners’ itineraries through his letters in order to present his story in his own words, in such a way that it may be read as an autobiography offered to a dispersed readership. But letters offer more than autobiography, of course; a collection of letters is multi-vocal, offering a cross-section of the different selves Wieners presents to the people and worlds he moves through, from the jokey beatnik machismo he presents to Ed Dorn (“Eddie baby!”) to the campy voice he inhabits with Michael Rumaker. The letters’ “I” is an evolving performance that gives readers insight into not just Wieners’ own self-fashioning, but the often unexpected aspects he brought out of his correspondents’ personalities. This is one advantage of the autobiography-in-letters: rather than the conventional memoir, which is written with history – or some amorphous future readers – in mind, letters are written under very specific exigencies at very specific times, using voices the correspondents have established with each other. As such, the autobiography-in-letters offers many of the memoir’s virtues while also preserving an immediacy, and embeddedness in community, that memoir lacks. And so in the letters of John Wieners, assembled chronologically, we get if not the poet’s life story, at least one of the poet’s life stories, as told to various friends along the way.

Wieners’ story began in suburban Boston where he was raised by working-class parents, and a young education (he graduated at twenty) at the Jesuit commuter school Boston College. There he worked on the student literary journal and assiduously studied the classic poets, as well as a few favorite highly musical, modernist poets like Edith Sitwell and Edna St. Vincent Millay. He’d seen Charles Olson read at the Charles Street Meeting House during Hurricane Hazel of 1954, and after finishing his unsatisfying education at Boston
College he was determined to go study with Olson down at the last-legs experimental college where Olson was rector, somewhere he could make a “living that counted.”

He studied there in two non-continuous semesters in 1955 and 1956, working with Olson, Robert Creeley, and Robert Duncan, and beginning life-long friendships with Michael Rumaker, Ed Dorn, and other young writers and painters. His letters home from this period offer a lively, poignant look at this strange and wonderful moment in literary and cultural history, with the presence, either as correspondents or supporting characters, of not just his fellow poets but of artists like Wallace Berman, Franz Kline, and Basil King; of fiction writers like Fielding Dawson and Michael Rumaker, all the explorers of Black Mountain and its diasporic communities. For some critics, Wieners’ association with Black Mountain presents an apparent contradiction: how could a student of Olson and his historical-political poetic project write such personal, lyric verse as “I look for love. / My lips stand out / dry and cracked with want / of it”? But Wieners did in fact remain a student of Olson’s project, a poetics grounded in an outward stance, an “open field” not just in prosody (opening up the line) but in subject matter, by opening the field of poetic inquiry beyond the self, and beyond the Enlightenment and Romantic projects of mapping its interiors. For Wieners, the personal was not the matter of the poem, its substance and subject. Rather, it was a vantage to occupy, a center from which to enter and understand, describe, the world outside the self.

Perhaps the best characterization of Wieners’ version of a lyric poetics comes from Denise Levertov in a review for The Nation, in which she positions Wieners as “an Orphic poet,” one who “writes from hell, but not about it.” This connection to the Orphic traditions in the arts opens a generative line of inquiry of its own, aligning Wieners with a specific set of predecessors: Goethe, Nerval, Rimbaud, Hölderlin, and Rilke; poets who follow the descent-and-return path of the mythic demigod but who also, in keeping with the other components of the Orpheus myth, see poetry as a revolutionary vocation (invoking the power of Orpheus’s music over nature and gods) and who use poetry as a medium for prophecy (like the severed head of Orpheus, which keeps prophesying as it floats down the river). Also, the “Orphic” category allows us to think of Wieners alongside the modernist painters that Delaunay and Apollinaire (both profound early influences on Wieners’

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1 Selected Poems, 27.
aesthetic) called “Orphic cubism,” or “Orphism,” with the goal of using color as sound in a refraction of cubism that aimed to bring celestial light to the canvas. By provisionally placing Wieners’ verse within these traditions, we can liberate him from the poetry wars of the twentieth century – staged scuffles among the confessional poets, the language poets, and the other warring factions – and read him through a new lens. Implicit in this repositioning is a challenge to those too-convenient “schools” of poetry that serve as a carceral system, keeping poets in their marketable places, or out of the marketplace altogether.

Measure was one way Wieners worked to break poetry out of its “schools”; in 1957 he launched its first issue, its name inspired by Blake’s injunction to “bring out number weight and measure in year of dearth.” The name indicated, on one level, Wieners’ intent to take a measure of poetry in the years since “Projective Verse,” the 1950 essay he considered to be the great pivot of twentieth century American poetry. In doing so he was adamant in his desire to present a full measure, not walled into familiar groupings but brought together according to Wieners’ always singular vision. Over the next five years he produced three issues of Measure, always with the poems presented simply, inexpensive in the vein of the small-magazine movement going on at the time.

For Wieners those Measure years, 1957-1962, were glorious and savage, spent in Boston and San Francisco and New York and Boston, in and out of state hospitals and varying states of psychological distress. The best poems of the era are preserved in the majestic 1964 collection Ace of Pentacles, with its centerpiece 1962 poem “The Acts of Youth.” This poem, which Olson called one of “the most beautiful and truest” poems he’d read, begins in a place of great personal suffering, as “with great fear I inhabit the middle of the night,” but by the end of the poem the voice has grown into a glorious plural, with the closing “we rise again in the dawn. / Infinite particles of the divine sun, now / worshipped in the pitches of the night.” The pronoun shift is a performance of its own, enacting the message embedded in the poem, that “pain and suffering” are “the formula all great art is made of.” Furthermore, this Orphic figure of the Poet is living under a “burden / that no god imposes” – it is the burden that “we are made for; for that / we are created. Until the dark hours are done.” Far from being a confessional cri de coeur, “The Acts of Youth” reveals itself as a political lyric, the Orphic poet trying to lead the whole suffering world out of hell, or at least to transfigure it through his art. This consciousness of suffering also led Wieners to be a fierce witness and advocate of the working class and the homeless, one class that he
came from and another that he could easily have become – in his vocation Wieners aims to be, as he writes in “Children of the Working Class:” “I am one of them. I am a witness / not to Whitman’s vision, but instead the / poorhouses, the mad city asylums and re- / lief worklines. Yes, I am witness not to / God’s goodness, but his better or less scorn.” Here one can see the overlaps in the Promethean and Orphic myths: Prometheus brings down fire for mortals, while Orpheus tries to bring the mortal up out of hell. Both myths end with the mortal saved, enlightened, at the hero’s great expense.

The late 1960s was for Wieners, as it was for the world, a period of intensities, one summer of heterosexual domestic bliss followed by traumatizing loss, travels to Europe and out west, increased attention but also heightened psychological distress. His output remained strong and the books – Pressed Wafer, Asylum Poems, and Nerves – reflect a constantly evolving prosody, poetics, and worldview; Allen Ginsberg, in his introduction to Wieners Selected Poems, calls them “three magisterial books of poetry that stand among the few truthful monuments of the late 1960s era.”

The late 1960s were also defined, for Wieners, by his time in Buffalo, a trying time – Olson, Wieners’ main reason for coming, left the program the semester after Wieners’ first, making their second time within the formal classroom unfortunately brief – when he balanced his psychological health issues with formal study and new writing; nevertheless, he was desperate to escape town, which he found stultifying.

After a series of shocking, dramatic losses in the first two years of the 1970s – both his parents, Charles Olson, Steve Jonas – Wieners settled into his last home, his fourth-floor apartment at 44 Joy Street on the back side of Beacon Hill, the neighborhood where his whole adventure had started twenty years before. He would spend his final three decades on Joy Street, writing, making collages, smoking and talking with friends, and making the rounds of Boston and Cambridge book stores.

During the 1980s, Wieners oversaw the release of three collections of his work, notably Cultural Affairs in Boston (1984). He gave fewer public readings, preferring to write and hold court in his apartment at 44 Joy Street in Boston. A 1997 article in the Boston Phoenix describes the excitement of an upcoming reading by the “mesmerizing apparition…

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2 Ibid, 176.
3 Ibid, 15.
Beacon Hill's own John Wieners, the oracle of Joy Street — one of Boston's best-kept poetic secrets…

He is making a rare public appearance on this cold spring night, as the featured performer at a "Kerouac's birthday" reading sponsored by Stone Soup Poets and held in venerable Old West Church. The pews are crowded with local literati eager to pay him their respects; in fact, there are rumors that his performance — coupled with the recent release of his new collection of poetry and prose, *707 Scott Street*… augurs a Wieners comeback after all these years.4

As his later journals and correspondence reveal, he remained committed to the same two vocations he and Olson share in these letters: poetry and friendship. He died at sixty-eight, after attending a party with old friend Charles Shively. Not feeling well, he'd left the party early and collapsed in a nearby parking garage. He was found by an attendant and admitted to Massachusetts General, where he remained on a respirator while a concerned social worker and nurses obsessively tracked his identity through a prescription they found. They identified him through the pharmacy, enabling his cousin and friends to visit; Charles Shively and Jim Dunn were with him when he died.

In a 1974 interview, Wieners was asked, "For whom do you write?" His response:

For the poetical, the people. Not for myself, merely. Or ever. Only for the better, warm, human loving, kind person. The guy on the street who might hold open a door for you, left the bumper on your car, stops to give you instructions, spares some change, lets you in his bookshop. Friends I take for granted, like the future.

4 Salmons.
Notes on Correspondents

Donald Allen (1912-2004), American publisher, editor, and translator. In 1957 he helped edit the groundbreaking “San Francisco Scene” issue of the *Evergreen Review*, but arguably his greatest achievement was the 1960 anthology *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*, which established a provocative counter to the canon then controlling the poetry establishment (establishing a new canon in the process – with all the attendant problems of anthology canon-building). Allen edited Frank O’Hara, notably his *Lunch Poems* and the posthumous *Collected Poems*, and is mentioned in O’Hara’s “Personal Poem,” in a conversation with LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka: “we don’t like Lionel Trilling we decide, we like Don Allen.” In 1997 he co-edited (with Benjamin Friedlander) *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson*.

Wallace Berman (1926-1976), American artist and publisher, called the “father” of assemblage art, a style of collage-based work he showcased in the exquisite art journal *Semina* from 1955 to 1964, which printed several Wieners poems. He and wife Shirley became close with Wieners during the latter’s years in San Francisco in the late fifties, and Wieners wrote about their time together in “Poem for the beer at Berman’s,” describing a lazy afternoon at the artist’s house:

> Guess who? mixes marijuana and Shirley says
> the door’s open down stairs.
> It is to April 12 – an afternoon
> where I progressively get attached to Stimulants

Paul Blackburn (1926-1971), American poet and translator often grouped with the so-called “Black Mountain School” because of his role as an early contributing editor for the *Black Mountain Review* and Don Allen’s grouping of them in the 1960 *New American* anthology. He is known for his vital translations of works like the medieval Spanish epic *Poems of the Cid*, and through the 1960s he was a prime moving force in the Lower East Side poetry community that congregated around Café Metro and the St. Mark’s Poetry Project.

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1 Wieners letter to Olson April 8, 1958.
Robin Blaser (1925-2009), American-Canadian poet and scholar, grew up in Idaho but is most closely associated with the Duncan/Spicer circle in Berkeley, with whom he formed the core of its “Renaissance” in the late forties when the three were students together. He befriended Wieners after moving to Cambridge to work in the Harvard libraries. His move to Vancouver in 1966 solidified connections that had been forged at the landmark 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference; publication of his collected poems (*The Holy Forest*, 2006) and essays (*The Fire*, 2006) mark his enormous achievement.

Gordon Cairnie (1895-1973) in 1927 using his own thousands of volumes as the stock, the Grolier Book Shop is a legendary Harvard Square haven for poets and writers operated by Cairnie until his death. In 1965, Wieners writes to Joanne Kyger that he is on his way to Cairnie’s birthday party, adding, “He is 70. Let’s be like him.”

Hank Chapin, professor at the University of Kentucky in the early 1960s and editor of poetry magazine *Blue Grass*, which was heavily influenced by Olson's “Projective Verse,” publishing several Modernist and New American writers in its brief run, including Louis Zukovsky, Barbara Moraff, and Fielding Dawson.

Cid Corman (1924-2004), American poet and publisher whose work was key for generations of post-war American poets, especially but not limited to his hometown Boston. In the early 1950s, he launched his radio show *This is Poetry*, from Boston’s WMEX, putting local and visiting poets like Theodore Roethke and Stephen Spender on the air. At the same time he began publishing his seminal poetry magazine *Origin*, which would publish most of the emergent American avant-garde on and off for the next three decades. He was a voluble and generous correspondent for innumerable young poets and publishers till the end of his life, including fellow Bostonian John Wieners as the latter planned to publish his own little magazine, *Measure*.

Robert Creeley (1926-2005), American poet and publisher. He published Divers Press and the *Black Mountain Review*, was a mentor of Wieners’ at Black Mountain, and a
lifelong friend thereafter. Recordings of Wieners’ visits to Creeley’s classes at Harvard may be downloaded on PennSound’s John Wieners page. After decades of publishing and teaching in New York and New England, Creeley helped to found Buffalo’s Poetics Program in 1991. He taught there until he went to Brown University in 2003, and taught there for the last two years of his life. In his elegy for Wieners, read at his funeral in 2002, Creeley described his old friend:

Sweet, you might say, impeccable gentleman, like Claude Rains, his Boston accent held each word a particular obligation and value.
I see his face as still a young man, in San Francisco, hearing him talking with Joanne, hearing him talk with Joe Dunn, with friends.

Diane Di Prima: (b. 1934), American poet, scholar, and teacher. Raised in New York City, she was a prime force behind the Lower East Side and Beat poetry scenes, and later the Diggers in San Francisco. In addition to publishing more than forty books, she has co-founded several indispensable arts publications and organizations including The Floating Bear (1962-1969), the New York Poets’ Theatre, the Poets Institute, and the San Francisco Institute of Magical and Healing Arts. In 2009 she was named Poet Laureate of San Francisco, where she has lived since the late 1960s.

Robert Duncan (1919-1988), major American poet, early gay liberation figure (his landmark essay “The Homosexual in Society” was published in 1944), and one of Wieners’ Black Mountain mentors. In his letters Wieners makes mention a few times of Duncan’s “The Venice Poem,” an open-form serial poem written in 1948 while Duncan was part of the small nucleus of poets, along with Spicer and Blaser, who became known as the Berkeley Renaissance. He first met John Wieners at Black Mountain the summer of 1955, when the young Wieners was one of ten students remaining, and Duncan wrote to Robin Blaser that in his dorm room Wieners had “lines of Pound written on the paint with frames over each.” His review of Wieners’ Hotel Wentley Poems and Ace of Pentacles for the Nation, in May 1965, placed his former student among “not only the poets but seers and prophets [who] have reiterated the ultimate value of an ecstasy that is identified with sexual orgasm, with sight beyond sight, with divine or demonic inspiration.” After his long association with Berkeley and San Francisco, Duncan moved with his partner Jess to Stinson Beach, where they lived till Duncan’s death.

Larry Eigner (1927-1996), American writer. Born and raised in Swampscott, Massachusetts, Eigner was non-ambulatory, born with cerebral palsy, and his poetry and essays explored the universe from a unique perspective. Robert Grenier and Curtis Faville edited a four volume Collected Poems (2010), reproducing Eigner’s one-keystroke-at-a-time typescripts and making available his extraordinary achievements.

Larry Fagin (b. 1937), American poet, teacher, editor, and publisher of Adventures in Poetry magazine (1968-69). A participant in the exciting New York art scenes of the 1960s and 70s, has worked as a writing teacher, briefly at the New School, and then for decades as an independent teacher out of his East Village apartment.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (b. 1919), American poet, artist, activist, and owner of City Lights Booksellers in San Francisco since 1953. After a difficult childhood spent in various cities and homes, Ferlinghetti served in the Navy, after which he was able to use the

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2 Jarnot 158.
3 Ibid 241.
GI Bill to return to graduate school, earning a master’s at Columbia and then his PhD at the University of Paris in 1951. By the time he arrived in San Francisco, the Berkeley Renaissance had morphed into a burgeoning arts and poetry reading scene in San Francisco, where his City Lights, and its Pocket Poet series, acted as community center and catalyst.

Raymond Foye, American publisher and editor. After a childhood in Lowell, Massachusetts – Kerouac was on his paper route – Foye befriended Allen Ginsberg, first meeting him when Ginsberg was en route to see Wieners, whose virtues as a poet Ginsberg excitedly extolled. That mission ended in failure but Foye returned, becoming good friends with Wieners in the 1980s. In the mid-eighties Foye spearheaded a renaissance for Wieners’ work by releasing Selected Poems (1986) and Cultural Affairs in Boston (1988), which garnered widespread, glowing reviews. In 1986 Foye co-founded, with Francesco Clemente, Hanuman Books, a small press of small books, handmade miniature books by a wide array of Beat, New York, and other writers, including two by John Wieners.

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), American poet, teacher, and activist who formed, with Jack Kerouac and William S Burroughs, the core of the first Beat movement. In 1955 his reading of “Howl” at the Six Gallery, followed by the poem’s publication and its obscenity trial, made him into something almost unheard of in 20th century American poetry: a household name. In his letters to others Wieners often jokingly calls him “Ginsbergmessiah,” but their correspondence makes it clear that theirs was an enduring friendship based on mutual respect and commitment to the poem. With poet Anne Waldman he founded the Jack Kerouac Institute of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute in Colorado; it is still a thriving program that merges poetry, performance, other arts, and Buddhist practice.

Robert Greene, American teacher, Korean War veteran, and friend of Wieners’ from Boston College in the early 1950s. They worked together at the student literary magazine, The Stylus, and continued their friendship through letters and occasional visits through Wieners’ stays down South and in California. Wieners’ letters to Greene offer
unparalleled insights into Wieners and his experiences at Black Mountain College and San Francisco.

Barbara Guest (1920-2006), American poet and writer associated with the New York School. Her first books were published in the early sixties by New York-based Tibor de Nagy and Corinth (the publishing arm of the 8th Street Book Shop). In 1984 she published a biography of H.D., called *Herself Defined*. Her *Collected Poems* was published by Wesleyan UP in 2008.

David Haselwood, American publisher and Buddhist monk. After serving in the US Army in the mid-1950s, Haselwood settled in San Francisco, where he founded the Auerhahn Press, producer of elegant letterpress books under his direction (with Andrew Hoyem) from 1958 to 1964, at which time he left to form an imprint under his own name. Auerhahn’s first book was John Wieners’ 1958 breakout volume *The Hotel Wentley Poems*. When the book’s printers censored the word “cocksuckers” in one title, blanking out the “cock,” Haselwood was so incensed he learned how to print, so that he could handle that as well in the future. The reprint of *Hotel Wentley*, published by Dave Haselwood Books, features the restored title “A poem for cocksuckers.” He has been a Zen Buddhist monk for many years, living and teaching since 2000 at Stone Creek Zen Center in Sonoma.

Jess (1923-2004), American artist. Born Burgess Collins, he dropped everything but “Jess” after breaking from his family and his former military life working with plutonium on the Manhattan Project and the Hanford Atomic Energy Project. He went to the California School of the Arts in San Francisco, and built a career as a visual artist, specializing in painting and collage. He is also known for his collages of old comic strips, particularly the *Dick Tracy* work (called *Tricky Cad*) that Wieners mentions in his letters. Jess co-founded the King Ubu Gallery, which eventually became the Six Gallery, home of the famed 1955 group reading that included Ginsberg’s “Howl.” He was the longtime partner of Robert Duncan.
LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka (1934-2014), American writer, publisher, and activist. A native of Newark, New Jersey, Jones rose to prominence as a poet and playwright in Greenwich Village among the Beats. He published *Yugen* magazine from 1958 through 1962, and the first 25 issues of *The Floating Bear*, with Diane di Prima, from 1961 through 1963. An issue of *Bear* featuring Jones’ *System of Dante’s Hell* and William S Burroughs resulted in his arrest in 1961; after a brief show trial he was acquitted. In 1964 he caused a sensation with his intense, confrontational one-act play *The Dutchman*, resulting in a media reputation for controversy. After the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965 Jones radicalized and moved to Harlem, renaming himself Amiri Imamu Baraka (the middle name would later be dropped). His *Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* offers a frank depiction of all these phases of development, and *The LeRoi Jones / Amiri Baraka Reader* (Basic Books, 2000) a nice cross-section of his work.

Joanne Kyger (b. 1934), American poet at the heart of the most vibrant aspects of North American poetry and poetics since moving to San Francisco in 1957. Associated with Jack Spicer’s circle around North Beach bar The Place and Joe Dunn’s White Rabbit Press, she was close to Wieners during his time in San Francisco, immortalized as “Miss Kids” in his memoir *The Journal of John Wieners is to be called 707 Scott Street for Billie Holiday, 1959*, the name taken from the Victorian house they shared on Alamo Square Park. In 1960 she moved with Gary Snyder to Japan, marrying him and traveling on (with Ginsberg in tow) to India. Upon returning she published her first book of poems, *The Tapestry and the Web*, and in 2000 she republished her travel writings as *Strange Big Moon: Japan and India Journals, 1960-1964* (North Atlantic).

Denise Levertov (1923-1997), British-American poet. She moved to the United States at 25, and her work since has reflected a lifelong engagement with the American idiom, notably via William Carlos Williams. Her poetry is deeply invested in nature, politics, and faith, and her poetry criticism is catholic in its scope and perspicacious in reading; her great collection *The Poet in the World* (New Directions, 1973) includes the glowing review of Wieners’ *Ace of Pentacles* that she published in *The Nation* in 1965,
and her *Collected Poems* was released in 2013. Her highly charged correspondence with Robert Duncan (Stanford, 2004) is a must-read for any student of New American poetry and the anti-war movement.

Alan Marlowe, American writer, director, and performer, co-founder with Diane di Prima of the New York Poets’ Theatre in 1961. He was married to di Prima from 1962 to 1969.

John Martin (b. 1930), American publisher, founder of Black Sparrow Press in 1966. Martin is best known for launching and helping to sustain Charles Bukowski, but he also published many of the New American poets, including Diane Wakoski, Robert Duncan, and Wieners, whose two culminating collections – *Selected Poems* and *Cultural Affairs in Boston: Poetry and Prose 1956-1985* – were released by Black Sparrow in 1986 and 1988, respectively. In 2002 Martin retired after 36 years of publishing, selling Black Sparrow’s catalogue to David R. Godine.

Michael McClure (b. 1932), American poet and writer who has been central to the “San Francisco Scene” – in all its permutations – since the fifties. He was one of the poets who performed at the famous Six Gallery reading in 1955, and his first book, *Passage*, was published by Black Mountain alumnus Jonathan Williams’ Big Sur Press in 1956.

Duncan McNaughton (b. 1942), American poet, writer, and teacher. A Boston native, McNaughton studied Classics at NYU before going on to Princeton and Buffalo, where he earned his PhD in English Literature and Poetics. It was at Buffalo that McNaughton befriended Wieners, and published him in both of his small magazines, *MOTHER* and *FATHAR*. After Buffalo, McNaughton helped establish the New College of San Francisco, which in many ways continued the educational tradition of Black Mountain College.

David Meltzer (b. 1937), American poet and musician. When he showed up on the North Beach poetry scene in 1957 he was the kid of the group, a 20-year-old studying and performing with Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, John Wieners, and their circles of
friends. While Wieners was living in San Francisco, Meltzer and wife Tina frequently
had Wieners over to babysit their infant daughter.

W.S. Merwin (b. 1927), American poet. He and Wieners first overlapped when Merwin was
Playwright-in-Residence at the Cambridge Poets’ Theatre 1956-57, but went on to
share many connections, through east coast poetry centers and the anti-war
movement. A Pulitzer Prize winner for Poetry, he was named Poet Laureate of the
United States in 2010.

Charles Olson (1910-1970), American poet and scholar. He worked for the American Civil
Liberties Union and then the Office of War Information in Washington, D.C., as
well as the Democratic National Committee and the Roosevelt campaign, but grew
disillusioned after Roosevelt’s death and Truman’s rise to power. In 1945 he gave up
government work for poetry. From 1951 through 1956 he served as professor and
then rector at western North Carolina’s experimental Black Mountain College, where
he taught and befriended John Wieners. After Black Mountain, Olson settled in
Gloucester, except for two years in Buffalo, New York, where he directed the State
University’s new poetics program, which aimed to be a “Black Mountain II.”
Throughout these post-Black Mountain years Olson continued to work on his
Maximus Poems, which remain unfinished. He died just after his fifty-ninth birthday,
and is buried in Gloucester.

Irving Rosenthal (b. 1930), American publisher and writer. In the late fifties he edited the
Chicago Review and Big Table; after the former was censored for printing William
Burroughs, the latter was formed in protest. He wrote one novel, Sheeper (1967,
Grove Press). Though he hadn’t been friends with John Wieners prior to Wieners’
first hospitalization in 1960, they formed an immediate rapport through
correspondence, their experiences as young gay men – and iconoclastic publishers –
giving them an instant connection. Rosenthal lobbied friends and Wieners’ family for
his release, but it was six months before this was effected. He was also a great
supporter of Wieners’ old friend Edward Marshall’s poetry; in the late 60s with
funding from Panna Grady Rosenthal formed Carp & Whitefish, a press whose sole
expressed intention was to put Marshall’s verse in print. They planned a series of books based around different themes, but only the first of these, *Transit Glory* (themed around travel), was released, in 1967.

Michael Rumaker (b. 1932) is a fiction writer, poet, and memoirist who was a close friend of Wieners and, along with Wieners and Ed Dorn, one of Olson’s most acclaimed students. His trilogy of memoirs, *Black Mountain Days, A Day and a Night at the Baths, and My First Satyrnalia*, give invaluable and uniquely crafted insight into queer and artistic life in the post-War and early Gay liberation years. *Black Mountain Days* shows an especially tender portrayal of young John Wieners, at the point when he and Rumaker were fellow Cold War queers living in the very masculine environment of Black Mountain in its final days. His fiction brought him together with Olson and Black Mountain, notably his first great story, “The Pipe,” which appeared in the *Black Mountain Review* after he wrote it at the school, and was featured in his groundbreaking 1967 collection *Gringos and Other Stories*.

Ed Sanders (b. 1939), American poet, writer, activist, and musician. Sanders created and edited *Fuck You/ A Magazine of the Arts* from 1962 to 1965, and operated the activist workspace and asylum the Peace Eye Bookstore on the Lower East Side throughout the 1960s. A founding Yippie and Fug, Sanders is pioneer of what he calls “Investigative Poetry,” a “history-poesy” movement that pursued traditionally “non-literary” lines of inquiry into history or philosophy using poetic modes; as he wrote in his manifesto for City Lights, the new movement would take its cue Ginsberg’s 1958 line "Now is the time for prophecy without death as a consequence." And indeed, for Sanders as for Wieners and their closest colleagues, the political and aesthetic are inextricable.

James Schuyler (1923-1991) was an American poet, artist, and critic. After two years spent in Italy as W.H. Auden’s secretary, Schuyler moved into a New York apartment with Frank O’Hara and John Ashbery, with whom he would form the founding trio of the New York School of poets. Like O’Hara he worked as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art, and his art criticism appeared frequently in *Art News*. He won the
Pulitzer Prize for his 1980 collection *The Morning of the Poem*. It is unclear through whom Schuyler first met Wieners, though it would be truly surprising if they hadn’t met, given the close-knit nature of the New York poetry and art scenes, and the omnipresence in both of Schuyler as well as Black Mountain alumni and ex-San Franciscans.

Charles Shively, American poet, activist, teacher, and editor in Boston. The author of two books on Walt Whitman, *Calamus Lovers* and *Drum Beats*, were both published by Gay Sunshine Press. He worked for many years with *Gay Sunshine*, as well as Boston’s *Fag Rag*, two groundbreaking gay liberation publications. He became friends with the older poet Wieners while the latter was hospitalized in 1969; their correspondence grew into a lifelong friendship. Shively was responsible for the publication of Wieners’ *Behind the State Capitol, or the Cincinnati Pike* in 1975, with Good Gay Poets.

Gary Snyder (b. 1930), American poet, scholar, and translator, longtime Buddhist and Deep Ecology activist. Snyder was married from 1960-1965 to Joanne Kyger, living in Japan and traveling around Asia with Kyger, Allen Ginsberg, and Peter Orlovsky. Snyder was immortalized as the hero of Jack Kerouac’s *Dharma Bums*, Thoreauvian Zen trickster Japhy Ryder.

Phillip Whalen (1923-2002) was an American poet known for his deep commitments to Zen Buddhism and ecology in his life as well as his poetics. Whalen served in the Army in World War II, and attended Oregon’s Reed College on the GI Bill, where he befriended Lew Welch and Gary Snyder. An integral part of the San Francisco Beat community, he was one of the Six Gallery readers in 1955, and his poems were published in the San Francisco section of *The New American Poetry*. Dave Haselwood’s Auerhahn published two of Whalen’s first three books, in the two years after Wieners’ *Hotel Wentley Poems* inaugurated the Press. His *Collected Poems* were published in 2007 by Wesleyan University Press. Brian Unger is currently editing Whalen’s journals, excerpts from which were published in the CUNY Center for the Humanities’ *Lost & Found* Series III (2012).
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## The Letters

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Textual Introduction

My work on this dissertation began almost three years ago, when I decided to research the letters between John Wieners and his mentor Charles Olson. The letters are housed at the University of Connecticut (Wieners’ to Olson) and Boston College (vice-versa). This experience, which resulted in a two-volume chapbook for the Lost & Found Poetics Documents Initiative (“the sea under the house”: The Selected Correspondence of John Wieners and Charles Olson), was so engaging and, as I came to see, important, that I decided to continue collecting and Wieners’ letters, eventually deciding to make this the centerpiece of my dissertation.

The earliest letters I have found are from 1955, the first time he moved away from Boston. From Black Mountain College he wrote to his college friend Robert Greene, both that summer session and the following year, when he returned south for his second and last term at the school. Before Mr. Greene donated these letters to Boston College last year, the earliest letters available were from 1957, after Black Mountain had closed, so this contribution was extremely fortuitous, and demonstrates the highly contingent nature of letter-compiling. The available resources depend completely on who saved what, and what papers were sold to which libraries or private collections; this is why many of Wieners’ close correspondents, represented here because they saved his letters, have no letters to him in their own collection. Other than his letters from Olson and some letters related to the 1957 launch of his magazine Measure, Wieners saved hardly anything anyone sent him. Collecting his letters involved making an extensive network of connections with scholars, librarians, and friends and colleagues of John Wieners. Many leads came from old friends mentioning offhand that there might be something in some other collection. My first year of research was an intensive, basic training experience in textual research, networking, and archival detective work, discovering and refining my methods over time.

All editing decisions have been made with my central project in mind: to make John Wieners and his world visible. I want him to speak for himself through his letters, as much as possible, assembled in such a way that the book functions as a John Wieners epistolary autobiography. The first question, then, is what method to use in transcribing and presenting the text, beginning with whether to present as the final product a critical or non-critical edition; that is, a “clear” text (based on critical decisions made by the editor) or an edition that tries, as David Greetham explains, “to reproduce a text already in existence” – in this
case the letters – “and perhaps to use this text as a vehicle for annotation or interpretive criticism.” For this dissertation I have chosen the non-critical edition, presenting the letters (as closely rendered as possible) more or less as I found them in the archives.

The main advantage of the non-critical edition is that the changes – additions, deletions, non-textual elements like arrows or doodles – can be preserved graphically so that the reader can see the writing process unfold and be presented with an approximated recreation of the text as it was presented to the editor. There is a spectrum of non-critical edition types, and the most attractive for this kind of project are the facsimile (which presents actual photographic reproductions of the original text) and the genetic edition (which preserves, via codes of varying complexity, the changes made to the original text). I decided on a genetic edition for this project, with a simple code system that will allow non-textual scholars to intuitively understand it.

Letters are usually revised as they are written, with words or entire sections struck out, new text inserted in the margins or connected with arrows and other notation. In my genetic edition of these letters, I am preserving all readable struck-through text (struck through in type), and italicizing any inserted or substituted text in italics. Also, I have represented non-textual elements (arrows, etc) in bracketed descriptions (these will be rendered graphically in the eventual published book). My decision is motivated by an ethos of preservation above all else, but just as importantly, with Wieners’ strike-throughs and insertions left as they appear on the archived page, the reader is able to experience his writing and editing processes more or less as they happened. For example, in one journal Wieners refers to “Rose Kennedy’s interest son John.” What a loss it would be for the reader if the struck-through word were merely replaced with “son”? How much about Wieners’ view of the world – and about the Kennedys – is preserved in that genetic transcription? Also, countless times Wieners will scratch out a word, substitute a different word, scratch that out and replace the original word, sometimes up to ten times, back and forth. Preserving this series, even if only with italics and strike-throughs, puts the reader in the position of reading right over Wieners’ shoulder, watching him vacillate as he writes.

Within the text of the letters, I use three systems of annotation, which serve different purposes. First, each letter has a bolded heading indicating the recipient, the date sent (or mostmark), and Wieners’ location at the time the letter was sent, if that can be determined.

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1 Greetham, 347.
Occasionally the recipient’s location is noted as well. Secondly, in order to facilitate reading these letters as a narrative, I have used headnotes at significant moments in the text, to signal geographical or biographical changes, note hospitalizations and major life events, and fill in gaps in the chronology to the best of my knowledge. I have tried to keep the headnotes as brief as possible, providing some context holding the letters together. Whenever contemporaries like Diane di Prima or Michael Rumaker have published accounts of the same events or periods of time as the letters I’ve brought in short excerpts and references for further reading, in the interest of placing Wiener’s experiences within their lived worlds.

While headnotes set the stage for the letters, giving sometimes necessary connective tissue, the footnotes are supplementary, and address two different needs. First, many are meta-textual, addressing textual ambiguities, providing necessary graphic information such as arrows or circles, and explaining creative spellings, or providing citations referring to works in the Bibliography. Many notes are textual “stage directions” – letting the reader know that certain text is written vertically along the side of the letter, for example – that are helpful but not so necessary as to require bracketed insertion into the text of the letter. Hopefully in an eventual published edition, these will be rendered graphically in the transcriptions.

Finally, footnotes are used to provide biographical or other identifying information for references within the letters. There are a range of available approaches to this sort of note, one being the sparse style of Sally Fitzgerald’s Flannery O’Connor letters, which has only minimal information, usually presented as brief, italicized headnotes. This same effect, with fuller notes, is possible through the blind endnote option, as in the recent UC Press edition of the Robert Creeley letters. The former works well for a collection like O’Connor’s _The Habit of Being_, where most of the references are either to her own work or to well-established figures like the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop or the writings of Thomas Aquinas. But in keeping with my central mission – to make John Wieners, his lived experiences and points of reference, visible – I felt it was important to provide that information here, from references to old Boston and San Francisco dive bars and book stores to poets and writers who are no longer widely read. My goal with these notes is to give the letters contextual support by illuminating often occulted information and allusions. Where a reference is widely known, such as when he talks about Edna St Vincent Millay, I try only to give basic information (lifespan, nationality) and how the figure is connected with
Wieners and his circles. The notes are by no means exhaustive, and during the publication process they will change as more information becomes available.

Finally, I must acknowledge the strange genre of the dissertation. Both complete and incomplete, it is a draft of an eventual book, especially in a project like this one, where progress depends not so much on my own writing as it does more detective work. There are many more words and phrases labeled “illeg” than will be in the final book, but these fixes will require more visits to the originals, consultation with other John Wieners experts, and so on. Also, not every person or place who needs identification in footnotes has it yet; after friends and colleagues of Wieners have read this dissertation I expect to gather a great many more clues for these. Finally, the poems in these letters, which are now given placeholder footnotes, have not all been sourced yet to where they first appeared, and so those placeholder footnotes will be finished with that information when it becomes available.
Chapter One: “a living that counted”
February 1955-December 1956

The letters of John Wieners begin in early 1955, a cold Boston in February when the young self described “would-be poet,” newly graduated from college, was reading and writing intensively while cavorting around the city with friends from Boston College and nearby Providence. He was openly gay “at a time,” as friend Michael Rumaker writes, “when practically everybody in America from Senator Joe McCarthy on up was a terminal closet case,” with his blonde firefighter boyfriend forming the friendships and networks that would blossom into the “Boston Renaissance” on the north side of Beacon Hill. From the start, an always present theme is the poverty of Wieners and his friends, outlaw children of the working class living poetry as a vocation. Wieners describes this cold winter of 1955 in his Untitled Journal of a Would-Be Poet, rent parties with stolen wine, reading feverishly and drinking with college friends Robert Greene, Veronique, Rita, and Pat – all fresh out of college and obsessed, as so many were at the time, with the fashions and litterature of the 1920s, a fusion of pop culture and modernist literature – for Wieners, it was a journey from Edna St Vincent Millay to D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, and H.D. – that informed the style and substance of many poets and artists of Wieners’ generation. Like friends Le Roi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Diane di Prima, and Joanne Kyger, Wieners was born at the depth of the Depression in 1934, and by the time they were hitting twenty, as di Prima recalls,

An excitement was in the air. Not just my excitement. It was as if all the city of New York, all the nation, was discovering movement. Was learning to move all at once. My childhood years had been marked by the fear of polio: ten-year old friends in braces, trailing withered legs. A president in a wheelchair. As well as the paralyzing realities of war… we were discovering, or re-discovering, movement.1

Wieners grew up in middle-class Milton, and was just sixteen when he started school at Boston College. The first letter here is to Robert Greene, his friend from Boston College literary magazine The Stylus, a genial young man who would soon be shipping out to Korea. The college was a commuter campus, and so a group of them, needing a place to hang out between classes, took up residence in the Stylus offices, chatting and reading.

Through Wieners’ letters to Greene in the early years of this collection, we are able to see the always-eager Wieners devouring all the poetry and culture he can, fusing these experiences with his unique lyric vision in the letters and the poems they frequently contain. Wieners’ journals from this same time are full of Edna St. Vincent Millay, but the first poetic reference of the letters is, appropriately enough, enfant terrible Arthur

1 Robert Duncan in San Francisco 7.
2 Recollections of My Life as a Woman 152.
Rimbaud, whose *Season in Hell* Wieners suggests he and Greene can read together, as it is “superb poetry.”

The second letter in this collection is perhaps, historically speaking, its most important, Wieners’ application to attend Black Mountain. After seeing Charles Olson read at Boston’s Charles Street Meeting House, Wieners knew the experimental school, then on its last legs, was the place where he could hone “the craft that gives meaning to my life,” as he put it. Black Mountain’s reply – Olson’s – was almost immediate, a telegram offering him a loan for room and board. Wieners letters home to Robert Greene offer a rare, exhilarating glimpse at Black Mountain in its last days, a place of great creative energy, poverty, and hard work – what Wieners would later recall as “a living that counted.”

* * * * *

Robert Greene

February 9, 1955

[Boston]

78 Walk Hill Street

Jamaica Plain, Mass.

4:45 to 5:00 P.M.

Dear Mr. Greene:

I find it necessary to write in this form as I am in the green office & the bug men may and do watch me constantly.

I hope news has flashed from Providence, but I have an intuition that all lines have or are put down. I hope not.

Wasn’t Rita lovely singing that way in the back of the car? I can’t put it out of my mind. The following day we spent the afternoon together at Milton. My family loved her. That night we went to Quincy and heard a Chopin concerto, played by Rubinstein – that made Marie weep in the wan light. This was followed by Keats’ odes and Millay, read by J. Anderson. It was rain that night. But unfortunately, reality and the everydayness of life had somehow hardened my illusion of Rita. We went to the Museum last night & she seemed quite ordinary, unfortunately. But I do not give up. I love her best when she’s playing a role, young girl dedicated to poor poet, sophisticate, eager student, spirit crushed by the world, night club singer, or flapper, but I do not love Rita Nolan per se. Can you understand me? I don’t. Hope to see you very soon. I have not heard from the young lovers, the Pineaults, and am still adhering to my schedule, but not too rigorously, I am afraid. Let me hear from you soon as we both need it.

I

Vienna

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3 Written in the white space of a typed notice from the LAHEY CLINIC (the nonprofit teaching hospital of Tufts University) demanding payment of a $25 past due amount.

4 On January 18, 1955, in his *Untitled Journal of a Would-Be Poet*, Wieners describes having met his new friend Rita Nolan, a student at the time at the Rhode Island School of Design, at Boston’s Museum of Arts. “Rita with her plain face and the extraordinary eyes and mouth” became a good friend of Wieners and his boyfriend Dana Durkee, frequent party-guest at the couple’s apartment.
P.S. Have you read Rimbaud’s “Saison En Enfers”.\(^5\) Maybe if you have time, we could do it together, as I have done the first selection and think it is superb poetry, trying of course not to translate it into English, which can’t help but ruin it.

---

**Black Mountain College**

March 23, 1955\(^6\)

[Boston]

Registrar
Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, North Carolina

Dear Sir:

Having read the 1952-1953 catalogue of Black Mountain College in the Boston Public Library, I am most anxious to receive whatever more recent information, i.e. new catalogue, application and scholarship forms, that are available concerning the requirements for entrance to your school.

There are unusual circumstances in my case which I feel should be told to you at the beginning.

1) In June of 1954, I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Boston College. I do not feel, despite four years of hard work, that I have greatly profited from this education. The school is conducted by the Society of Jesus, and although not a school of religious instruction, it is necessary for all students to take four years of theology and two years of Scholastic Philosophy, which demand more time, both classroom and study, than the student’s field of major concentration. E.g. In my junior year, I was only able to take two survey courses in literature, totaling six hours a week, since it was compulsory to attend six hours of philosophy classes and two of theology a week. Thus I know scholastic philosophy which is of no little use to my life and do not know the craft of writing, which is the only use of my life. The obvious question is, why didn’t I transfer? At the time it was financially impossible as I lived with my parents and was barely able to earn my tuition and personal support from part-time jobs.

2) My age is twenty-one and I feel, in terms of my own development as a writer, that one to two years at Black Mountain College, “hammering form out of content” is the most worthwhile thing I could do. I am eager to study under Mr. Charles Olson, having read his poetry in *Origin*, *Four Winds*,\(^8\) and the *Black Mountain Review*,\(^9\) Vol. I, No. 1, and also

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\(^5\) Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), libertine French poet of great influence on the New American poets. Basil King, painter and classmate of Wienes, remembers Charles Olson thrusting a copy of *Illuminations* in his hand and saying “Read it, boy!” (email from Basil King, April 2013).

\(^6\) This letter, from the Burns Library at Boston College, was Wienes’ application to Constance Wilcock, the registrar and Olson’s common-law wife. The responding telegram of acceptance and with promise of a loan (unexpected in Black Mountain’s cash-strapped last years) was sent just a week later.

\(^7\) *Origin* was founded in 1951 by Boston poet and publisher Cid Corman (1924-2004), who brought Olson on as contributing editor; their important letters, chronicling the creatively agonistic process of production, were published in 1969 as *Letters for Origin*, and six poems from Olson anchored the its first issue. *Origin* was foundational to avant-garde poets, including Creeley, Denise Levertov, and Louis Zukofsky, who published his opus \(^A\) 1-12
having heard him read his poems at the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston last year. His essay, “Projective Verse” has been the most important work I have read on the writing of poetry in 1955.

3) I have writing ability but do not consider my creation to be anywhere near its possibility. At Boston College, I was Associate Editor of the Stylus, the undergraduate quarterly; literary editor of the Sub-Turri for 1953-54; contributor of feature articles to the Heights, the student weekly newspaper; and contributor of drama reviews to the Emerson Dramatic College newspaper.

4) I am willing to work whatever is asked to learn the craft that gives meaning to my life. I have no funds of my own and my parents, who were not able to contribute to my education at Boston College, I do not expect can aid me here.

All this, I know, is not usually included in an initial letter to the registrar of a college, but I feel that by making known these facts, they will help actualize my hope of attending Black Mountain College. I realize that further fact and verification shall be needed, and when I receive your reply, I shall notify Boston College to send you whatever information is required.

I thank you sincerely for your time and whatever consideration you extend to me.

Very truly yours,

John Wieners

38 Grove Street, Boston 14, Mass
Read slow, this is a bombshell.

Dear Bob:

This will be short and confused, but have and wanted to tell you about this place, and this shall serve as asking you to write when you have time, to tell me 1) re: Veronica 2) future plans 3) Joe’s marriage 4) summer still at Vermont YES YES YES 5) how does Dana look, and all other news but especially about plans, and if you say Army, I will, yes, all over you.

The student body numbers at the most 15. Excellent living conditions. No cubicle, etc. but a wing of a little Dutch house, called Mountain Stream, with a mountain stream running beside it for 24 hours. Three rooms, a kitchen, a piano, etc. Joe and Carolyn in one, no one in the other if I can help it, and me in the back, under trees, with a little screen door, and three screened windows, one window with only a screen. I take theatre, lithography, and writing under Olson who is the only Man to have said anything NEW or FRESH about Poetry – since before Pound, and before Pound, Ernest Fenollosa, in his essay “The Chinese Written Character as A Medium of Poetry” and before Fenollosa, John Keats, not in his own poetry, but in his letters, when he attacked Milton and Wordsworth for their Egotistical beyond the fact that it’s early in Wieners first of two terms at Black Mountain (Spring of 1955).

Very little is known for sure about Dana Durkee. He was a tall blonde volunteer firefighter who was Wieners’ live-in boyfriend in Boston, and then off and on while Wieners was at Black Mountain. He moved with Wieners to San Francisco in September 1957, but did not last long before moving back to Boston. Robert Greene remembers him from Boston College, and later, when Wieners and Dana lived on Beacon Hill:

He played football in high school, and he played in the navy. So he had gone to an academic program at St. Mary’s, so he was prepared to go to college, but he joined the navy right after high school. Then when they reinstated the GI Bill, he was eligible for it. So he went to BC on the GI Bill for that period of time… I think he still did some work as a fireman during the summers up in Swampscott… John and Dana, especially John, organized readings at their apartment. They would get people to read, you know, people passing through Boston, the poets they knew. (Interview with Robert Dewhurst).

Joe Dunn grew up with Wieners in Boston, and with his wife Carolyn stayed fast friends with him from Boston to Black Mountain to San Francisco. In Black Mountain Days, Michael Rumaker describes Joe Dunn as “even smaller and sparer in build than John, with skin so pale it seemed never to have known sunlight” and an “almost angelically boyish face” (429). The Dunns, like Wieners in those days, were perpetually poor and smoking. They moved to San Francisco before Wieners did, and held court at their apartment in Polk Gulch; Dunn was an instant crush for North Beach center of gravity Jack Spicer. Tom Field described the couple as “pre-punk, proto-punk,” Carolyn with green makeup, the apartment “dumpy” and dark (PBLG 108). When Dunn got a job at the Greyhound Bus Company’s Print Department, his boss allowed him to use the equipment for free on nights and Saturdays, as long as he provided the paper stock, and so White Rabbit press was born, publishing Wieners’ friend from Boston Steve Jonas’s Love, the Poem, the Sea and Other Pieces Examined as its first book, followed soon after by Jack Spicer’s After Lorca. After Joe’s descent into hard-core drug use, the couple split, and Joe moved back to Massachusetts, where he cleaned up and lived out his life quietly.
Sublime, as he called it. His doctrine was the only new thing said (Negative Capability)\textsuperscript{13} for many, I do not know how many, hundreds of years. Look, read, and read, and try to refute this. Poetry for 300 yrs. up to 1910 and Pound, was nothing but imitation of old forms, from Shakespeare, and Elizabethans to Pound to Olson, who has added more. His essay, Projective Verse in Poetry: New York, 1950 Issue no. 3. the first thrust. And he has gone on from there. Naturally, this is the only place of its kind in this country, no one has any major interest but in what they create. The pace of life is something I have never known, and which you probably Touched, mind you, only touched, at Middlebury, with their hundreds, at the most here, with wives, and for kids, it comes to 25, and with 600 acres. at least 13 buildings, many unused and in disrepair. Classes are as follows: Writing: Monday and Wednesday nite—8 on, usually to end at midnight, once at Peek’s a tavern four miles out, and last Mon, having coffee in one of the rooms until 1.\textsuperscript{14} Theatre—Mon, Tues, Thurs, Frid, mornings—9:30 on usually to noon. Lithography\textsuperscript{15}—Tuesday nite—8:30 to 10:30.

\textsuperscript{13} In a letter dated December 21 and 27, 1817, John Keats (1795-1821) described his concept “Negative Capability” as the state of mind “when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason.” As poet Micah Ballard writes in his invaluable monograph \textit{Negative Capability in the Verse of John Wieners}, this Keatsian poetical character, free of egotistical identity, is what distinguishes Wieners’ poetry from the confessional verse that continues to dominate modern notions of the lyric. “After having broken the barrier between his mind and its subject,” Ballard writes, “Wieners follows his imagination throughout all it brings him to inhabit” (2).

\textsuperscript{14} Ma Peak’s was a blue-collar, country bar 3-4 miles from Black Mountain. Basil King remembers a night when Wieners showed up at his room “all gadded out in high heels” wanting to go to Peak’s:

And John came in all dolled up and he said, "Take me to the bar!" And I said okay. We went down there. We were seated to drink. Then John all of a sudden gets it in his head to go over and sit on one of the farmer’s laps. The guy pushes him away. He goes to somebody else, and he cuts a piece of meat and tries to feed it to them. It's just crazy. How do you talk about somebody who will do this? And there was a woman who ran the place, who was friendly toward Black Mountain people… She came over to me, and she said you got to get John outta here, Ma Peak’s gonna call the sheriff, who was her cousin. I got him out of there, by then he was disheveled. And we started to run and then both of realized that if we were running and they caught us they’d kill us, or they'd do something to us. So we stopped. And I saw the sheriff talking to Barbara. What possessed me, to this day I do not know. I walked over to the sheriff and I said, “Excuse me sheriff, could I talk to you?” And he didn’t answer and then I waited and he looked at me like okay, say something. And I said, “Is your mother alive?” He said yes. And I said, “John just lost his mother. He's not like this all the time.” The guy melted. He put us in the car and he drove us back to the school. We did things like that (Interview with Robert Dewhurst, January 2, 2012).

\textsuperscript{15} American artist Joseph Fiore (1925-2008) taught the lithography class which, like all the arts classes at Black Mountain, was open to students of every discipline. Fiore also taught drawing at the school.
Naturally my whole interest is in Mon, and Wed, and the wild stimulation that follows. Advisory Committee to the school reads as follows:  
Albert Einstein—head  
Norbert Wiener—MIT  
Franz Kline—Painter- NYC  
William Carlos Williams—one of the THREE Men who have done ANYTHING in this century-poet  
Carl Sauer—Head of Geology-Univ of California  
Since Einstein dead (School’s telegram read: Sympathy for your loss, ours, and theirs) the school has ritten to Carl Jung, to ask him to take over head of Advisory Committee)  
You see Olson believes it is the artists who alone can, with the scientists put Man back on his track. Not Culture, art museums, Shakespearian movies, rare collections, all the shit that goes by as culture, but Art, that can put man on again, as Homer did, and the early ones did. That is what this country has, don’t you agree, culture running everywhere, but no art, nothing new, no language new, but culture running everywhere, and people (hanging) Renoir and Degas in their parlors.

I am sorta run out of fire, but do hope you will do something with what you have this fall, and fuck the Army, but you can’t, and will probably have to go into two years of waste, the best time shot, but hold off if you can, and write everywhere for openings. Even write here for teaching position, they would love a bona-fide Romance language. I don’t think you’d get much pay, but a good food allowance, 12,000 books on an open shelf, no locked doors, and some of the most exciting hours of your life.

Write soon to me, Bob, as I would like to hear your doings, and all the doings of the all the ones I love. There is a Black Mountain Review which would make interesting reading, plus so many benefits for the writer. Jonathan Williams, publisher, of Olson, Creeley,

16 Norbert Wiener (1894-1964), a famous child prodigy and mathematician at MIT.  
17 Franz Kline (1910-1962), a major abstract expressionist painter who taught briefly at Black Mountain. He was brought onto the BMC board by Olson, whose thinking was influenced by Kline’s work.  
18 William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), American poet. His *Paterson* (released in five books between 1946 and 1958), an epic “poem of place,” informed and inspired the work of Olson and the other poets coming in and out of Black Mountain College. His notions of “measure” were key to the BMC poets; he sought to “break” the iambic line and establish a living alternative to meter that varied like speech. His concept of measure as the modern alternative to meter was certainly on Wieners’ mind as he chose *Measure* as the name for his magazine.  
19 Carl Sauer (1898-1975), a pioneering cultural geographer and professor at Berkeley who put forth a vision of geography as a phenomenological study, his work was foundational for Olson, who discussed him frequently in his letters and essays.  
20 Jonathan Williams (1929-2008), a Black Mountain student of Olson, scion of a wealthy family in the Swannanoa area, classmate of Wieners, and founder of the Jargon Society (while he was still serving in the Army), a small press that published, among many other books, Olson’s *Maximus Poems 1-10* in 1953, then 11-22 in 1956, and then in collaboration with Eli and Ted Wilentz of the 8th Street Bookshop, what became the first volume of *Maximus* (Jargon/Corinth) in 1960.
taught here last summer, editor of Merlin, literary quarterly in Paris, THE Divers Press, Carresse Crosby left here 2 days before I came, leaving on exhibition first editions she and her husband Harry printed on the Black Sun Press of Hemingway, Pound, D.H. Lawrence’s “Sun” Hart Crane’s “The Bridge” Letters of Proust, Letters of Henry James, etc. etc. Plus Archibald MacLeish, letters from all the above and other people like Kay Boyle, Eugene Jolas, other impeti from the 1920’s which line of electricity has fallen directly into Black Mountain College and its surrounding men. If there is any force in the world of letters today, besides the one which Olson is in the center of, please tell me, and ask the adversaries of this statement that also. Which and who are they? Not eliot or Spender, etc etc, as they are old, and never really brought in anything new. Olson and the people above, with one man in Canada, in the mag, called Civ/ /n (Irving Layton) who shall teach here, it is hoped this summer, are the only ones. And the Boston Arts Festival gives its award to men like Robert Frost and Sandburg. WHAT GOOD DOES THAT DO FOR POETRY, or for Sandburg or Frost either. Farce, farce, and more.

Please write soon, I would like so much to see you again, but write.

Love,

J

Shall wait a week, and then send some subversive magazines to your house, if you have not answered, addressed to;

Robert Greene, Atheist.

I will, too.

Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, North Carolina

I shall be home in June for a week, and then come back here until September and then Boston again, or maybe shall stay here until December, that is if Dana would only come and live in a little house, by the side of a field. If he won’t, I shall live in Boston much against my will, for the winter moths, and then come here again, with money this time, that is, if they will have me.

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21 Robert Creeley and his wife Ann founded Divers Press while living on the Spanish island Mallorca in the early fifties, before Creeley came to Black Mountain. Divers published Olson and Duncan, along with many other influential post-war American poets and writers.

22 Bostonians Carresse Crosby (1891-1970) and her dashing husband, libertine heir Harry Crosby (1898-1929) were poets and publishers who printed many Modernist “greats” (several breathlessly listed here by Wieners) with their Black Sun Press, including Charles Olson’s 1949 book of poetry, Y & X.

23 Irving Layton (1912-2006), a Romanian-born Canadian poet, teacher, and famously outspoken public intellectual. He was coeditor of two influential Canadian poetry magazines, Contact (with Raymond Souster) and CIV/n (edited with Aileen Collins, named for Ezra Pound’s abbreviation of “civilization”). In 1955, Olson invited him to come teach at Black Mountain, but Layton declined.
John Homsy\textsuperscript{24} and Dana are coming back with me in June, to spend a week here, maybe you could come too, if you have not gone to Middlesbury, it costs nothing.

Show this to people, as I can’t keep repeating myself in letters.

Thanks.

* * * * *

As the previous letter home demonstrates, Wieners finally found at Black Mountain the creative home he’d longed for, a mix of the bohemian life he loved in Boston combined with a rigorous study of poetics that he’d only glimpsed in writings by Williams and Pound, and that fateful Olson reading at the Charles Street Meeting House. Fellow gay student Michael Rumaker, in a letter to his boyfriend, described his new friend:

this boy Wieners has been a lifesaver this spring. He’s been lamenting having left a certain ‘Dana’ on Beacon Hill all spring term and he has written wild poetry about it all. As a result, he’s the darling of Olson’s class, for the poems are really terrific, very beautiful, fresh, and revealing. He is one of those true gay fellows who can get away with murder – because everyone loves and enjoys him – I think it is that sense of utter abandon in his nature, a sense of light irresponsibility, suggestive of so much magnificent freedom, which makes him attractive to everyone. He even looks like a poet.\textsuperscript{25}

Rumaker’s memoir of the school’s last years, \textit{Black Mountain Days}, offers an intimate look into their friendship and work with Olson and the other teachers and students Wieners mentions in these letters home.

* * * * *

\textbf{Robert Greene} \textit{Thursday [Winter/Spring 1955]}

\textit{[Black Mountain, NC]}

Dear Bob:

Well, Bob, it’s begun for me, or rather a part of it, only a line of it is done. I brought seven new poems into class Monday, and after I finished reading them, I heard someone clapping, and I looked up and it was Olson. There was no real criticism of them until last night, when the class asked me to re-read them, and after they were, to begin their a critique. Nothing really important was said, but then it was Olson’s turn. He admonished the class for being too modern to enjoy these poems. He said that one had to applaud after hearing them, as they were bursting from their seams language-wise. He also suggested that I submit one of them, the longest one, for publication, as the poem says everything about the subject that can be said, that I had held nothing back, and on these grounds alone, it should be published. After class he told me how lovely parts of them were, and all of this from a man

\textsuperscript{24} John Homsy was an old friend from Boston, described in Wieners’ 1955 \textit{Untitled Journal of a Would-Be Poet}.

\textsuperscript{25} Rumaker \textit{Selected Letters} 15-16.
who really is first-rate in poetry today. … I will leave this for a while, but I first want to tell you some of what I have been doing. In Lithography, I have completed a drawing on stone, from which I shall print 12 copies. Would you want one? It’s real shit, but you could use it in the bathroom, and it is an original litho, this is the process of Toulouse Lautrec. Mine is quite quite abstract, but if you want one, just ask. O.K.? In theatre, I appeared two Sunday nights ago in a scene from STREET SCENE by Elmer Rice with a girl called Mona Stea. I was Sam Kaplan to her Rose Maurrant. She was excellent, and I could have been better, but it was a wonderful production, and much enjoyment. I am now doing FAUST with me as Mephistopheles, and we are also rehearsing Ezra Pound’s translation of Sophocles’ THE WOMAN OF TRACHIS. There will be dance, drama masks, music, etc. in the production.

About French, a Robert Hellman is coming here for the summer from the U. of Iowa, and last summer, he gave a course in Proust and Rimbaud, and intends to offer another course in French Lit. this season, so I will definitely be able to enjoy a little of francais.

It was very good to hear that you had enjoyed some or achieved some satisfaction from working on Bellay’s poetry. And the question you put forth is a good one. Don’t you think that one Learns because he has, not that he wants to. We know many things, but to keep knowledge we must learn it and keep on learning, thus it is not so much a perfection of self, but a damn necessity of self. We have to learn, not to be educated or articulate or successful, but simply because there is something there that makes us learn, and thus we should only learn that which we are forced to. This is not progressive education. I mean when you have the essentials, whether you want them or not. This is simply something above the essentials, then again, the things we are learning now are really essential to ourselves.

About movie fare, it was funny to hear you speak well of Heart of the Matter when sister had wrote that it was corn corn etc. but her main complaint was the lack of spiritual struggle. As for me, I would love it, I think. Also the End of the Affair is out in Ny, with Debbie Kerr and Vannie Johnson. What ridiculous ads if you’ve noticed. I think Time gave it a shoddy write-up. The movies I have seen are two: the bill of fare here is impossible. The Revenge of the Creature: sequel to the original Creature of the Black Lagoon, which I had seen up in Boston, and whose sequel I couldn’t miss. It was riot. Lori Nelson gets seduced by a half-fish-man. But naturally is saved. The other film was On the Waterfront (now my 3rd time) but I was stinking, so it didn’t matter. The afternoon of that day, I was walking to the Studies Bldg. and met Ed Dorn, poet published in Origin, and he and his lovely lovely wife invited me to Peek’s for a beer. They brought their baby, who was brought up in a bureau drawer in a chicago tenement. And at midnight we returned, bare-footed, hysterical, the baby had been taken home earlier, after having devoured a package of pretzels and two packages of peanut butter and cheese crackers. But they are fine people, she being a divorcee who left her husband taking two other children with her, Fred and Chansonette, to live with Ed and sleep on dirty sheets on a mattress in their living room, the same house that Joe and Carolyn share. As she said, I left convention and a PHD for him, but he’s so beautiful, I love him, etc. He really isn’t but she loves him, etc.

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27 Joachim du Bellay (c. 1522-1590), French poet and critic.
28 Wiener’s sister Marion (1925-1992), a nun for many years, fiercely devoted to her brother’s welfare all of her life.
I close now for a day or so in the rain here, it’s like Monsoon country.

Monday.

Still raining, steadily since Thursday, I laid out in it Saturday night for fifteen minutes in a big raincoat. Laying out in the grass with the rain coming like hell. I then went down and danced for hours, like Zelda Fitzgerald, on the deck of an old studio, to jazz and the rain through the leaves. I would be so happy here, but I can’t stand it without Dana, and this morning I received a long overdue letter from him, answering important questions I had asked him (like what are you going to do this summer, will it be work in the Fire Dept, why can’t you come to BM and me for the summer) and he answered the questions with answers like YES or NO and I DON’T want TO. So there is nothing for me to do now but stay here, work hard hard harder, but it is so hard to be in a beautiful place, and the person you want most won’t come, for some reasons I am afraid to think about. So it’s done, and I can do nothing but stay here, and hope he realizes that this is his chance for salvation, and he is putting it aside for dollar bills and security. What do I do in a case like this? I have written my heart out asking him in all kinds of hysterical ways to please come in June, and the worst thing is that he could come if he wanted to, but won’t now. So I am not going to answer his little note, so awfully cruel, the cruellest thing he’s ever done, and just go on by my old self and fill up as many pages in as many books as I can. And hope maybe in a year or so, or years, Dana and I might see each other again. I will not be home to Boston in June, probably not in September, and yet I do not want Black Mt, without him, but as you can see, Boston offers so much, and yet it cannot teach me, nor criticize me, or help me in what I have to do. I know I could go home for good in June, and work with Dana during the summer, and maybe in September we could come back here. But it is up to Dana to suggest how and when we can meet again, as he evidently now is content to stay away from me. Thus whatever I could suggest to him would really help matters none. He has to find out himself and help me and want me, and his letters had none of these thoughts in it. And we could die tomorrow. But this is no reason to depress you, happy as you must be with the thoughts of Middlebury and the apparent luxury you are going to have. It is wonderful.

Last night too, I read three of my poems before the entire college, and enjoyed it. When I get things in order, I will send them out for publication.

It was beautiful what you said in one of your letters about the end of one era, and because we are still young enough, the beginning of another. I think so, and it will be an era as rewarding and young as this last one, but let’s hope not as hectic. It was a wonderful era, we’ve had two or even three together you know. The Freshman-Sophomore, The Lax and nearly sterile transitional period of Junior-Senior, when resolutions were formulated, and then at the end of The Senior, the blossoming of the Third, leading into a culmination for me, at least, of Grove Street, which is as far as you can in the poor wild Boheme stage. Now the other, the beginning of the work, and the distance and the isolation of ourselves from each other, and then I hope will be the coming together and the exchange and the enjoyment of what we have profited.

It’s silly to end this note with all the paper full, but I am going to.

And I hope you are growing too, but I know you are.
Thanks for asking me back, and I will be soon.

your friend always, and all eras.

John

Write whatever you want to about Dana. The Greeks were right when they said that Eros tossed a man down to his inferiors.

PS. I received the Stylus. How shocking, not only the cover, but that absolute hussy drawn by something called Adams. Luman’s poetry, not much I think, nothing there that has not been said a 100 times before. Why the hell bother to say it again, if you can’t do it in a new way, and the sonnet form, and etc. with some of those horrible rhymes is not a new way. Song in Defense of Myself had a charm, but so reminiscent of Housman, and the ode, has passion, but don’t you think it gets smothered and becomes unreal in that artificial form? L.

I think this era, is the hardest I have been through, as I am now totally alone, for the first time, and very nervous about the possibility of a life alone, old, drunk, etc. And yet what else can I think of when this thing is being smashed, a thing that was always warm inside of me, and now it’s as if I am paid back for all the warmth. You know that old cliché, you have been too happy, or we have been too happy, the gods will punish us surely. But still as Blanche said, sometimes there’s God so quickly. Right now, there is nothing but John Wiener’s and white paper, and it is killing me, but still I must be a…. Fill in the dots. This letter to you has released some tension. I also can play 2 songs on the piano with 1 finger. My Buddy and Stormy Weather, also a little of Heart and Soul, so things aren’t as bad as they seem.

Robert Greene

Tuesday, May 24th, 1955
[Black Mountain, NC]

Dear Bob:

Of course, I have to answer your letter right away, even now when I should be writing, and the main reason is because I feel so elated by it, and also by another writing class last night. I brought in two poems, a love poem, which begins, “I have wanted to write a love poem like the river merchant’s”, and another, an address to Hart Crane, and Harry Crosby, two suicides. I did not work hard on them, especially the suicide one, as it was written while I was stinking on Friday, and written while I was in tears up to my knees. I brought them to class last night, read them in my turn, there were so many manuscripts we all read them one after another, and then waited, me sure that they were a failure and a dis-appointment to the ones of the week before. They talked for an hour on two poems of Mike Rumaker’s, and

29 The Stylus is the Boston College student literary magazine on which Wieners had worked with Greene (mentioned in Wiener’s letter of application to BMC).
30 “Hart Crane, Harry Crosby…” was published as a broadside by the Detroit Artist’s Workshop in 1965, and was the lead poem in Wieners’ 1984 book Cultural Affairs in Boston; Ralph Maud notes that a copy of the broadside was in Olson’s personal collection (Charles Olson’s Reading 318).
then a boy asked to read mine again – and then he commented that he liked them, and I asked a question: I would like to know how I can stop writing poems like this: Olson laughed and laughed, he said you never can, and you better not. He asked me what I meant, and I answered with: preoccupation with myself. The class then launched into them. In a second, failure is turned into success, at least for other people. Olson then began answering my question. I don’t remember what he said in quotes, but he talks about the intensity, me John Wieners, the desire, the trouble in the poems, that the use of language is my image, on and on, talking as if I am a poet, possessing the talent to convert experience into form. We went to Peek’s afterward, and I could hear him talking up the other end of the table about the emotion in the poems. When we went up to pay the bill, he came over and thanked me for the night. I was writing to Dana this morning, at about 10:30 and he came in, and talked with me for two hours, talked not in the way that if you work hard you will be a poet someday, but that if you work hard you will be a better poet than you are now. He asked me to write 5 different poems on the same subject: “the river merchant” it’s an allusion to Pound’s translation that we loved so much in Boston.

He left and I walked to the mail, hoping to hear, and I got your letter, I never expected to hear you talk this way. What you say, I know, is true, that Dana just loves me for this reason: that I can give him back love from someone he respects, but I must never give him more love than he gives me, I must never lower myself by loving him too much, I must be neat and clean, I must be a poet—all these things I have to maintain for Dana’s love. When I wrote those letters to him, throwing down all pretense, telling him I should give up writing, anything, BM, to be near him—I got back letters with no love in them, demands that I must stay at BM, he was going to BC for the next 2 yrs, lectures, sermons, all types of near-pleas to get back up and treat him as I had always done, holding him off, yet still giving him enough love, but not all of it, even though he does want it all. Of course, it is doomed because I know all the reasons now, and nothing can last unless you don’t know why it is lasting. So I still ache ache, and plan and resort to the old tricks

(It is now at least three hours later) While I had been writing this to you, Ed Dorn, the poet I mentioned came in and we talked re the party that C. Joe and I gave in the lobby of our house last Saturday night. A big scandal occurred in which a young girl, 18, from Cherry Lawn School, visiting here for two days, to determine whether or not she should attend BM in September was either raped, statutory, or willingly, I don’t know, by a [redacted on manuscript in black ink], a student here, so things were coming to a head, as this [redacted] has caused trouble before, namely with Ed’s wife Helene, and also with Carolyn. He is a repressed homosexual, with this great male mask, the worst kind, Ed and I talked for an hour, and then we went to the yard of our house, and Helene, Ed and I had tea, and were joined by Olson who came back again with a fresh manuscript in his hand. It was a poem he had just written, called A Post-Virginal, for John Wieners.  

You know how I feel. How does it happen, what has it happened, I’m not even trying to find out. I just know now that as long as I live I will be a poet, that my life, way of and function of, will be the writing of poetry, as long as it lasts. Yesterday over the cliff, today on top of it. When I finish this letter, I will write a few words to Dana and then spend

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31 Later published as “The Post-Virginal,” the 1955 poem is a profound meditation on the nature of form in Olson’s other “PV,” 1950’s “Projective Verse”: “Form is not life. Form is creation. It changes the condition / of men. It does not disturb nature. Nature, like god, / is not so interesting. Man // is interesting” (CP 354).
as long as I can stand it, writing it, because as they say here when you're in heat with the poem, write write and hurry. It doesn't last, and it's too good to waste while it's lasting.

I have only read your letter once, so whatever I say has to come from that, and I don't want to stop writing to you to even re-read it.

I know what you say about Dana is true, but still in him is the ability to fill parts of me up. He is coming down here June 13th, for six days only! I guess, and my original plan was to leave BM with him in June and work in Boston for the summer, and then the two of us come back for a long long time. The school will advance loans to me until December, I am sure, but this way, I could earn my own way and then stay here through the winter and all next year. Don’t worry, this place has its limitations, and I see them, but still, I am getting the time and THE CRITICISM, and the encouragement every time I want it. I cannot get these things in Boston to my satisfaction as you know, but still I do not feel I can go through the daily business of existing without Dana. This is where I am weak, and if we broke it off now, I know it would be better in terms of my development but I am too weak, something I never thought I was, at least in terms of this kind of need. I thought I was weak in my intensity towards the poem, but here I am strong, but there will be dry days, months, maybe years without the actual accomplishment of the poem as I guess I have now, and who will keep me alive then?

Dana does not want to come here, but I know that by pretending that I intend to stay here without him, and pretending that this is the end, at least I will say this, he will come down. He does not think I will go back to Boston with him, but while he is here in June, I will be cold, uninterested, back on the old role, and he will then begin to make gifts to me, and the one I want is his coming here in September. If I asked him to, he would not, but if I pretend no, stay where you are, Dana, all I want is my poetry, he will do whatever he can to stick with me. (I think this is the best course to follow)

I want to say one more thing in my mind. I will write again after the heat is off, but this I want to say. Don’t let pity destroy you, pity kills your action to the degree that it’s passive. If it is not passive pity, O.K. But the complacent, the serendipity, (serene-pity) that Pound coins in his latest Canto, the 85th is a disease. We must have the simpatico, this is the only way we achieve relationships with beings, I know, but the other kind, is the suffocation of yourself, in the face of the intolerable misery of the world, the feeling that I can do nothing but cry over them, without trying to correct or even kill. This isn't necessary to say – I don’t know why I spent so much time on it. A first impression.

Enough, I guess, I will re-read your letter over and over. It is wonderful to hear it from you. I think it marks a break maybe, I am not sure, but please don’t regret writing it. It is the best thing you could have done for me, it establishes you in my vision as also (what words can I use) a dynamic in my life. Do you see? Not just a boy in the past, but an energy of my present thought, a factor in my life. I had forgotten since I got here, and maybe before that, that you should be a voice in my mind. Now it is here again, just another wall we have broken down or built up for ourselves, I don’t know which. Built up in the sense that we

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32 Ezra Pound’s Cantos LXXXV- XCV were published by New Directions in 1956 as Section: Rock-Drill. The name “Rock-Drill” was meant to suggest the hammering out of Pound’s ideas, and was inspired by the title of Wyndham Lewis’s 1951 review of The Letters of Ezra Pound (Terrell 533). For the irreverent, very queer Boston Poetry Newsletter that Wiener printed up and distributed with his friends the summer of 1956, gay Ezra Pound devotee Steve Jonas wrote a poem called “Cock-Drill.”
think even more strongly of and for each other. I hope this doesn’t sound like the pledge of eternal friendship, that you spoke of, I don’t want it to sound like that.

I will write again soon, in a week probably, but you write when you want.
Letters from Marie, Florence’s wedding invitation, and Bilver Monday. Marie’s was so wonderful and so upset because she had kissed you and held onto you tight in the car, and was afraid that you would think her a frustrated cheap 17 yr. older. She is unbelievable, she won’t live long like herself. I don’t think one can do it. She has to change or die/ Maybe not, maybe she is a miracle.

Don’t tell her I told you. Love, Vienna

Robert Greene
Friday June 1955
[Black Mountain, NC]

This is a nearly un-intelligible letter

Dear Bob:

This paper was put into the typewriter to start a new poem, but I answer your letter first, an enjoyable one with the news of the clan. I did write to Marie, a little drunk and sentimental, but a true letter. Entertainment-wise, this land has been hectic, especially with this Ed Dorn and Helene, so much fun and sharing so completely what I love. I finally did Balling the Jack for the school the way I used to do it, but never as wild as now, what with all the tricks I have picked up from Roxanne. Underneath the moon in front of the studies building before 10 or 12 students after Ed Dorn had finished his number in a white shawl, we had danced in a circle for an hour, singing all the stupid songs, screaming, not even drunk, just tired, as Pearl Bailey says There is a boy here called Mike Rumaker, short story writer, from NYC, Helene’s from Duluth, Minn, Ed from Matoon, Illinois, they met in Seattle I think, and she was then married, but such a lovely girl, like a Madonna by some artist I forget, all bones in her face, soap and water face, long straight brown hair, educated by nuns, although non-Catholic, low voice, soft, Ed is a little looney, seriously, with big eyes, and when he answers a question, it’s like you jerked him with a string. They are coming to Boston in September, for two weeks, and he is applying to Harvard for a fellowship in history, she has been to Boston once, loves it. They don’t sound at all here like they are, because these things I say can all be applied to other people, you just have to see them together, they really are like no one I have ever met before, and this truly is something to say about them. They had us to supper twice, as we are penniless, living on crackers and second-hand tea-bags which we hang up on the wall to dry to use a second time. He asked me to
Peek’s for a beer at 2 in the afternoon on Memorial day, and at midnight we returned to the campus, we had brought Joe Dunn (Carolyn was furious) Harvey Harmon from L.A. with us, and were joined later in the afternoon by Herb Ross, my ex-roommate from Philly, and the girl who has come down here to live with him for the summer, Jackie Kline (names, names) also were joined by Seymour Whittaker, a mountaineer. 33 We ran up a bill of 14.05 which we haven’t paid for, and ended up playing pool in Asheville 20 miles away. We thought Big H. (Helene) would be mad but we serenaded her under the window when we got back with, I can’t give you anything but Love, and she took us inside, and listened with great glee while we spent an hour telling her what we had done. Ed supposedly was to come back and get her at four, but she took it all wonderfully. Their son Fred, is amazingly bright, smokes cigarettes, as all the kids do here, even Katy Olson, age 3, and occasionally gets drunk with Ed and keeps on shouting Ipsalante, Ipsalante, the town in Michigan where he was born. All the kids here usually go stark naked, and possess the most unbelievable imaginations. They all see snakes and bears, have lynching parties, dinner parties of their own, swear. We cleaned out three sewers yesterday, and when Katy asked; what’s that white thing at the bottom, Pops, Charles looked at her calmly and said, that’s a pile of shit, my dear, and she went away satisfied.

How Freeman Frank and Bettina ever got to each other I don’t know, but I did nearly die. Was it an engagement party or what?

Monday
Wasted three days really, but all action seems so worthless when 3 weeks from now, I do not have the faintest idea what I will be doing, North or South, alone or loved. I do not have the strength of those words, Bob, at least now. I am out of heat, and my day, nearly my entire day is spent in planning, wondering whether or not Dana will come here for the week of June 12th, as he has promised. A promise has always been a very solemn thing between us, and yet, he has broken three since I came here, and most likely he will break this. Today is

33 Harvey Harmon was a student at Black Mountain College. In one of her memoirs of the time, “Seventy Years Ago in the South,” Martha King remembers him as “pale and romantically listless and used to sit in the bathtub for hours with his books and his papers piled on a plank that fit across the tub” (n.p.). He and wife Lorraine moved out to San Francisco during the great migration of Black Mountain alumni after the school closed.
his birthday, and I sent off this morning a Birthday Parable, or allegory, and of course, all I
did was ask him to come here for that week. I gave him till Friday to contact me, and yet I
have let myself need this, and I suppose, it’s only because I have little chance of getting it,
that I feel I need it so much, but it is getting better, and if no word by Friday, I will send one
last letter, a very dramatic one, spewing it all out, getting it out of my system, and freeing
myself of him for once and always. Yet I hope I get his letter by Friday and all that will not
be necessary.

Re my activities: We are very poor, in fact, I do not have a single penny left. Our
food provisions add up to this, 1 quarter box of pancakes, 1 box of Hominy Grits, ½ can of
corn, 2 frankforts, and 20 crackers. These are mine, and I must spread this to last until the
opening of the second quarter, June 20th. This is another reason why Dana’s coming or not
coming is crucial, but I shall survive.

I have hustled my way around the campus, and had dinner out twice last week,
breakfast once, and lunch twice, plus gifts from unknown admirers of ice-cream cones,
cigarettes and beer. I now roll my own cigarettes out of pipe tobacco, and they are ghastly.
I have another dinner date tomorrow night, at two girls’ place, and their boyfriends. Tuesday
is the best night for dinner, as we go to town that day for provisions. So I will have a lovely
meal that night, and then I will start on the Faculty. I have made good friends here, one girl
knitted me a pseudo-loin cloth out of cellophane, leaves, wood, yarn and old newspapers.
This coming Thursday and Friday night, we present Pound’s Women of Trachis, it is not
really Pound’s but a translation of his from Sophocles. My litho came out fine, but I will not
mail it, and if Dana comes down, it will be given personally to you. You see, I will come back
to Boston for the summer, if he comes here, and I will work and save and come back to BM
for the next year. You can live on $6.00 a week here, royally.

After writing that last letter to you, I did write those poems, five of them, called 5
Plucks on the Same String. Success again, and Olson told me to keep on that series, he calls
them My Buddy poems, and squeeze it for all it’s worth, it also referred to it as an elastic line,
and when I asked him what he meant he only laughed. I know; he means, stretch it until it
breaks, it can only go so far. Also Joe and Carolyn, Mike and I are presenting Millay’s Aria
Da Capo, before the school… So much to tell you, no time. We have to have a new manuscript for every Olson class, so I close quickly, and if you have things or facts that you think would help me re Dana, something to make me hate him, please tell me. But I do hope he comes, and that the hate will be checked. It seems a shame that this will have to end in hate, but that is the only way I will get out of it. A gift from Marie today of a Moby Dick paper weight. (Olson wrote a book on Melville, called “Call Me Ishmael” Also a card from Rita, signed “Mon amant” same place, Nantucket.

1. What is the name of the steak house you work in?

2. Read the article on Thomas, my sister also sent it. Where is the mention of Pound, William C. Williams, the phony glamour prose, but still a tribute to an important poet, viz/their remark. ‘the first of the second-class’. That horrible classification of cocktail drinks, I did not like, but I liked the spirit of it, I think America should always be reminded there are poets like Dylan Thomas. I also think, yes, they did, devote book sections to Graham Greene, Joyce Cary, Hemingway more than once, how about Faulkner, I’m not sure but I know Life did. Bob, also in that issue read the lead article on the spirit of the country today. It is unbelievable, but still Time, and still America, go on for four pages, it all coheres. In Newsweek, I read that Frank Lloyd Wright visited Boston for the first time in 15 yrs, and spoke at the Institute of Cont. Art. He repeated what he had said about Boston in 1940. “It needs 500 first-class funerals, and then get rid of 800,000 people and preserve it as a museum-piece.” He also told the people or told somebody to go to art and religion if they want civilization, for there love exists.

Write when you can, and if you see Dana, kiss him for me.

John

PS. I hope I don’t ever have to write this kind of letter, i.e. re Dana to you again. I am sorry, but it’s so much on my mind and you are in Boston with him, and I am not, and that, as Mr. Frost says, makes all the difference.

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34 Edna St. Vincent Millay’s play *Aria da Capo*, first produced at the Provincetown Playhouse in its 1919-1920 season, was written in verse, an influence on Wieners and other playwrights at the Cambridge and New York Poets’ Theatres.

35 Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), Welsh poet; Graham Greene (1904-1991), English writer and critic; and Joyce Cary (1888-1957), Anglo-Irish novelist.
Dear Bob: After the second re-reading.

There will be more to follow, but I thank you so much for your understanding, it’s that horrible business of walking from the studies building to supper, or from bed to the bathroom, that is unbearable. Times like this with paper and type I don’t need anyone. And if it is from the bed to the bathroom that Dana and I walk on, that old road of merely living, the great leveler. I guess that’s why drink is so necessary, not that I am near alcoholism, but drink puts roses on the road. If you let me be poetic today, I will drown you.

Goodbye, for a little while, I wonder in June how much your note will have dug its way.

And it won’t be probably the June of this year.

Tonight at 11 o’clock, it will be exactly 30 months since Dana and I met, on the same tuesday night, 2 ½ years ago. Remember that next Wed. morning. How awfully strange, but I remember more of that morning in the cafeteria than I do of the night before, but I still remember his arms. I am not sad, and if I am, the sadness is the force behind the best poetry, I guess, I have ever written.

If I do send these poems, the only rule I ask you to remember is: Forget what you know a poem is, forget any ideas you have carried into yourself from the outside about what a poem is, or should be. Just ask yourself: what was the author trying to do, has he done it successfully for me, and if not, why, but in that answer to the why, don’t use anybody’s rules but the demands of what you know, from yourself, from your own experience with the same subject that the poet is talking about. Leave every membrane open to the poem itself, rather than suffocating those very important membranes with rules and formulas of what a poem should be.

I am sorry if I keep on repeating myself there but it is so important to someone coming into poetry written today. We don’t know what a “poem” is, thus the reader shouldn’t, above what it does for and to him.

I guess this can be said about the other arts.

As Creeley says: FORM is never more than an extension of content. Thus where does the sonnet come in, an imposed form, an artificial form.

* * * * *

Back from his first term at Black Mountain, Wieners was in Boston at a very exciting time; the Winter/Spring of 1956 saw Boston flush with new energy. Jack Spicer had arrived in December for a very short stint at the Harvard rare books room, joining his old friend from Berkeley Robin Blaser, who was already working at a Harvard library and thriving among the Cambridge literary crowd centered around the Poets’ Theatre. Frank O’Hara too was in Boston, spending the Spring 1956 semester studying at Harvard. These new arrivals worked together with the native Boston poets Wieners, the Dunns, and Steve Jonas, who led lives so louche as to approach a form of magic… uniformly charming, witty, and lovable, they sought poetry by following Rimbaud into a systematic derangement of the
senses, a regime which left little time or inclination for ordinary jobs or schedules.”

Together they formed what Gerrit Lansing called the “occult school” of Boston poetry, fascinated by the occult but also occulted, hidden on the back side of Beacon Hill while Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and their ilk were garnering attention in the more upscale parts of town. It was a Boston Renaissance that was invisible to many Bostonians, though right under their noses; their “newsletter” came with the injunction “Post whatever pages of it poke you in the eye in the most public place you can find – i.e., an art gallery, a bohemian bar, or a lavatory frequented by poets.” These letters from Wieners’ first days back in Boston, to his new friends from Black Mountain, capture a spirit of joy and adventure that would permeate the next year of their lives, as he struggles to maintain community, searching Boston for apartments with Dana, writing and reading with friends. For the visiting Spicer it would be a very trying time – Blaser wrote to Duncan that “Jack isn’t at all well here. The total absence of his admiring juniors leaves him pink and shell-like” – but for the others it was a generative time in their shared youth.

* * * * *

Michael Rumaker [Black Mountain] [Aug 11, 1955] [Milton, MA]

Thursday

Dear Michael:

I got up five minutes ago, washed, went down to see mail (almost psychotic, my need for mail) and opened yours, read, and am excited. How stupid of me to end up with the word ‘clever’. Those things in the story that excite me, (and I call them that,) but I agree with you. Of course they are not clever, but creation.

I came running up here, all excited to write to you, and I begin and go dry – so to warm up, I will start with my own poems. As you can see, machine is beautiful, better now than ever. And yesterday was first day with it, so typed up all poems written since leaving BM. They come to 11 [circled], but like you, I do not know. And the reason for me is, I write them so crazy. I feel hot, or chaotic, so begin writing, and by the finish, it has come out, the thing inside, but they are all written on the moment, and when that ends, usually about 30 mins., I figure, I put it aside, not forgotten, but really unable to touch it again, until I am forced to, or the deadline I have set in my mind has been reached, and then I take them all, and spend an afternoon or a day, tightening, working out lines, watching words, matching words, --- all sort of mechanical and I could do this, over and over, if I have hit a poem that still excited me – like the ‘wreck’ poem, or poems OTHER people seem to be interested in – thus, even those ones from BM have been tightened and mostly always – shortened, brought down to essentials. I hope. I will send the poems off to Olson, probably tonight, also some to you, O.K. and the copy of the ‘wreck’ which I am happy to give.

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36 PBLG 70-1.
37 Quoted in Jarnot 157.
Back to what you have said --- true; / maybe we are talking about same things, but the crux to remember is that if you feel someone has to go, let them, all the way, even though reality might stand in this way. Now what is reality – my using it here I guess means, making people real as they are expected to be, following the laws of real, as we know it, or as the readers know it, or as you know it – rather than letting Billy suddenly (this is nuts) sprout wings and fly. I think I have said it, there. If I wrote, and I dried in the writing, then I would take this way OUT, and it would be easy for me, and maybe this is fault. I think you have told me your ‘raison d’etre’ of writing, and I agree with you. Yeah, you are more than right – ‘that kind of fantasy is backboneless to me, doesn’t give the imagination a chance to set its teeth into something solid: this earth, what’s in it’.

I wish we could touch like that,\(^{38}\) sexually, but until this other one dies in my eyes, even after, I am no good, I am afraid of taking off my clothes in front of anybody else – HEY – maybe that’s why homosexual love or homosexual sex is SOMETHING – because it’s not a blending but a give and going back, each remaining separate, yet, god knows, in contact. And thus, the act is not selfish, as I have been told by the ‘soul-saving’ set, when they tell me, "there is no union, only a giving, so one may take." Who wants to unionize. I give all of me, dangerous or not, when the pull is there, when I KNOW all of me is wanted, -- yet I don’t give up me: and for a prize, I get something else added onto me, whether it be a body or an emotion. I get supplemented.

All that really matters is that the dry spell has broken, and always will break, you want it to that much, so I remember, you writing that you got up every morning, hoping something begins and nothing does, but you must know (you probably do) that the mornings may stretch into months, without it, still it’s there in you – all you need is patience, in those times only, on the hot days, patience with nobody or nothing. Viz. Brancusi quote – you remember – 85\(^{th}\) Canto, I think, something like, those days when I would not give 15 mins. of my time to anything under heaven.\(^{39}\)

I know who this unrequited love is of yours, the one watching the dancers, I can’t see it myself, and I hope you do get tough; so there looks like nothing there, but don’t get hard, hardness means, I suppose, no holes to let it out, use it and then you escape from the dying you. You know I say these things, as much for myself, as for you. I do feel though that all of us, in this, can hear this stuff from each other, it’s our duty to each other, remind each other to keep holes open, mostly through our finger-tips.

Now some news about my plans for Sept. Tomorrow, Dana and I resume apt. hunting on Beacon Hill, something high up, with lots of space and windows. Looked at something in a god-awful tenement, with an hallway, indescribable – 5 flights up, 5 rooms, $55.00 a month. It is too much to pay, so we are eating the landlady down, a Mrs. McGonagle, who is fine as she don’t care what us boys do at night, in fact wants us to make so much noise so as to evict the widow downstairs and her four children. If we can have it at $45. we will take it, and the rooms are wonderful, big and a lot of walking space, and

\(^{38}\) Circled, arrow down to “give and going back”

\(^{39}\) In the 85\(^{th}\) Canto, the first of the “Rock-Drill” section, Pound is referencing avant-garde sculptor Constantin Brâncusi (1876-1957) when he writes:

“One of those days,” said Brancusi,

“when I would not have given

“15 minutes of my time

“for anything under heaven” (579).
room for guests, which I enjoy, especially if from BM. If you can do it for a week, Mike, do it – bus fare from Boston to NY is $5.75, and a midnight train – roundtrip – is less – the Owl, a vacation special. You know, Dana will drive all who can fit, and who want to, back from BM to the North. So far, Herb Ross asked and Joe and Carolyn said – as far as NY, that is, if they don’t get an extension of loan. Things are indefinite there. I know, so make no plans, simply realize that a car will be available for four or so, if they want it.

I am like at the end of a poem, so goodbye for a while and write as soon [“soon” circled] as you want to.

Big polio epidemic here, 80 cases a day, and I have a stiff neck, so begin building an oxygen tank for my arrival.

My love,

John

You Can’t Kill These Machines

Only a paper moon hanging
over
a smashed up body by a squeezed car,
chopped bones and their moaning as sweet music plays
body and soul on the road with blood
on our arms.
A hundred feet up the street his watch
and further a door handle, some chrome
while somebody sits on him to keep his head whole
somebody says his sides are coming out of his shirt.

You, dying under this moon, what would it be for you
on an old road with nobody to hold you,
blackd eyes and mashed hands.

They can carry this other body off,
out of my eyes,
pick up, put in his sides, piece his watch,
but your hair gold in the headlight
chin also
high cheek clean in the beamlight,
this is not in my eyes.

Silver silk is the skin I love to
and thru
the bedroom went the whispering and laughing and lighting
of matches.

Don’t let the matches

40 “You Can’t Kill These Machines” and the following poem, “Ode to the Instrument,” were both published in issue #10 of Floating Bear (edited by Diane di Prima and LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka) in 1961, in an issue devoted entirely to Wieners’ poems.
go for it comes, fear of
shall it be alone or together we get it
some starry blue night
on what highway?

As long as my blood grows cold on the skin I love to
and your good leg is on mine
and a hundred feet up the ditch
somebody else brushes off our mouths,
who cares.

A copy for Michael Rumaker from John Wieners
who was there August, 1955

Ode to the Instrument
I have wanted to write a love poem like the river merchant’s,
and call: I miss your arms under my ear,
small words like sad song, running wine,
there are cold sheets.

I write the news:
we found and ate red plums today, rain, the rivers are full.
I saw your name in a book.
On the deck where I danced one morning
I heard you in the frogs with rain on leaves.
Saturday night I laid down in it,
then walked back wet hoping you were home

Bring curtains for the bedroom.

Why shouldnt it be where?
It is thirteen days now
they bury men on the third.
ago words are better than bitter word
bitter word is you live.

When we step on moths,
do they feel the rip,
I mean does it last?

I wanted to send a love poem.

All I stamp is me with no chains on
asking
how do I go through tonight?
When you’re little you can go sleepy bye bye
and no big feet follow.
But I have put away, I am a man
from laying out my face
in the rain
in the hours where you were.

If you are coming down on the Blue Mountain Skyway,
please mail it soon
and I will come out to meet you
as far as Philadelphia.

for Michel, if he will pardon the sloppiness,
and take it to say Thank You.

John

ON THE FIRST PAGE

Out my window
runs the Neponset, a river enough to be written,
(but bloody from my baby wounds)
Phlox flowers, purple for any passage
or page or poem or whatever
(planted because Mrs. Reddington had yellow phlox)
Green grow the oak trees, giant leaves for publication
(beatings from their branches is not in content or text)
Christmas star, christmas trees, mistletoes and holly
but mother under everything in festival paralysis)
Old linoleum
(she laid on that also
only it was daddy who kept her there those times)
My sister (but she cries at night)
My mates, play and otherwise,
Yes I can sing of tornado nights on fire
With black passion and no dawn
mouths that bleed from kissing.
Oh it was love love love
on our bedroom bathroom living room walls
(but that house full and go boom in the 39 winds)

It seems there’s nothing to sing out
this boyhood window

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“On the First Page” was published, dated 1961, in the collection *Cultural Affairs in Boston* with only the most minor edits (a couple of punctuation changes, the break between lines 16 and 17 is after “with” in *Cultural Affairs*) except that the line “My voice” has been omitted in the published form.
except her
across the street in the blue bushes
my lady of the gold cloak
stringing silver bow and arrows
wanting eyes
waiting for me as for no other.

My voice:
Mother at your feet is kneeling
One who loves you is your child
Mother your altar boy is singing
In sob syllables of sugar breath
Mother cross my hands and hope to
Death,
appropriate me from the living.

Wieners, 55

Robert Greene

Thursday, August 11, 1955
[Milton, MA]

P.S. Come back to us soon, and I would like to hear from you, if you can. Maybe some pleasant Sunday afternoons, or at least Saturday afternoons, or maybe Sunday nights, or Saturday nights, or well, soon, and … we are getting old and far apart.

MY IMPRESSION OF BILL LEWIS

wonderful! and me a poet, and having to say what Joanie Corcoran could. I despair, but grow.

Dear Bob:

This is a short note (I always say that) at the end of a tired day. As you can see, I got typewriter back from the hills, but found it damaged, so repaired but better new now. With new type, felt inspired, so wrote up all poems done since returning from BM, 13 in number, though I don’t know whether one calls them such, at least all, but some I like, and so all typed up, they were sent off to Olson, who I shall see prob. Sept 3rd. Dana and I shall leave Boston the 1st.

Rec’d letter today from Mike Rumaker, prose-maker from BM, and I will be so happy to see them all.

Crazy news, Joe and Bettina and I spent many hours together at B. Burke’s wedding, Joe very generous, also they came here to Milton one night unexpectedly, and unexpectedly, I was in. Wedding, I anticipate. YOU, me and MARIE, Bernie (WOW, all we need is Veronique and the new one, who of course you are bringing back to Boston to live with you in perversion, you, John Homys, and the grand piano/ if you had to go and live in perversion, why not Colby, he pines continually. Enough silliness, but I hope your digs at

42 A friend of Wieners and Greene at Boston College, writer for The Stylus.
Marlborough St. will be happy, though I think crowded. I could not do it in one room, but still, it is a lovely room, and will be easy to keep up.

My plans: Live with Dana on the Hill, apt hunting tomorrow again although we might have something already---5 rooms, 5 flights up, $55.00 a month which of course, is completely out of our limits, so we have to eat her down. I advised D. to sleep with her, a la a Cry of Kids. Maybe with a year’s lease, down to $45.00, lovely windows, though the dingiest hall way ever, reminiscent of Joe’s Huntington Ave. palace but bigger, but God, bigger, with STEAM HEAT, no less, but the floors slope, so hunting again tomorrow and view of the above mention in the daytime. 17 Irving Street might be it, and the landlady wonderful, 30, vivacious, and wanting or notcaring what us fellows do at night, in fact, wants to evict the widow downstairs and her four children.43

Bettinson moved out. Cheap crowd at 38 Grove st now. Big blow-up between Bilver and me, calling him a PETTY SHIT, but clam calm now and friends. He will be gone in 2 weeks.

Gilbert living in Kitty’s old apt.

Heavy correspondence with BM people --- one boy maybe living in Boston in Sept. Dy[ing] to see them/

Vincent, you remember the letter that Veronique sent, and the long answer I was to mail and have written, well, haven’t as I forgot the address, so I know you can squeeze time to jot down again on postcard, where she lives, so I can send it. Also four telephone calls from Rita and letters, but I am afraid to tell her Dana and I in again, and think it is good, Bob, I am complete with him, more so than ever, and I think, he is happy and looking forward to Sept, and we have regained a contact again. I don’t defend him in anyway, but only see, I must say it, I guess I need him.

Bring the new one home, you can afford a mistress. Marie and I spent some wild hours together. I thought she was going to rape me.

Love,
John

---

43 In an interview with Jack Kimball, Wiener later described this early apartment:

our own entrance, on the second-floor, off a tiny winding-staircase. Filigreed

virginian hallway, immaculate and spotless, There were keys to the Spartan

front door. And only three apartments, including a panelled den below, whose

occupant, Lady Rex, worked at Elizabeth Arden’s on Newbury Street, doing

the hair of such celebrities as Tina Louise and Arlene Dahl (n.p.).
floor of a slum, but it is long and light, with steam heat and an extra bed, for week, weekend, or overnight guests. This means you! But more important, I am coming to New York on Friday, Dec. 9th, through Sunday, Dec. 11th, with the Poets’ Theater. No, not acting, not writing, only some sort of stand-in, errand-runner, lackey, usher-type post, but all very exciting for me, and the REAL reason for my activist state. The show is Finnegans Wake, adapted for speakers and chorus by Mary Manning, etc. etc. and to be presented at the Poetry Center Saturday, Dec 10th, and Sunday matinee, Dec 11th. Herb is acting the role of Finnegans, and he too will be in the city, / we hope, staying at the Dunns, address, I think, 407 W. 23rd St.

I have begun a one-act play, finished it too, am still on unemployment, or didn’t you know, since Sept. 20th. Dorn was right, that one never starves in this society. I get 19.00 a week for signing my name, and that’s all, but now, the irony, when I have only two weeks to go, I begin to feel like writing again. NOT a word from me, Mike, all these months, and yet I suffered no great agony. I went to movies, fought, drank, read (a little) etc, but god, what a feeling to be like in the mts. again. It comes on me, usually late at night, like now. That is why I WANT TO SEE YOU. I want to talk, just to be around and active with you, sit in Central Park in big over-coats early Sunday morning, walk to the bookstores, ride the bus up Riverside Drive maybe. I know it’s short notice, but I will manage a place for you to stay, if you can make it. I have not written to Olson, but have read two letters he sent to other people in Boston, one to a young insane friend of mine, a religious (he preaches on Boston Common) near-fanatic, who sent Olson a 20 page poem about his

44 The Poets’ Theatre (1950-1968) was founded by a group of Cambridge poets who all, except for V.R. “Bunny” Lang, were attending Harvard at the time. The group, including Molly Howe, Lyon Phelphs, Richard Eberhart, and John Ciardi, was committed to “experimental plays not likely to obtain commercial production, and to encourage poets to write for the stage and to educate them in the techniques of the theater,” and performed plays by John Ashbery, Lang, Frank O’Hara, and Archibald MacLeish. Famed performances included Richard Wilbur’s translation of Misanthrope and Mary Manning Howe’s adaptation of Finnegans Wake, both in 1955.

45 Asphodel, in Hell’s Despite is a one-act play whose production history features prominently in Wiener’s correspondence with Irving Rosenthal in 1961 (see Wiener’s letter dated November 9, 1961). As he mentions in this letter, the play was written in a flash in 1955.

46 Edward Marshall (1932-2005), whose poem “Leave the Word Alone” appeared in Black Mountain Review number 7 and then in Don Allen’s 1960 anthology The New American Poetry; Ginsberg would later credit it as a strong influence on his own “mother poem,” “Kaddish.” David Abel, whose tireless work on Marshall is bringing about exciting discoveries about this neglected poet, has helped piece together some biography:

He moved to Boston in 1953, where he met and roomed with the poet Stephen Jonas, who introduced him, Marshall was reputed to have said, “to poetry and to love.” Marshall’s other profound love… was religion, and at this time he enjoyed a period of public preaching on Boston Common. Through Jonas, Marshall met John Wieners (recently back from Black Mountain College) and Joe Dunn, and began writing poetry. In late 1955, Marshall sent the recently completed long poem “Leave the Word Alone” to Charles Olson… Olson was very excited by it, and wrote to Marshall: “That’s a fine thing you’ve done here, Marshall – very true, and quick, very thick. It speaks very much. It is very personal and formal at once. And form-wise it is very true – the
insanity, his family tree, his memories of his shuffled childhood, his internment 5 doors from his mother in the same asylum, and Olson showed to Creeley and they are publishing it all in Black Mt. Review #7, since 6 had gone to press, I hope with the PIPE\textsuperscript{47} in it.

The drive from BM to NY with Olson and Creeley last Sept was the most memorable experience of yours I had except for certain nights at BM. I suppose I am being sentimental and pleading, but just to walk around a bit together in the cold would be fine!

And of course, to see Finnegans.

I was down to NY one weekend lasting five days a month ago, but didn’t go near the Cedar’s\textsuperscript{48} or see anyone, except Dunns for 5 mins. as I felt, as explained above.

About trip up, Creeley spent most of it sleeping but Olson and I talked in Back seat re everything from landscape to poetry, or rather be talked.

There is so much to talk of, and it can only be done together in person. Also I will have a food allowance from the Poets’ so we can share that, thus if you are broke, and you are, no doubt, this would help. Bring manuscripts you think we or you would like to show, and I will bring some, too.

You show yours and I’LL show mine.

Another quick and forgive me, dear Mike, for not writing before. I know since you have gone thru it all before you understand (the only word I can find) while I was at the top, you down, re avoidance and contact. PS. Don’t worry about building up a reserve for the weekend, as it will be quiet, and I will make no demands.

DANA TOO.

My love,        JOHN

Michael Rumaker

December 11, 1955

[Boston]

My dearest Mike:

I have just returned from New York, my faded blue coat still on, and your recent-read letter beside me. So I answer to write now, right now, that exactly I knew what I was doing, about you thinking I expected something from you, and my last goddam line was, don’t build up any reserve for this, I’ll have enough for both. Right?

Of course, spontaneity would be killed, and is, by romanticizing over the past, and therefore always running running after and over losing the wonder of the present. I didn’t rely on anything from the past for us, our meeting, I JUST wanted TO SEE YOU AGAIN, YOU ME AGAIN, and walk in grey overcoats in Central Park????(why grey overcoats, why

peopling, the protests, the end.” The following spring it circulated among students at the college (including Michael Rumaker); Robert Duncan, in an interview, recalled that at the time it was “the exciting poem for everybody at Black Mountain” (n.p.)


The Cedar Tavern (1866-2006), bar and restaurant that served as locus for downtown New York culture, especially to the Abstract Expressionists and Beats who gathered there when it was located at 24 University Place, between 1945 and 1963. Condominiums now stand in the Tavern’s place.
Central Park), just my idea of what eventually or bringing it to now, what naturally we should do.

I felt I wanted to say that to you before I went to bed, so now I will take off my blue coat and sleep.

A little news:
I do not hear from Ed Dorn and doubt if I ever will, I never will have anything to say to him to prompt an answer, I am sure, yet I miss them both very much, have nightmares on subject. I want his address, if you will send it, Mike, it will give me maybe some night, when drunk, the chance to send a letter.
In New York, finally bought In The American Grain.49
I suppose you have seen Creeley’s new book, Robbery,50 even if it is seen signed.
Jo and Carolyn very unsteady together. He is going back to BM in January, she in March, fighting like crazy.
Lorraine and Harvey to be married this Sunday. Baby in April.
And like the boy and girl from the fairy tales, she looks like a madonna, truly, her face all clean and very radiant. She never has looked lovelier, as they probably say in your Ad Agency.

Goodnight, now, Mike.

Michael Rumaker

New Year's Day, 1956
[Boston]

Dear Michael:

I have just returned from a movie-house called the Rialto, which is the refuge for a good percent of the old, the poor, the cold, the drunk, the perverted of the city.51
They go there to keep warm and the management keeps the place cold. I have walked home in the cold, my ears freezing, and my coat like a piece of paper around me, and I thought, what if I had no place to go, no place but the Rialto.
Now as I sit here, I can’t imagine the cold any longer, it doesn’t exist, I’m not in it, my ears are thawed, my coat is on the couch, yet I feel guilty because the old men are still out in it. I feel guilty because I don’t do any writing and justify my existence. Every day of my life, half of it is taken up with when will I begin. I blame Dana for it, I blame Boston, the neighborhood I live in. I think of myself holed up in some romantic little room, alone, on a schedule, but I know too well I can’t ever accept that kind of life. This letter sounds like it

49 William Carlos Williams’ essay collection In the American Grain, first published in 1925, went largely neglected (except by champions like D.H. Lawrence and Charles Olson) until it was reissued in 1956 by New Directions.
50 Robert Creeley’s 1955 release, All That is Lovely in Men, was a limited edition published by Jonathan Williams’ Jargon Society. Featuring illustrations by Dan Rice, the 200-copy run was signed by both Rice and Creeley.
51 The Rialto, theater and popular cruising spot in Boston’s Scollay Square. One patron remembers it fondly in Improper Bostonians: Gay and Lesbian History from the Puritans to Playland: I met some wonderful people in there. A lot of very butch straight men would go for a little relaxation and to meet someone. You saw two full length features, the news, coming attractions, and serials all for a quarter. You could be there all day (167).
comes from one just beginning, and yet I’m not just beginning. I been on this thing for years, and nearly all of those years I have wasted, I mean, the time of those years. It’s so strange. If I sat down and went back and wrote those years, day by day, down, and read them in a book, I would say: what an exciting life, ooh, what I wouldn’t give, that’s what I want --- still all this crap, this anxiety and worry, over waste mainly, is the biggest waste. It drives one out for distraction, never to more work. You think I wasted so much. I can just kill a few more hours, and that’s what you do, kill it, bury, smother.

I long to be back in Black Mt. I worked harder there. I think of myself there in pain, I seek out pain for myself,

why need thee weep? thus the affinity to torching it up, I can’t face the music, but let’s face it, John, the stuff is pretty sweet to the men sleeping in the Rialto open all night.

I know the cure:

get out of here. get into something vital, leave it, and then weep all night because I left it behind me. One great lifetime of self-pity and the poetry to come out of it, what will it be but dirge, lament for John, that’s the kind of poetry I want to write, UNTIL I come up to the real stuff of pain like cold on the ears. I really think physical pain is the hardest, the mental brings tears, but the other blood, and that’s what I need in my veins. Now right now, I am not in pity, I am just trying to see me, and deep down a resolution is coming, of course, New Year’s, but it does want to put me out into the cold and remember it, and remember that I get cold very seldom, and the rest is unimportant.

So the bed’s unmade and Dana isn’t fleshy anymore and I’m not at Black Mt. and I want Olson to teach, etc. etc. still I’m warm, I’m Bohemian, I write, I’m young, and I am going to remember that the cold is hurting people, whether I make a poem or not, still that poem can help somebody’s cold. A new anti-histamine.

Michael Rumaker

January 22, 1956

[Boston]

Dear Mike:

After having read your three letters – since Dec.

You are very real to me, now, Mike.

Of course, Charles, is right, and if this is turned into you, the result will be exciting, more of the oyster fork from the Pipe, the shimmy dance from that ghost off the balcony, but please, don’t limit yourself even to a subject. I will go that far, yes, start, blank, I don’t mean, not knowing what you are going to write, but blank as to what your limits are. You see, I write now, after reading these letters, because you can’t be dead. You mentioned in the 12-25- one that on Xmas morning you woke with a sore throat, caught somewhere the night before. The play goes out to you tomorrow night, and this will be in, it.

I do remember my letter to you re letting it rip, and I was right, I know, and you, too, because there is ground we have to stay on, but it’s the ground of ourselves, and that land is mud, and we keep sucking up all kinds of things that we didn’t know lay there, and the only way to do it is go right down, head first, mouth open, into it. And then spit it out all over white paper, let it dry, and scrape, with your fingers, over and over, the rough edges off, except the interesting rough and cake, which must stay.

You are in BM #6? You never said. It is “consolation,” and this I need. You know, the “consolation” of being told, POET, go on, and by people like O. I wrote a poem called, the Big Man In the Mt. which I haven’t finished, otherwise, you’d have seen it. My stuff is
scattered to Boston people. I’m such a good talker they all want to read it, but they don’t ask for seconds. When I get it back, you will have it, you experienced soul. I don’t know, still, why he ever liked it.

Well, you have the 18 pages, so now, you let loose, but Christ, don’t get tired, and beat, and sleep 12 hours a day, and get the leaks fixed.  

John  

Michael Rumaker  

January 22, 1956  

[Boston]  

My dear Michael:

Enclosed find two letters, part of them, to you. You know me, by now, and I have to send them, cuz I can do no more. It’s just that sitting down in front of this typewriter is such a pain, most of the time. And yet, what do I do away from it. Fuck.

What a shock to hear about the hospital, and God, I hope you get out soon, now I hope you are out. I have the stupid fear, right now, that maybe you are dead (that yellow liquid in the lung sounds awful) I am always this way with people who aren’t near me. I am afraid they could die so easy, but you won’t,  

YE

T.                  John, dear, please stop, I’m getting itchy from death.

On to the pleasant subject. I am free. The play is done, after, imagine it, two months, me 2 mos. on one thing. I send you the ORIGINAL, not the revised, which has all the long speeches split up for the theatre. If the thing is ever done, they will be danced, and the words will be recited offstage as musick. So it’s not a fair copy I send you. But I send Olson both. OK? And there are only 2 copies of the 2nd. Send Dorn’s address? And if I can sometime think of, or feel something I am satisfied with, I will write him. That is why I can’t write to him, because he said to me in Sept. that I had never said anything to him that prompted an answer. BUT they were beautiful letters, filled with internal rhyme and reminiscence? and now look, he prob. has ripped them up. But I have ONE thing to say. I am going back to BM, in June, alone, for poss. six months, to return in Dec? and resume sinful relations with DD, then as plans go, six months later, when he graduates, to go back, the two of us, if Olson is still there.

Therefore, you must come here before June, or I must come to NY to see you. NOW I am NOT looking for anything from you, but to see you and walk with you, and say nothing, just knowing we are on the same street.

And if you can’t come before June, why I will simply stop off wherever you are, and visit you, that is, Michael …. I won’t think of it. I am perverse in too many ways. Death is really one of them, and it’s all selfish. Maybe you will go on to peace, and the beautiful oblivion of Lawrence. Ship of Death? You’ve read it? Talk about it in the next letter? I mean you talk.

52 D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930), a British modernist writer whose prose, poetry, and critical writing were essential to Olson and, through Olson’s influence, Wieners. In his essay “D.H. Lawrence and the High Temptation of Mind,” written in 1950 – the same year as “Projective Verse” – Olson calls Lawrence a master of “moral perceptions,” which are “so instantaneous as to be immeasurable in time” (CP 135). In his Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn (1955), he recommends Lawrence’s Studies in Classic American Literature, his 1923 masterpiece examining the lively “spirit of place” in early and antebellum American literature. Lawrence’s bold, iconoclastic style had enormous influence on Olson’s work (most notably 1947’s Call Me Ishmael) and poetics.
Now, having sent this play, which follows, as they say, under separate cover, I hope, that means, I deserve something from you, and I will return it.

1. BM #7 has a 20 page poem by a Boston discovery, an Ed Marshall, who is going to BM too, poss, in March, and at latest in June. Herb says there are more there now, than were last summer? And the place will break 30 in this summer.

Do you have any dope on whether Olson will hang on? And how long? It’s a worry. Also, what is Dorn now, and where? Helene is a beautiful girl, when I see one, her type, I am filled up with them again.

YOU and them, the most of all, Michael, and of course, Charles and funny, Connie, too, and Freddie. Now John, dear, sentiment? Also, Mike, my sending the play necessitates you saying something or everything about it.

Your line about the arms of the attendants is shaking, no, shattering and to put you on any letter, especially since, I am left with the feeling you are not strong enough to resist. Maybe that’s not too bad.

I have a new Billie Holliday, My Man, Stormy Weather, She’s Funny That Way, beautiful selection. I shall bring it with me whenever we meet.

You know a possibility. Boston is cheap to live in, but I can’t force this, also office work in bundles.

75 Phillips --- vacant March 1st. 2 rooms, fireplace, all util. furnished. $40 a month, where Herb lived. Really nice, small, not too quiet. and that kind of landlord, also all tenants, except the couple on his floor, were, well, I guess, fairies.

No pushing, though, just remember one avenue.

I wrote to Charles too, tonight, and I did know about NY. Herb has also written.

Shall I send him your address? When will Charles be back at BM. I don’t think it’s all winter. Herb says 2 more weeks? Dunns there also, not Carolyn, who comes, I hear, back to Boston from 407 W. 22nd Street in March.

My love to you Michael, and I hope you are out.

And send me your plans.

PS. Now comes the typical Wieners apologetic postscript. On re-reading, this sounds so quick and … well, I don’t know, but I want to get word to you quick, to get out, and not despair, and I am close to you, now.

I have just read for the first time, since I wrote them, the other 2 letters. And I wrote that one, on NY’s day, with you being admitted, and me slobbering, and you comatose in a cot. Oh Christ, I have to laugh, John. Mike, I thank you for your patience. And poor Dana. Well, go on and read them. The second one has really given me a boost.

John finally

53 1953’s An Evening with Billie Holiday, her second studio album.
Charles Olson  
February 8, 1956
[Boston]

Dear Charles:

I have tried to write this letter so often. I began it last Nov. and thought about it nearly every day since then. Why is that? I think I feel no matter what I say, it’s inadequate to being there. Me there is what I want to say. And if I can, could I be there for June? I will have the money, at least most of it (I will send exact figure in May). I know you’ll say, June, who can tell where any of us will be? but BM is where I’ll be, if it’s alright.

The reason why this letter now is I can send you something. It’s a play, in 2 versions, one (the 2nd) written after the suggestion of one Ed Thommen to make it a “dance play”, that is have the characters dance the words, with voices off stage speaking. Also there are two poems, yes, that’s all I’ve done since Last…??? Sept?!

Another question, I don’t know why? Life is too easy. I am warm and eat well, and sleep “well”, and I think and think why. This is the dry season, etc. You told me once I milked the tits of the world and they would go dry someday. But… if it’s because I’m content like the pig, and it only comes out of agony, well, how long do you last? I don’t think I really care.

The “Big Man on the mt.” is you.
That’s something I’ve done.
And the play does make me happy. It’s the first long thing I’ve been able to complete. But not enough, I know, not ever enough, I guess. Marshall is wavering, what with finances and religion, but still says Yes.

And Jonas is firm. I don’t know when for either.

I met a woman here, who I think still is fine. She is Helen Neville, and after a few conversations, wrote to you re a position. She said she was once a friend of Dahlberg.

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54 This letter, from the John Wieners Papers at the Burns Library of Boston College, was unsent.
55 Edward Thommen was artistic director of the Cambridge Poets’ Theatre, and in 1961 he would help “resurrect” the Provincetown Playhouse.
56 “Big Man on the Mt.” remains unpublished.
57 Steve Jonas (1925-1970), American poet and fixture on the Bohemian north side of Beacon Hill. He befriended Spicer and Blaser during their Boston sojourn, remaining close to Wieners and Dunn, whom Wieners introduced to Jonas at Olson’s 1954 reading. An autodidact with broad interests, Jonas’s apartment was a place for poets and “a nexus of various underworld activities,” as Joe Torra notes in his illuminating introduction to Jonas’s Selected Poems. In his 1965 introduction to Jonas’s Transmutations, Wieners laments the destruction wrought by urban renewal, talks about the growing national debt, and remembers that: “You cannot move / faster than the shutter of my mind. / Those old elms bend over / the street and form an arch / that we walk under. / Sad priests in the 20th century. / We began the second half / together.” He died unexpectedly on February 10, 1970, exactly a month after Olson passed away.
58 Helen Neville, American poet and publisher, one of ten New York poets to be given Federal Writers’ Project funds specifically to continue to work on their own poetry. With Harry Roskolenko she founded The Exiles’ Press, which released The Exiles’ Anthology: American and British Poets in 1940.
he would say that he thought all writers should be expunged, except one Charles Olson, and so she was excited by whatever I had to tell her. re Charles Olson That is why she wrote. I don’t think she mentioned this in the letter, which might have been pretty stiff, and loaded with all she could do, and did underneath. She merits a good chance, because she’s sincere and wants a Black Mountain.

Also another, Charles Smith, reads all he can get of you. A poet, “Botteghe Oscura” but writes and loves mostly like Wallace Stevens.

I just want you to know that, above anything else I can ever tell you. You knew it anyway. Somebody like me doesn’t get what those three months gave, and walks away to a less-kind of world. He walks with it between him and the ground, but it wears out, unless… So if you say, yes, it’s yes.

I wish I could say more about Marshall, but he is tentative and the main north pole is his Church. But he has gone on writing, a very long one on the results of his leaving 38 Grove and your publishing him.
I keep after him to send it to you, and he will.
I have done some reading; and write to Mike, quite often. He is well now, but with a large medical bill.
Whatever else I write that passes, I will send you before June, so there will be, is it “tabula rasa”? I think of it as this thing just gestating, waiting for summer to, like summer, ooze out of everywhere.

I work for a few more weeks, checking coats in the Boston Library, 5 mornings. I never went back to waitering. He laid me off, and I was on unemployment until January.
And that’s all I did. 2 poems. Please, write, if you can, and say whatever you can re play.

Yours---love---John

Michael Rumaker [March 2, 1956] [Boston]

Dear Michel:

I am writing this, because it is three in the morning, and I feel I have to write, but am dry of “inspiration,” yet the mind is going. Why I am dry of the poem is, yesterday, I sent off to Olson, the play, all the poems, 3 or 4 finished ones, since October!, a batch of un-done

Edward Dahlberg (1900-1977), American writer originally from Boston. At various times a soldier, day laborer, expatriate in Paris, and anthropologist, he taught briefly at Black Mountain College. In “Projective Verse,” Olson credits Dahlberg as the one who “first pounded into my head… ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION.” Their passionate and contentious correspondence was collected in 1990 for In Love, In Sorrow, edited by Paul Christensen in 1990 (Paragon House).

ones, and the great impetus of getting all these things ready for him produced in me 2,
maybe three, I think of the best things I have ever done.

I don’t know what they are. Poems – or prose – or super-real or what. I can’t hardly
remember writing them, I mean, what was in them, only that I desperately wanted to speak
to him. And I am still in the euphoria of accomplishment.

Olson once said to me that most Americans bored him, because they refused to
deliver the goods of soul. It is true. I didn’t know it at the time, but now I do, having read
more of the contemporary…
So I am going at people like Cocteau – The Diary of an Addict, or the formal – Opium, the
diary of an addict.61

Appolinaire; selected writings – ed and trans. by Roger Shattuck, one of the
“Cambridge poets” hereabouts, real base and academic stuff the introduction, but Guillaume?
himself is very exciting.62 It is a New Directions book. Another one of Cocteau’s is “Call to
Order” critical essays up to 1926 with a fine one in it re Picasso, who himself is a delight.

I turn to these men only for the reason of exasperation with that which is at hand, namely
the Donald Hall’s and the Richard Wilbur’s63 surrounding me in this sterile Boston, or
rather, it is Cambridge area.

Also the little (125 pages) of Jane Harrison’s prolegomena64 has been opening the new world.

And Lawrence – The fantastic Kangaroo,65 the most exciting novel I have ever read, oh that
is so inadequate. I say, I experience all of Kangaroo because of Lawrence – that it// the
experience of “Kangaroo” has been great, quantity-wise.

61 Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), French poet, writer, artist, and filmmaker whose Opium: the Diary
of an Addict was published in 1929 (in the United States in 1932) with his own illustrations.

62 Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), French poet and art critic whose writings were
indispensable in the formation of Modernist poetry and painting, especially Cubism, and the
branch thereof that he called “Orphic Cubism.” His Selected Writings were edited and
translated by Roger Shattuck (1923-2005) for New Directions in 1948. Wieners would later
address these writings and art explicitly in his 1958 poem “The Windows” (see Wieners’
letter to Olson, May 4, 1958). Allen Ginsberg’s “At Apollinaire’s Grave,” published in
Kaddish and Other Poems 1958-1960, recalls a visit with lover Peter Orlovsky to Pere Lachaise
cemetery, crying “Guillaume, Guillaume how I envy your fame, your accomplishment for
American letters … come out of the grave and talk through the door of my mind / issue
new series of images.”

63 Donald Hall (b. 1928) and Richard Wilbur (b. 1921), American poets and critics, both Poet
Laureates of the United States at various times. Both writers’ well-crafted verse was
unavoidable in the 1950s and 60s.

64 Jane Harrison (1850-1928), British classics scholar and feminist pioneer whose 1903
Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion was central to modern Greek mythology studies.
Primary to her study was a foregrounding of ritual as a way to understand myth, an approach
whose absence Wieners will later lament when reading Samuel Noah Kramer (see his letter
to Charles Olson of September 22-23, 1957). Olson dedicated his poem “A Newly
Discovered ‘Homer’ Hymn” to “Jane Harrison, if she were alive” (Collected Poems 363).

65 D.H. Lawrence’s novel Kangaroo was published in 1923.
Also of course, the approaching of June, the realization that I shall soon be a part again of this budding thing, this thing on the black mountain, not Olson alone, but what he grows there, out of the dirt in his fingernails, as I say in a poem to him ‘The Big Man on the Mountain’.

the blood of him his wheeze on me
his dirty fingernails
with violets in their dirt
I pick and hand to you

My own life is good. The last week working nights until seven in the morning, that is, writing, then sleep, and take my morning walk under neon lights, going the other way from the boys and girls returning from the typewriters. The life, of course, which excites me, the life of counter current.

But if I get to the black mt., I have to have money, so the last two days I have tried to find work, and so depressing, if I let it, which don’t, but still an agony, I have to go through. To counter-set it, I went on a binge tonight at the library, with abt. 10 books, all exciting, which I dip or rip into middle, end, beginning.

Tomorrow the pavements.
June the world.

But I want
very much to hear about you, and whether you have made yourself well again.

And of course, the writing, maybe some of the poems, if any, you have done, you could send, as I possibly could help on them, that sounds pompous, but at least, I cd. make a critique on them, but I wd. like to get something, which I wd. return, so don’t worry abt. making a special carbon. Just something to make you alive to me again. I am a funny one for that. With you least of all, though. All the others are dead. Tom, a little breathing, and Dorn much more, but still not alive, so I can’t write to a dead man. I wish I could write to him, and he wd. send pictures of Fred, or Helene — no no — that is so sentimental of me, but still, whether they have changed.

Your mention that he might come east is exciting, to get settled. Maybe he is only 250 miles away, as I write.

The more I read of Lawrence, the more I see Lawrence in Dorn. I think of them together, often. The walk Dorn had, that walk as if he was going through underbrush.

Well, now I wait for Olson, maybe no answer until I see him in June, and I hope he is there (any inform. you have re this I would love to hear) but I think from the nature of stuff I sent, I will get an answer. It was immediate, and I hope, lift him under the arms, like he said of one of my poems, once did.

The BMR? When? I never know on this St. Williams Island. Are you sending others out? I sent two early RHYMED and traditional trashy poems to the NYer and 4 days later,

66 Tom Field (1930-1995), American artist. An Army medic in Korea, Field studied painting under Joseph Fiore at Black Mountain from 1953 to 1956, after which he moved to San Francisco and worked among other Bay Area artists generally ignored by the New York-centric art-world. With Alberto Saijo, Lew Welch, and Philip Whalen, he founded a Zen Buddhist community called Hyphen House.
had a rejection slip. That is all. But I do want publication, somehow, maybe, it’s only the need of the winter, which the high mt. air will cure.

I have talked enough, yet still I can’t sleep, I am doomed to another dawn, but I send this now, so I can have your answer, I hope soon/

Thank you for the pleasure you gave me in your letter re “Asphodel”. I think what it did for you, your letter of joy did for me.

What I tried to do was to show that LOVE survives in hell’s despite, in the lovers’ despite, in the audience’s – that with our hate, it is love, with our selfishness, it is love, with each generation, each recurrence of the pattern, each dialogue, each triteness and lust, it is still there, as DH said, the call, and the answer. In the 2nd version, this is clarified and a happy note, is that BM or rather Herb wants to do it this summer, from which I will learn so much, and which will be exciting.

My love to you, very warm now,

John

* * * * *

Wieners spent his the Summer of 1956 at Black Mountain College, his second and last term there. The school was down to ten students, living on meager rations but always working together, producing at the end of the quarter Robert Duncan’s play Medea at Kolchis. It was the first time Duncan and Wieners spent together – he’d been away during Wieners’ first term there – and they had an instant connection, both openly gay, both inspired by the Orphic mysteries, the romance of Mary Butts and H.D., as well as the Projective poetics of Olson. It was another pivotal season for Wieners, a crucible of “dreadful freedom” – as he reports back exhaustedly in this next letter to Robert Greene, “I can’t believe that I am only 22.”

* * * * *

Robert Greene

Thursday, August the 9th, 1956
[Black Mountain, NC]

Mon Cher Robert:

Just came back from the sunlight, blinded from reading your lovely letter in it, and felt I had to write again to you. I realize how much has been denied me by not knowing French, and something just has to be done about it, if only to take those silly extension courses again next year. The summer feels from here that it has been good to you. For me also, all or nearly all the anxiety has been lost, and even when it hung the heaviest on me, it must have strengthened as it bore me down, because, so many are unable to last here. We

67 This letter is written on the Black Mountain “Curriculum of the Soul” stationery, cream paper with ancient glyphs.
have had one party (I talk social, because it is such an integral part here) and after that one
party, as I think I told you, one boy left, in complete frustration and loneliness, and another
had himself committed to the bughouse in Asheville. Another had left the week before, and
Herb leaves tomorrow. The principle of the place is to push one to his limits, to force him
to earn his own way, in all phases, and the result is: that the man either runs away,
breakdowns, or survives endures to do his best work. And the principle is none other than
that of “freedom”. No one really knows just how far they can go, so they go too far, one, if
he is driven that way, goes too far. And I endure. Along with about six or seven others.
That’s all. And the crazy thing is, that it doesn’t matter, what with the peace one finds after.
And the pace, “the beautiful monotony” of the place. The french poetry course sounds as if
it could not be better. Appollinaire even in translation is an excitement. Michaux I have
only heard of but he was featured in that issue of Origin, I showed you with Rene Char. He
also paints, and check on this. I find out from a new student here that Michaux has given up
his poetry, and only paints now? It wd. be interesting to find out why. 68

That wonderful touch you mention of knowing personally that men
discussed in class, has always been the thing I think I enjoyed the most. And Lennie could
always convey that illusion, as if they had just written the poem last night and read it to him
over lunch that afternoon. That was the “glamor” of his teaching.

French theatre I am completely ignorant of. Yes, Cocteau’s “Infernal
Machine” is translated. Never read it, but BU, I think, did a job on it last year.

Francoise seems like a personification come true. But more that, Robert, if
she comes into that world of “friend”
(Duncan just walked by, he serves as cook for three of us now, since Basil left) Olson’s new book, “The Maximus Poems 11-22” came out last month, and he read it

68 Rene Char (1907-1988), French poet sometimes associated with the Surrealists, whose works
often concerned the Hermetic traditions and were translated by several of the New
Americans. His poem “The Lace of Montmirail” was translated and published by Cid
Corman in Origin #11. Henri Michaux (1899-1984), Belgian-French poet and artist known
for his India ink and sepia drawings and paintings. In 1955, Michaux took French citizenship
and began a period of exploration with mescaline and a form called “all over” paintings,
lacking a fixed center, including 1956’s Mescalin Painting.

69 Basil King (b. 1935), British-born American painter and writer who arrived at sixteen to
study art at Black Mountain College before marrying Martha Winston (b. 1937), a writer and
student at the college, and moving to New York City. His signature style can be found on
the cover designs of many books and small magazines, including the pivotal Yugen. His
recent memoir, Learning to Draw / A History, interlaces poetry and prose to create a vivid
introductory text to his body of work. In addition to her fiction and poetry, Martha Winston
King has published several remarkably insightful memoir pieces, recently in Jacket and
BlazeVox.
to us entire, which was a charge. Five times through. I felt I had to run home and begin pecking on the typewriter.

BMR # 6 has been out two months, and they all have stuff in it, even Rumaker has a long story in it. He’s the boy from Philly, with whom I spent two days, and who has just left here after his week’s vacation. When he was in classes, like last week, one lasted (Olson’s) until ten minutes to three in the morning. From 9 on. # 7 will be out this winter and Marshall will be in it, alongside such people as Herbert Read, Edward Dahlberg, 70 and W.C. Williams.

When you are thirty-five, your time for being very young, you will feel, ends when you touch 29. I do know what you mean. I can’t believe that I am only 22.

It was a new birth, and I can’t say anything about it at all for once, because you said it so beautifully.

I go out for breakfast now, with only three weeks remaining here. I approach my leaving here with great joy and great fear, but I would not have it any other way. Dana writes once:

“PS. Let’s buy a dog” and we will, Robert, we will. I feel I have just gotten off a tight-rope wire over Niagara Falls, and go down now for the honeymoon. I hope I do not hex myself by my optimism.

love
John

Mon cher Robert:

After the long silence --- no excuse --- but I hardly think outside the immediacy of this place. Thus each day ends with a tired groan.

I take 4 mornings 4 afternoons (sometimes) and 1 evening with Duncan on Meaning and Content (the poem) and Basic Technique (the poem) and Rimbaud (The Illuminations), also 1 morning spent in his reading from The Poets – Thomas Hardy, W.C. Williams, and Yeats, so far.

Happy to hear you on Appollonaire. Tell me more about Hoag?? and the others you are doing. Of course, by the time you get this, the session will be ended. Shattucks

70 Sir Herbert Read (1893-1968), English radical poet and critic. His contentious correspondence with Edward Dahlberg was published by New Directions in 1964’s Truth is More Sacred.
translation, I hear, of him, is quite juiced up, while Mme. Varese’s translation of Rimbaud, is quite dried down/ I can’t get R’s Madame X. out of my mind, she who set up her piano in the Alps.

Heard from O’Hara with all kinds of leads for the fall in NY, but I will be most happy to return to Dana. I don’t feel any diminishing of feeling for the same, but as usual, you musn’t tell the old dear, even tho he knows. Duncan met him, liked him, and of course, Duncan and I are fine friends. I always make one. Dana was with George when we met one morning, and afterwards, Duncan asked me who the dishrag [arrow to George] was! NP—For four weeks here Gilbert sent no money, and it was near starvation. No butts, no food, oatmeal for days, and finally, I was forced, along with my kitchen-sharers, one of whom left after the last party, to boost groceries from the A&P. Which practice has stopped, since Gilbert sent down the money in post-dated checks. Also Atty. Rosenberg came thru.

My own actual production has been slow – but I feel I have already learned more essential ingredients (substance) in 4 wks. here, than 4 mos. of reading in Boston. Next year, or beginning in Sept. after we get settled, I will bring it to use.

I had no trouble adjusting to the tenor of life here, although some do break, when faced with the “dreadful freedom” we all face today, though lesser extreme out there than here. After our 1st and last party, the above mentioned Basil King left, in complete frustration and loneliness another boy [several words redacted in manuscript] had himself

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71 In the first section of Rimbaud’s Illuminations (via the 1946 Louise Varèse translation), “As soon as the idea of the Deluge had subsided,” among many apocalyptic reactions, “Madame*** installed a piano in the Alps. Mass and first communions were celebrated at the hundred thousand altars of the cathedral” (5).

72 Frank O’Hara (1926-1966), American poet whose work and social acumen were crucial in forming what became known as the New York School of poets, his close affiliation and collaboration with New York painters was largely facilitated by his work as an assistant curator at the Museum of Modern Art. He befriended Wieners when the two worked together at the Cambridge Poets’ Theatre the summer of 1956, and he helped Wieners place his first published poem, “With J.R. Morton,” at a magazine called Semi-Colon. The two remained close friends until O’Hara’s death in 1966; Wieners’ poignant memoir of their friendship, “Chop House Memories,” was published by Bill Berkson and Joe LeSueur in the collage-style Homage to Frank O’Hara in 1980.
committed to the bug house in Asheville, and the week before, a boy called Graystone, a painter, left for the same reasons as Basil. But we keep getting new students all the time.

Herb Ross leaves too Aug. 10, without his degree, and without producing my play. That was part of his graduation plan, but the faculty did not feel he was ready yet for it, so he was told he wd. have to wait, maybe six months, and WORK. He leaves, though, and I guess they all feel, GOOD. Even Herb does.

I meet with Olson twice a week – one night on manuscripts (I get a poem out a week) and one night on Myths and Fairy Tales. In fact, both teachers have centered for the summer, around [ditto marks up to Fairy Tales]. In Duncans today, we traced Snow White back to Persephone, Eve (the apple!) and Oedipus (he was abandoned, remember, like her, and was ordered put to death, like Snow White.

Olson read us Alcestis yesterday. If you don’t remember, we had it, I think, in Soph. Greek. I didn’t remember until about 20 lines down in the translation, which is intolerable.

For relaxation, this week, I made a large (3’ by 3’) collage or montage of Great Greta Garbo. I cut out various poses of same and transposed them onto other situations for ex. GreatGG over a gold cross, GG on a Grecian column, in a wheat field, in an exploding atom, in a river, etc. Also I acquired a lovely small red and gray painting, framed, which I carry back home.

I WROTE TO VERONIQUE. I don’t know why. Has there been anything comparable for you this summer? I have kept this a pretty-one-way letter, I know, but answer it anyway, if you get time, I understand, and you can make yours your way.

I guess you will live at home this year, until the Army calls, but it seems so unnecessary now, that possibly, there will be a long wait? Dana writes you plan Philly on Sept. 6th. It is not a particularly interesting town, do you think, but then again, I don’t suppose Boston really ever is, either, except, to the natives, like we fools.

Love to you Robert,

John

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73 Wallace Grey Stone, who introduced himself to the others as Greystone, was an eccentric young man, even among Black Mountain’s quite eccentric student body. Beyond the fact that he was a painter who later married and had children, little is known about Greystone.

74 Like everything else at Black Mountain College, graduation was unusual. After meeting with his primary advisor and agreeing to a program of study and work, the student would meet again with the advisor for examinations. Rumaker went through the full process with advisor Michael Rumaker (detailed wonderfully in *Black Mountain Days*), but Wiener was only at Black Mountain for two non-consecutive terms, already having graduated college, so his evaluations came directly and informally from teachers Olson and Duncan, as they would for many years.

75 In the indispensable *Charles Olson’s Reading*, Ralph Maud notes that Wesley Huss had given Olson the 1953 Penguin Classics edition of Euripides’ Three Plays: *Hippolytus; Iphigenia in Tauris; Alcestis*, tr. Philip Vellacott (272 n.12).
Robert Greene  Sunday, august 19 1956  
[Black Mountain, NC]

Mon cher Robert:

Just to write and say it is the night of the full moon, and here today, all day, everyone feels it. I don’t know why. Eloise stays in the house and says she wants to see no one, Duncan is afraid to go home and write because of what might happen in his play, Olson won’t answer his door, Eric stays in bed and reads. I didn’t look for these things, but earlier I couldn’t explain my own mood either. I walked all day, in here, out there, anywhere, filled with some kind of worry, old fears about the future, and then I wondered why all these others were acting so closed in. I blamed it on the grey Sunday, until I went out a few minutes ago. It is 8:30 PM and the roads are nearly as bright as daytime, and I look up, and there’s the answer, with an orange ring round her, the full moon. What else can I use to explain it, this caged atmosphere. I want to go, be off, see something different, but all one can do is wait for it to pass. I wonder if tonight you feel, think back when you read this, anything similar. You must be under the same moon.

Much has happened since I last wrote. I definitely stay until the end of the month, as I have been given a lovely part in Duncan’s new play. It is Arthur, the author, a combination of W.B. Yeats, Pound, Olson, a man filled with fanaticism, fantasy, old dreams, Eloise Mixon and Erik Weir were students at Black Mountain College. Mixon was a poet and actress “who had not yet written a poem,” Duncan remarked, but who had “natural measure in the syllabic line… in workshop exercises [at BMC] Eloise’s performance was considerably ‘better’ than my own.” Mixon moved West after Black Mountain, and Duncan wrote her a part in each of his plays after Medea at Kolchis: The Maidenhead, the play Wieners is discussing in this letter (Ellingham and Killian 85). In his 1963 preface to Medea, Duncan writes that BMC theatre instructor Wesley Huss asked him, the summer of 1956, to present a new play, and he decided to work on the story of Medea as “a pubescent girl” with “obsessive passion pre-figuring the woman’s wrathful jealousy.” He envisioned Arthur (the role in which Wieners alternated with Louis Marbury on the production’s two nights) as “a last remnant of Pre-Raphaelite kings living on in the art-nouveau last stage… There is no scene in which he is not playing the mask of the poet.” In the Black Mountain production (August 29th and 30th, 1956) Edna was played by Eloise Mixon, Erik Weir played “The Doctor,” and the old woman Garrow was played by Wes Huss (Collected Early Poems and Plays 593-597).
and ONE new hope. What a part! So to play it, alternating with another boy, I must stay until the last week.

Here in only one speech:

Arthur: You have been in this house all your life. Haven’t you ever loved someone?
Edna: I loved Father… and you.
Arthur: I mean been in love. Something more.
Edna: Perhaps once. With Boris. But it was not more. And you, Arthur?
Arthur: I have been in love with all beautiful resistant things, with women who knew nothing of love but who walked in pride. Yet one proud woman I have heard among the dead a whimpering shade.
Edna, I have desired! I have needed, been deprived, suffered! But Love? No. Not loving someone or being in love. But desired, needed, been deprived of, suffered for – a speech, an articulation of the human thing. Even from Pride, women fall away, from the proud woman, into some insufficiency. A self! A person! I have come to loath all person because it corrupts, reduces, cripples the man or woman that is a magnificent figure.
I do not crave, I have not craved, love – what that woman whimpered for, what the spawn of man crawls under. I have craved… no, not pride either. Pride, like Love, is a crawling place of the you, the me. “Give me my scene before the act closes” and I said, “Our scene.”

It is a luminous uncertainty, a great articulation, autonomous, no respecter of person, contradictory and beautiful! etc ”

Has this man done it? This is poetry for the theatre. That is why this summer, I know, has been so important for me. Whole new areas have opened up, where I was ignorant before. It is a most rewarding thing to know, that as the years go by, the thing one has chosen, or been chosen for, in life, has been the right thing. The longer I stay the more reward I get from the poem. It is like a re-charge of the energy I got over five years ago, when I said, “Poetry will be my flag.” That is why I can never feel quite as alone again, because I have this mysterious gift, force, which won’t leave me alone, and which like love inside of me, won’t die. Christ, it makes one feel awfully humble. Not that I have created anything comparable, but as Olson says, I am in the Process, and possessed, in love with the word, so there ain’t nothing else to do. And I had such doubts last spring, what with other matters.

I have written Dana twice, and he has answered once, not the last one. So I guess he still has decisions to make. I think he thgt. the summer with me would make his decision for him, but now as the time draws near for me to come home, I feel he might have doubts again. Or maybe it is just the full moon, that makes me think this way.
The boys I mentioned to you that left have all returned, what with even two new students. Basil came back with a new car, a convertible Willys Jeep and we went off (four of us) to the drive-in last night and saw Trapeze, which I enjoyed thoroughly. We had been drinking, and on the way home, Basil who is filled with all kinds of drives,\(^7\) began to speed, very fast, up to 70 mph, and sometimes on the wrong side of a three-lane highway. What could we say. Speed had possessed him. Ahead of us, a car put out from a cut-off, and Basil couldn’t slow down, swerving out to the middle lane, sideswiping into an oncoming car, sending us off across the street to the left! up an embankment, bouncing from two wheels to two wheels, right up thirty feet to the top, where we hit a telephone pole, and came down, still he couldn’t stop, and smashed into a street sign at the bottom, kept going, until the car stopped. No injuries to none of us, except Basil spent the night in jail, is out on $300 bond,

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\(^7\) In his book *mirage: a poem in 22 sections*, Basil King remembers this occasion as the night after he’d found out his hero Jackson Pollock was killed just a week before, on August 11, in a single-car crash:

It was 1956
I owned a Jeepster with a plaid top
and white sidewalls
it was 1956
I remember John Wieners
I don’t remember who else
we all went to see *Trapeze*
in a drive-in
we’d been drinking
and I know I drank during the movie

On the ride
back to Black Mountain
I drove through the stop light at Oteen
in my drunkenness I went across
the dividing line, up the hill
towards the Veterans Hospital
swerved to the right
missed the fence
came down the hill
and swiped the back fender of a car
The state trooper
asked me to walk the white line

John told the trooper
“He always walks that way” (55)
and appears in court tomorrow morning on charges of drunken driving, and reckless driving. We three also must appear as witnesses. And Dana can tell you my premonition about death on the highway, still I was not afraid, and was, I guess you could call it transfixed, through what seemed to be three separate accidents. But of course, I know I can come home no other way but on the train. A car wd. be impossible unless I knew the driver, and a bus is like a large coffin. I sound like such a lily, but I just have to admit this re meself.

Duncan just came back and he sits one foot away. He has just read the beginning of his third act, where the heroine, who will die because “she cannot celebrate tomorrow”. The play is called MEDEA; part 1, The Maidenhead. DESIRE and the agony caused by same. He just left to write more. If ever you see a man possessed when writing, it’s him. He will be back, all nerves and shakes, after he writes the next scene. And the tremendous life of this existence. And the power is shared. His gift carries over to me. Olson’s does too. And by my youth, I transfuse something to them.

The new Origin #XIX came out yesterday, featuring German poetry, and a woman called Astrid Claes, who I have never heard of, and who you probably never have. But on the back cover, there is a note by the editor saying that Miss Claes wd. like to dedicate her work to the friend of her friend,

Richard Alewyn. ! ! !

I close Robert now, to transmit some of this tension to whatever I can write. I think only two more weeks before all this ends, and I think again only two more weeks before I begin again my actual life, the life of love, .. and the waiting is done.

As Eliot writes in his four quartets:

“What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from…

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And the know the place for the first time.

(This is the last stanza of the poem)

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78 Astrid Gehlhoff-Claes (1928–1911), German poet and prolific translator.
79 Richard and Veronique Alewyn were mutual friends from Wieners’ pre-Black Mountain Boston days.
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are infolded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.”

Love and see you soon,
John

* * * *

Back from his second term at Black Mountain, Wieners was struggling to continue his work while tending to his relationship to Dana as well as his many old and new friends. These letters from the tail-end of 1956 find Wieners and others in a holding pattern, Black Mountain closing, many friends moving to San Francisco, their already dispersed community spreading itself even thinner across the country. By January of 1957 he will have founded a magazine, Measure, that would try to give these poets a place to work together again.

* * * *

Charles Olson
Saturday, Sept 22 [1956]
[Boston]

Dear Charles:

I guess you know by my silence that I will stay here. I won’t even take my usual position of giving reasons. Under opposition I think I keep strong. And he is opposition, especially to the poem. I have written once since I got back, and I enclose it. It gave me great aura after I wrote it. Things are much cramped in, and I am looking for walking space. Everything I write I will send, in bunches, and with Spicer, Dunn, Jonas, Blaser here, all frantic with ideas of readings and Boston Newsletters, etc. I can’t help but have pressure.

And some pleasure/

We have found two rooms in a Colonial house, a fireplace in each, which we will need, as things have changed between us. But this also keeps other fires burning in me, which give off the sister poem.

If you need outlets here, or work done, count this city as yours as all would be eager, whatever the project. I make it sound like a spy ring, which is all right too.

Today is good because what I have neglected for two weeks, has come up, old voices of myself, and they refresh despite the running nose, stiff neck, sore throat I have. And of course, I have sat down.

I thought last night in bed that: where I am, is; where I am not, is not. Is this me being a trope?

---

80 Jack Spicer (1925-1965), American poet, with Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser formed the nucleus of the Berkeley/San Francisco Renaissance. His “Poetry as Magic” workshop in 1957 gathered many of the poets – including Joanne Kyger, Helen Adam, George Stanley, and Joe Dunn – who would be Wieners’ closest friends when he moved to the city.
But there is so much I will not have, I should get used to it. I should stop asking questions, especially of myself, and take this, whatever it is, as it comes; where I place myself, take the place and stop the sentimentalizing over the others. This would harden, bring cruelty in, and cruelty is easier, at least for me, here anyway.

This month’s Pageant has an article by one Daniel Dixon, called “Darling Jimmy Dean”. Is he still alive? Maybe next month he’ll lead up to you by saying that he is recuperating in North Carolina, and in November Mr. Dixon will write about the rest home.

There is a great deal of me still there, so we’ll see how the war goes, anyway I will send communiqués of mine.

My love, Charles, and thank you for the new summer (rose-red_ and here we’ll dig up a little black winter roots. Give my sister around and me to the gringos.

John

No the body is not easy to come by
it is saved it is treasured
inches of it built up over slow days.

not a pushover
- “a beautiful resistant thing” –
see it as such in some of us

how we are not easy
nor our bodies,
not given away in the night
like free coupons on street corners.

Saved.

My sister has saved her body for years
knees hard on prayers
her elbows shriveled from cold pillows

And you, you have let her lie
in man-pride, she has not asked
only in prayers, Christ, a skinny voice
you have let lie
soft in her pillow litanies to crucified [cropped]

Take me like breakfast, take my hard prize
bring me to the river
to the lit-hands of lovers

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81 Daniel Dixon’s “Darling Jimmy Dean,” about the cult of James Dean following his death in September of 1955, appeared in the October 1956 issue of Pageant, a general-interest digest-style magazine that ran from 1944 to 1977.

82 This poem appears in slightly different form as “Untitled [1961]” in Cultural Affairs in Boston (1988), where it ends after “where only skin is passed out on the street” (35).
who give hard gifts away
all all of it
toss it over the Charles
go away on lights out to sea
mingled in the current of a complete act.

Get off that hill bring good nails
let her see her blood free
of our city
where only skin is passed out on the st[cropped]

We are not passed out.
We empty waste baskets.

But the bodies fill up in their withering
are full shall pull the trees down
to feed off that fullness,
how we do not waste
but walk with blue fullness in the eyes,
strong German songs behind us
my sister and I.

The Fall, ‘56
Wieners

Robin Blaser

[November 4, 1956]83
[Boston]

Sunday Night, the 4th

Just in case we don’t meet in Liggett’s, this is to certify that this Saturday night will be the last gathering of the Boston poets. Please come and bring all poems you want carried out in their ears to that place on the WC. I have written Spicer-Dunn, and shall write Steve, so that’s all that will be present, but feel free to bring any interested parties if existent.

Also as of now, I have no way to obtain a tape recorder, and if you could work on this and find one, it would make things more permanent. Anyway, I am asking them for copies, offering my own as bait.

We will go on till dawn like the Chinese nightingale.

John

I will have some wine.
If you can’t come, write. (me)

83 The “Boston Poets” with this particular lineup – Wieners, Jonas, Blaser, Spicer, and Joe and Carolyn Dunn – lasted only the year and a half Jack Spicer spent in the city, from June 1955 through November 1956. Because the only Sunday the 4ths in 1956 were in March and November, it is most likely that this note was written on November 4, 1956, just before Spicer and the Dunns moved to San Francisco.
Robert Greene

December 11, 1956

[Boston]

Mon cher Robert [Greene]:

I am sitting amidst a pile of rubbish in the “study” and Dana lies 7’ away, behind me on the bed. I am cleaning my “desk” and Dana pulled out a letter of yours from last summer, and that brought memories, and then I read one you sent me while I “existed” – The Dunns – on Grove Street, just reading phrases here and there, and of course, I always have Dana saying: Did you write to Bob yet, you’ve got a cold heart, etc. and J/ Pino was here yesterday (I haven’t been to work since Saturday) and he said he wrote and there was no answer, and I said, Joe, we exist in a different world from his, and Joe said nothing except when I told him there was too much bass on our Hi-Fi, he said: I dont know anything about Hi-Fidelity anyways.

He is not working. Gil says one doesn’t have to when your wife does. He gets $26 a week on GI unemployment, having quit Teacher’s College, and they have a new Nash Rambler and a cherry cherry wood bedroom set, but… there is nothing else except remarks from him that he hopes you call him when you come home, and he would like to have a Christmas party.

Bilver has sent word, one post card of a Monkey Dance (50 naked backs) with the note, BALI is the place to be, and in the same mail, a lovely colored card from Hong Kong.

George and Kitty are having a baby.
Marie [redacted] are having a baby. (July)
Bob and Mary are having a baby. having moved back to Cambridge.
Jim Mitchell had a baby. girl-christine
Bernie had a baby. boy –
Joe and Bettina are not.
John & D are not.
Dick Boudreau is not.

Last November 28 at 7:30 in the morning, I left the Milton Draft Board, having refused to send off gift from the Jewish War Veterans of 1 pkg of Chesterfields, and a manila envelope which contained, I found out later, 3 pkgs. of lifesavers, 1 pocket comb, bomb, 3 postcards (wife mother dog) and 1 Scripto. Also there was a speech that we must not feel bitter over Military Conscription, as every year for forty years except from 1947 to August 1948, groups of men have left LB (Local Board #125) and this is the highest duty of citizenship, for even George Washington had military conscription, nay, even Moses… And so it was I left my towne of Miltown, and approached with 9 others the army base, not for pre-ind. but for an ind. phy., so that if I passed, I wd. leave that afternoon for Fort Dix (it was stamped on my papers) I did not pass for some silly suckin’ reason, but such the

84 This, “some silly suckin’ reason” related to the induction exams, is the closest Wieners comes in the letters or journals to an explanation for how he avoided the Korean War draft, which was such a pivotal moment for men of his generation. As he indicates in this and other letters, his friend Bob Greene was in the process of going off to war himself.
whole day was to me, the removal from this warm womb of a world to that other one of
delicious, that it is hard for me to write you knowing that I do move in a comfortable
sphere, while yours is not.

And yet, only basic shall be so far removed.

Poetry wise, I am not too active, but book wise, I am ever so, having read, what with the
time Lamont affords, much, though mostly people of this century, still they are the most
exciting to me.

The Dunns have left and are in San Francisco, with Jack Spicer, and we had a large poetry
festival, lasting until 3 in the morning, with most of it taped, and then and now, Robin
Blaser and Steve, and I try to meet once a week to read what has been done. We also have
plans to start a magazine (dana says tell that shitbird to get home, so we can talk, that the
mails aint no place for conversation.) Jonathan Williams, that publisher of Olson, etc. was
here for a few days, and that brought about more stuff read, and much bourbonizing.

I send you Veronica’s address, and she wrote, it is not really hers, but she said, it would be
forwarded thru her father. Also I send the Dunns, altho you probably won’t use same, but
in case you find a poet that wants to be published, they could show him around.

Goodnight, Robert, we all hope that very soon you will be among us and that we can
spend long slow hours together, quiet hours, just walking in our much beloved, much
despised city.

love,
Jean

Rita Nolan appeared in the Crucible BCDS – in a lead, a good rev. in Hts.

PS – I have not returned Faulkner to the pregnant one but shall ---

No address for Bill Lewis.

Veronique Alewyn
Schopenhauerstrasse 54
Berlin/ Nikolassee
Germany
J & Carolyn Dunn
2307 Taylor Street
S7,

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85 Wieners worked at Harvard’s Lamont Library from the winter of 1956/7 until he was fired
in late summer. In a later poem, “Dormant Lamont,” Wieners looks back at this time in his
life: “Poverty passes away, forgotten in splendor / of morning light, seen through a library
windows’ crevices” (Selected Poems 257). However, as he indicates in this letter, the job
afforded a great deal of time for reading, especially in the Woodberry Poetry Room, which
already had one of the best collections of small poetry magazines in the nation. Wieners’
study of these magazines informed and influenced the editing of his own small magazine,
Measure.
Michael Rumaker  December 28. 1956  
[Boston]

One of the dearest: Michael, (there aint many)

I write to you first because you’re the easiest, because I don’t have to say anything that does not fit me to say, and also because your letter has given me things to say, or will after I re-read it in the middle of this. I haven’t written since Sept., letters that is, except one to an old school Army buddy, so this is foreign ground.

And the poem comes in spurts, as it always has, except how there’s never any time to pick it up again, or so much else comes in and masks its face, that it just becomes a pile of paper in the left hand corner. I work at Lamont five days, and six every two weeks out of three. And of course I have nights but “things” happen, and I’m not anywhere where the poem is. So where do I go. Nowhere. Until next September 1st, nine months away (I don’t believe in the pregnancy period of the writer anymore) and then what. It will be San Francisco, but somehow it smells a little too much like home. Yet it might turn over, and to see all the many again, will do things, and Dana hopes there will be enough to see me in school LIBRARY SCHOOL. Anyway to get off the old rocking horse of tears. I saw Connie Olson again (without earrings) and all done up in grey, very beautiful from out of space coming back from lunch hour (hers) she had been to Daddy and Jacks to find stuff for Kate’s stock and, they have a house, and I was walking up the hill of Tremont Street, very wide sidewalks, the street falling away on one side to the Boston common, and piled up on the other with the grounds and the bricks of the State House itself and I was going very slow and she was at the top, very windy, very small in grey wool stockings and a small grey fur coat and a light shawl wrapped around her head. I know it sounds strange, but all there was of Connie was the clean face out of all of the bundling. She seemed happy and very pleased that she heard from one Mick Rumaker three days before, having thoughts of you that very day, wishing in fact there was a letter from you, and Merry Christmas, there was/ She said she liked the cold, what with the grey rat coat. Now don’t you write back this description, I still wince about the earrings, but understand how I am about her type of femme, I take them as prototypes, of me? of who? of where? I don’t know, but I do “impart significance” to whether they wear lipstick or not, or drink whiskey with water or not. In fact the whole damn sex gets this attitude, at the beginning, anyways. We will have lunch I hope, but I feel a little at ease, seeing she knows I saw B.K. O. but then you all have seen her too, and it don’t matter.

One thing, Mike, I’ve done a lot of reading, more than ever before in my life, and the place is filled with books, you know, two chapters read, then down, then another, but all staying here, until I get through them.

86 Kate Olson (1951-1999), daughter of Olson and his common-law wife Constance Wilcock Bunker (1919-1975). Michael Rumaker describes Connie as sensitive and elegant, with “dark eyes that had an edge of sadness and inward contemplation… a delicate bird” (Black Mountain Days 17). She left Black Mountain with her daughter as Olson’s relationship with Betty Kaiser became apparent. Olson died during Kate’s first semester at Sarah Lawrence.

87 Elizabeth (Betty) Kaiser (1925-1964) studied voice and music at Black Mountain College, where she fell in love with Charles Olson; they had a son, Charles Peter, and moved to Gloucester after the college closed. She died in a car accident in March 1964 outside Buffalo, New York, where Olson was directing the poetics program.
Stein: Last Operas and Plays (The Ma of Us All)\(^88\) Dr. Faust
Lights the Lights

Autobiog of Alice B. Toklas
Mary Butts: The Crystal Cabinet\(^89\)
Her autobiog. upto the age of 26, very English country and delicate and magical, with the pain that she killed herself 3 weeks after writing it.

And a book I discovered myself which I find now was Vogue, among the [illeg] ::
(intellects)
Denis de Rougemont :: Love in the Western World,\(^90\) which I am only half thru,
but which makes manifest a “disease” of heart, akin to me, and Edna Millay. Pantheon just re-issued it. $4.50

Yeats’ poetry, and A Vision.
Blake’s PROPHETIC WRITINGS, anything to wash out my mouth, but not with soap,
wash the soap or sperm out. I agree, soap opera and of course all subsidiary stuff I can get.
H.D.’s Tribute to Freud,\(^91\) which gave me a poem. I thank Duncan and Joe Dunn for H.D.
Just the “three books of the war”, The Walls Do Not Fall, Tribute to the Angels, and The Flowering Rod. But what I have never gone back to and will, could fill a year. [illeg] and The Plumed Serpent,\(^92\) Kulchur,\(^93\) and Joyce, although I do have some of Finnegar’s Wake, after the Poets’ Theatre show. And Henry James, and some Bollingen Books,\(^94\) I have

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\(^88\) Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), American poet, playwright, novelist, and art collector whose influence on New American poetics is incalculable.

\(^89\) Mary Butts (1890-1937), British modernist writer. Her memoirs, stories, novels, and journals speak to the mystery of Old England. A student of occultist Aleister Crowley, she was credited as a co-author of his Magick (Book 4) in 1912; her friend Jean Cocteau illustrated her 1928 book Imaginary Letters. Like most Modernist women artists her work fell largely into obscurity, but she was still admired by Wieners, Robert Duncan, and Duncan’s circles. In their introduction to Duncan’s The H.D. Book, editors Boughn and Coleman place her writing along that of “Edith Sitwell, Laura Riding, Djuna Barnes,” women of genius who “largely disappeared into the mists of time, ignored by the almost entirely male cohort of professors” (11). However, she is mentioned in passing only a handful of times in The H.D. Book, and never in depth.

\(^90\) Denis de Rougemont (1906-1985), Swiss writer whose 1940 book Love in the Western World was a history of romantic love from ancient through 20th-century Hollywood sources.

\(^91\) H.D. (1886-1961), born Hilda Doolittle, American Modernist poet, novelist, and memoirist best known for her centrality to the Imagist movement along with friend Ezra Pound. Her “War Trilogy” and Helen in Egypt are central to the teachings of Robert Duncan and Diane di Prima, and her condensed, stripped-down verse, with its ceaseless searching after mystery, inspired and challenged Wieners and his peers.

\(^92\) Kulchur, 1926 novel by D.H. Lawrence, written when he was living in Taos, New Mexico.

\(^93\) Ezra Pound’s 1938 Guide to Kulchur, published by New Directions in 1952, his study of 2,500 years of human history (focusing on economics) as “ideas going into action.”

\(^94\) The Bollingen Series, founded by Paul and Mary Conover in 1943 and named for the Swiss town where Carl Jung’s retreat was located, has published an eclectic list of writers, from Coleridge to Jung to Nabokov.
stolen, which like every book I ever OWN disappears and won’t come out, very toughly, of the limbo of my bookcase.

Somehow this letter makes an excitement that I don’t possess, an activity that is not in this setup. Maybe it is, I don’t know. I meet with an ex-San Franciscoan once a week, one Robin Blaser, and we try to set up a “project to do that week (ladies bridge) but it worked out for the three days Jonathan Williams was here, and there is a Steve Jonas (illeg] Spicer re both or Dunn) who has written long and lately well long poems, which at times show beautiful hip movements, as Olson might say. And now next weekend, Marshall arrives, we hope with manuscript, in from New York, and that will mean readings, and maybe a chance to get the manuscript that somehow one of the ex-students took from Olson to SF. with him, and now Olson has given JWilliams the money to publish same “Tug of War”95 and there is no word around, which must kill O.

For the first time, I liked Jonathan, being here and boyish and somehow very earnest.

I send Lorraine and Harvey’s address, in case you want to write. She was reading Personae96 and, blue, and so in years, she wrote a letter home to me, and that will be the hardest to answer, somehow.

And Jerry’s, me, I won’t send that, because Tom has it, and you have Tom and you probably don’t want Jerry. Wow, I am letting myself be led by a sentence!

Pardon Mike, the teacher tone in the top half of this page. You probably know Love in the Western World, it’s just that there is no one really I can say I read this, and they care. I guess the lack of that, outside of a few intimate relationships; care, is what makes the void. I know one can afford to stay out of a BM scene, but if you don’t want to, there’s a reason for jumping in, there is care [illeg] are.

Have you heard from O? I am going to write I hope soon, maybe my birthday night, because I know he’s there still. He forwards bills to my home and I recognize the handwriting. Jan. 6th, I’ll be 23. When I was 18 I had planned my first book like Keats to be out.

You sound very healthy in your letter, I hope so, the “things” of the lung you’ve got to expect. Journal of Med. Assoc. says artists are prone to respiratory ailments. Lawrence says re Poe he sucked things up so much it weakened, lived by feeling, was that it? the membranes weaken, the vibrations wear them down. Anyway I’m going to read the essay again.97 And then again, look at Lawrence and of course thinking of Keats brought all this up, like phlegm.

And just hordes of us can’t breathe right. Yet I have an aunt, my mother calls Whistler’s Mother, age 25, who has asthma and never said more than fuck me all her life. Or fuck you. I’ve always wanted to make a survey of writers who killed themselves, not a survey, but just a bibliography of where, when, how old, no need to ask why? but now I think I will do one on which in history have had respiratory ailments.

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95 “Tug of War,” a long poem by Edward Marshall that went missing for some time; Marshall showed up at all his friends’ apartments looking for it frantically. It was not published in either of his extant books, and may still be lost.


Of course, the best news is about Windhover Press\(^8\) and it can’t be “special” like Mike McClure, because there’s too much. I believe there’s enough to make a collection readable, and certainly Exit 3,\(^9\) if for nothing else but the woman who comes out of the lighted store, something which has become an eternal image for me.

The beauty of your talk on the SHE is that all of a sudden, someone is trying to write a play where there is mystery, there is going to be someone even YOU, baby, can’t see, now I don’t \textit{mean} brother Duncan, who wants to write them with magic up the ass, but a woman, who “goes in and out among the talkers” which is what woman is to us? Despite your “cockfull of cunt”, still is more mysterious to us than the others, simply because we “don’t \textit{want} to see her the way we want to see our own, and on “kind.” If you want to, and of course she’s in my dreams, but I don’t want to be taken or take her anywhere, like I like the big ones to take me across fields or up stairs. But of course, Michael, I’ve gone off on my own but it seems really what you wrote out for me is exciting, and if you don’t have a copy, I \textit{will send it back}, it’s that good, and if you haven’t started yet, would serve as a plunge in, especially the idea of them, the anonymous ones. (only I don’t feel they are, I feel they really are clear and sharp to you, as she is not,) stand and begin talking, cafe table, : Stuck. I want to get unstuck. The way Gavin\(^10\) would talk, except none of that jazz talk, which gets me fed up now, it’s everywhere, like that awful Howl by Ginsberg, howl, it’s more like puke, except molasses and all sweet and mystical. I do hope that you have begun anyway, and that when you are free to write again, you will tell me more, because I am excited, even the fire, which can be anything, a spotlight, very bright, with a lot of individual ones on the talkers [illeg] and the rest of the stage black with this gray Connie Olson, which is \textit{wrong} because she’s known, except CO is \textit{not} to me. moving in and out. Maybe even the one who turns the lights on, and the mother, at least mine would. In competition with her, but funny, now we’re back somewhat to my two women who ARE in competition, yet I believe they are. After all, this young man before the flames, his mother will hate the woman who so engages him.

I can’t send poems, right now, but I will, Mike, when I get a batch for O, a batch for you. And I hope you write and I will write again sooner, even if you don’t, but I suppose, I need the impetus of your word first. Congrats, again on Windhover, and I’m glad you’re out of Philly, somehow there seem to be spirits, maybe known ones in San Francisco.

\(^8\) It is unclear what Wieners is referring to; though there is a Windhover Press it did not exist at this time, and in an email Michael Rumaker wrote that he had no recollection of the name or this “news.”

\(^9\) “Exit 3,” short story that Michael Rumaker wrote while at Black Mountain College; published in the \textit{Evergreen Review} in 1957, it would later become the title story of a UK collection (1966) reprinted in the United States as \textit{Gringos and Other Stories}. In his memoir \textit{Black Mountain Days}, Rumaker describes reading the story in its earliest form in the writing class he took with Wieners, who came up to him after in a “shocked whisper” to say how surprised he’d been at the story’s gay kiss (438).

\(^10\) Gavin Douglas (b. 1931), American poet. He was the son of Boston art critic R. Langton Douglas and brother of Claire Douglas, a wife of JD Salinger and the model for his character Franny. His great-uncle was Lord Alfred “Bosie” Douglas, lover and source of all pain for Oscar Wilde. In a memoir of their friendship, Martha King describes Douglas as “mercurial, full of references, mentally international” His poem “The blanket” was published in \textit{Measure} #1.
Dana is reading the American Grain right now, and loving it. and we are the best together we have ever been, it’s all too good, that like Camille, and spa bubbles. I feel god’s got to pay us back.

My love,

John

Will Helen keep her man, or will he return to his formal evil ways among the furies who fire his body to forbidden lusts? Oh I cd. write it.

Lorraine and Harvey Harmon
3933 Sawtelle Blvd.
Los Angeles 66.

And the Dorns, where will dawn [cut]
any more?
It all started with Cid Corman. For Bostonians, with Corman’s early-fifties radio show (*This is Poetry*) and workshops at the West End library, and for Black Mountain and other New American poets, through his seminal small magazine *Origin*. In 1951, backed by a radio show listener, Corman launched this simply designed magazine, its first issue devoted mainly to the then mostly-unknown Charles Olson, and he proceeded to publish most of the preeminent New American poets (and foreign writers in translations) for more than three decades, including Paul Blackburn, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Larry Eigner, and Denise Levertov. In Creeley’s words, *Origin* offered these poets “a Place defined by our own activity.” Later Blackburn would say of it and *Black Mountain Review*, “What other solid ground was there in the last decade?” This is the kind of ground Wieners worked to establish in 1957. Olson’s 1950 essay “Projective Verse” had “set off a decade,” he writes to James Schuyler, “and MEASURE if my energies hold out, will end it. We must see ourselves as the new generation, initially our youth in these ten years.”

In this first letter to Olson, Wieners reports on his exciting life in Boston, busy with the Poets’ Theatre and work with his friends, trying to maintain the creative energy of Black Mountain. He is fighting, he says, “to keep meaning and intensity (its so easy to fall back),” and one way of doing this is a new magazine, one that will continue the work begun by Olson in 1950’s “Projective Verse,” the essay calling for a new, outward-facing, expansive poetics that transcended the “literary.” He tells Olson that the magazine will possibly fail, “but the effort must be made.” He has already written to Villiers, the UK press Corman used for *Origin*.

Charles Olson  
Jan 8, 1957  
[Boston]

Dear Charles:

I write 2 days after a 23rd birthday. I write after such a long time. I write out of what most of the time appears a desert (with snow). I write to enclose Laurence. And to wish I was there and able to endure.

I won’t send this tonight but add to it once or twice more so I can tell you what I have been reading and also to get some Robin Blaser poems to send you. He and Steve Jonas are the only two left and we try like ladies bridge to meet one night a week to read what if anything has been written. Marshall has taken to coming back for weekends to see Jonas but I haven’t met him yet and if you still need a copy of that manuscript (per Jonathan

1 Clay 113.
“Tug of War” maybe he would have it tho I think he sent you the original and only.

Last night I met Paul Goodman. He was at a Poets’ Theatre play of a friend of his and at a drunk cellar party, rather an antique shop party he talked so that after a while I only stared at his grey swamp water eyes — jelly eyes — blob eyes. Maybe that is why I am writing tonight because I didn’t like him much, his glory in some story of a duncan lover, “stealing” same which I tried to keep cutting off but he had to glory more so I finally said “Well, Duncan got the Venice poem out of it, and that’s worth more than any Goodman a Jerry put together”, which sort of shut him up on other matters which were the “poor” students at BM and leaders and disciples and chumps and Hail and beware I thought jelly eyes. And later the playwright said Paul, you really are the American writer, living, and someone said — yelled — Shah-hit! And I’ve tried to write a poem about it but couldn’t so I write a letter.

My own writing has been slow — almost nonexistent but in my mind every day like other things come back every day, the same people, so I write mostly I guess “journal entries” which unfortunately always have to do with me and I doubt very much whether I have found “the black that is blacker than black” tho I desire their skin since New Years. And of course I have the problem that without the agony of love to write off I have very little else. I went to Yeats but it doesn’t show. And of course I have the excuse of this job which takes up so much time. To make the living that doesn’t count. I try to forget none — nothing — of Black Mountain, a living that counted. When I came back, Joe Dunn said pick a card (this after I decided to stay here) and I picked a sword in the ground which Spicer said: a test of strength which failed, the sword was that way. But I know this is my way to


3 Robert Duncan’s “The Venice Poem” was written in 1948. In his essay on the “symphonic form” of the poem, Robert J. Bertholf describes its creation and structuring principles:

Duncan was having an affair with the poet Gerald Ackerman. Paul Goodman came to Berkeley, met Duncan and Ackerman, and then left town with Ackerman. Duncan was distraught with passions of rage and jealousy, caught between knowing his feelings toward Ackerman were authentic but suffering the inauthentic feeling of betrayal. The scene of San Marco, the references to Shakespeare and the Doge, and the references to works of art all have a local reference. That the poem is grounded in personal experience does not transform it into a symbolic structure. The immediate references add multiply meanings, simultaneous multiple meanings to the poem, charge it up with a passion that an abstract structure cannot maintain.

4 Just a month after getting this letter, Olson would have his own negative encounter with Spicer’s Tarot; at a gathering in San Francisco after Olson gave a series of talks on “propositions of projection and composition by field in the light of Alfred North Whitehead’s Process and Reality,” Spicer sat at the enormous man’s feet and began to spread his Theosophist cards. This was “the biggest faux pas Spicer could have made,” as Killian and Ellingham recount. He “was done in by a fact he could not have known, that Olson had foreswarn Tarot completely some years back, after a frightening experience in which the
stand it and the fighting to keep meaning and intensity (its so easy to fall back) makes
strength. It's in Blaser's face, a jaw that says hit it and you'll be the hunted. And the ladies
bridge helps, and letters. and sometimes the surprise of Boston, what we are in. And of
course the knowledge of what and how you are right now. The example, I mean, of you
under the conditions which for all I know maybe couldn't be better, for you.

Jonathan says Mexico in the spring. His stay here made a good night. So now at five
after 2AM, the same.

Wed the 9th

So I get home today and see your card oh Swannanoa — my heart's in the
highlands and on me birth nite. You shall have them coming. Boston today is warm and the
snows fill up the gutters. I helped a showgirl across the Chelsea Street circle — a harbinger?
and today I bring from the library

The Journals of Cocteau
Mary Butts Speed the Plough
Yeats' Letters on Poetry
to Lady Dorothy
R. Radiguet — Count d'Orgel
and the Midnight Court from the Irish
of Bryan Merryman

Thursday PM

We live across from a schoolyard. Where the girls from the 4th grade do the bumps
and grinds. Cy Scollay's within a stone's. And there is a sign posted:

cards had eerily, accurately predicted – to the day – the death of his own mother.” Olson’s
response to the reading was to “crush Jack totally’… Later, Spicer revealed that Olson had
rebuked him for attempting to ‘make something happen’ in San Francisco through incorrect
technique. 'Your poetry is bullshit, just like your rituals, just like your cards,' Olson allegedly
snarled.” Spicer replied through a poem, “A Postscript for Charles Olson,” which argues
that “If nothing happens it is possible / To make things happen. / Human history shows
this” (86-88).

5 Black Mountain College was located in the Blue Ridge Mountains' Swannanoa Valley.
6 Wieners is referring to the correspondence between Irish poet and scholar W.B. Yeats (1865-
1939) and his student Dorothy Wellesley, Duchess of Wellington (1889-1956), first
published by Oxford UP in 1940. As in the correspondence of Olson and Wieners,
Wellesley’s ongoing discussion with Yeats is a meeting of master and disciple, and the letters
always return to the mysteries of poetic creation: “My head is full of new verse,” she writes
to Yeats, “singing, pounding even in my ears, but practical affairs must be dealt with… but
perhaps no inspiration is ever lost, but recurs months, perhaps years later. It seems to me
that poetry is begotten of a tune” (31-32).
7 Raymond Radiguet (1903-1923), with poet and filmmaker Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) as his
mentor, cut a Rimbaudian swath through Modernist Paris. Radiguet wrote assorted shorter
works and two novels, including Count D'Orgel (Le bal du Comte d'Orgel), about an adulterous,
inter-generational affair, published after Radiguet's shocking death at age twenty of typhoid
fever. Brian Merriman (c. 1749-1805), Irish poet. His 1000-line-long Cúirt An Mheán Oíche
(The Midnight Court) is considered one of the great comic poems of Irish literature, a satiric
twist on gender roles and sexuality that uses the mode of the “vision poem,” setting a grand
argument in the court of the Queen of the Fairies. The poem was preserved in the oral
tradition, first published in 1850.
And I am sure that you will be as disappointed as I am with most of what I send you. The effort is harder than ever and I look back on past lines with envy. But the desire accordingly is stronger than ever. So all will right.

The poem about father on the beach was done Today so that’s a good sign. And your post card has sent off a chain reaction. Last night I was in bed from 10pm to 2pm today and dreamed every possible dream in the book. I wish there was made The Book of Dreams. Also I wish there was more of what is being done NOW within my grasp. Before there was Origin to catch up on and even last summer — pace makers — but there ain’t none here and whatever territory Steve is in or Blaser’s in is there’s too much for me. Where are you in? You can be used Am I right in this? Looking for spaces to inhabit. Like Laurence has enough space, opened same so that there is free room for any inclined there. And I’m not a rock-driller unfortunately, besides afraid of Pound affecting-infesting my own too much. What I might do is go back over all the near two years stuff to find business to exploit. For what strikes again. Because its always fight. Eat or starve, green grass or wither. And the trouble with what I send you is swamp — misery, it becomes a thick bore-bog and there are lights but too deep in the mush. So maybe retreat a bit. Get off the gold moon. To maybe something dry like this Pa poem. Untheatrical despite the sets.

Anyway now (post postcard) it’s a good time with much blizzards and everybody cursing and falling down in the slush except Dana who has snow tires and me who has [arrow pointing to “Dana”] and some dogs in the neighborhood.

Remember me to Betty and the other Charles and I hate to end because there’s no one else to talk to.

What Kind Of Man
would allow his dog
to Befoul
the Children’s Playground?

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8 Scollay Square, the beating heart of working-class Boston from shortly after the city’s founding until the city demolished it in 1961 in the name of “urban renewal.” At the juncture of Tremont and Court Streets, Scollay Square separated the West End, a thriving working-class neighborhood, from the rest of Boston. The lively and livable streets of the West End and Scollay Square were classified by government agencies as “slums” so that they could be destroyed. The residents, some 27,000 families, were displaced to substandard housing elsewhere in the city. In his vital history of the area, Always Something Doing, David Kruh describes the Square from its Puritan origins through its destruction, offering an especially fascinating account of the Old Howard Theater. Built by followers of William Miller, one of many end-times prophets of the 1840s, it eventually became a theater, a renowned showplace for minstrel and burlesque shows. In 1953, the Boston Board of Censorship shut down the Old Howard and Casino Theatre, another Scollay landmark. On June 20, 1961, a fire destroyed the Old Howard, soon before Scollay Square itself was demolished.
So I won’t for a bit. This is the 2nd letter I’ve written at all since Sept. The others in answer to Mike who wrote good news re the tarnished place & the Windhover Press.

Will the week there mean lectures? But there’s no sense in asking questions because I don’t want to set up an obligation on you. They’re on me from you and that’s enough.

I never thought of you as a MOLE. Paul Revere sees your lights out at sea.

Enclosed also find a letter to go out tomorrow to Villiers.9 The only reason to give for it is something has to be done here, so I sponsor this without friends. Do you think it worth the go? Blaser, Jonas & I will call ourselves the editors but if it contains — becomes actuality, it will contain only what Arc did & some, Spicer & Marshall and the ‘locals.’ Will you give some. The stuff has to be published but of course don’t bank on it. BOSTON: a blast from — etc., the contributors listed below that. “The opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the city.” It depends on what Villiers sends as estimate — and then raising money on a complete typesheet of the first issue — also selling space to the bookshops, galleries, Poets’ Theatre, and society poetry supporters. With individuals taking care of distribution if possible in different cities

Villiers was the choice because it must be cheap.

I understand Arc10 was only an “anthology” and Origin’s gone and what else but BMR? Besides I have to use this excess energy on something besides roamin’ those roads.

Whatever you have to say will be heeded. And as it stands needed. Maybe it’s a waste because it won’t go but the effort must be made. And it can be right if a firm grasp — the one voice — is kept. Mine now and mine when. The doubt then expressed was from a few thoughts on 4 Winds.

Again 2:05 and again until tomorrow.

Well it took more than tomorrow. It is Jan 16th and the routine of being pulled back & forth to work and bed has taken its great time. 7 days there last week. Still since I began this I began and finished on & off subways, quiet afternoons at Desk 1, - Yeats’ Letters on Poetry to Dorothy Wellesley which have given me some of what those two had. And the poem A Message was finished 5 mins. ago while the book was finished an hour ago, both giving me great joy. The book of course led me to her poems and his intro. in Oxford Book of Med. Verse — 1935 plus the selections, which I find hard to read, unaccustomed to the verse. You lose your eye & ear for rhyme, steady feet, etc. But I shall enjoy Yeats all the more now. And I have the Words of Music, Perhaps.

Mainly since your card, a very happy time.

And I have gotten the bills you forwarded. They are from a book club I joined there called The Art Book Guild, but whose books must still be at BM. If they are, I will send postage, if you could forward. Enough business.

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9 Measure’s publisher Villiers Press was suggested to Wieners by Cid Corman, who had used them to print Origin. The first issue of Measure was the “City Issue.”

10 In spring of 1947, Philip Lamantia and Sanders Russell edited Ark, a political literary magazine out of San Francisco. Robert Duncan, Kenneth Rexroth, and Paul Goodman were among the distinguished contributors. Only one issue was released.
We have been living at a literal ten degrees below zero for 3 days and I thought on Cambridge Street this morning — ‘Oh for a beaker full of the warm South’.

I do hope you can write and will say what you have to re the enclosed. I hope there’s light from me. I don’t think of any but the last 2 as finished.

‘Mrs. Yeats had said: ‘Come back and light the flame’. the day he died

I want to write again and hope it is all right with you with or without poems.

My love

John

This is positively the last postscript but re-reading this letter as a one when it has been done in so many parts is not a very pleasant record to face.

Pardon the crap about Goodman. He is as befits now nothing but a voice at a drunken party.

Also I’ve wanted to ask this often but do you think anywhere is a copy of a poem you once wrote which has “For J.W.” on it? Eighteen months ago. It matters more now.

The magazine too, without a push behind me, I doubt will ever get off paper. Or on it. Enough reflection.

I wait for a word.

Michael Rumaker

February 6, 1957

[Boston]

Dear Michael:

I write again because of an activity here, mostly by me, to make a little magazine, whatever it is, but to start, after receiving a letter today from VILLIERS, they will print an issue of 300 copies at the size, not the paging, of ORIGIN, now defunct. It will have the paging of ARC, that is, number of pages, 48 or so. And the cost will be $163.00

What do you think?

Necessary enough?

For me, yes. Here

To the poem?

_Toujours l’attak: Olson_ 11

I don’t know, but there is enough work going on, by enough of us, there is enough to combat, that to circulate what is being done, is necessary.

the only job is to get what is being done, the best, we know of, and can you help, in many ways, you know you can, and it might be of use, to keep you and me in contact, to keep, make a link. OK. I know there is plenty of little magazine, but what bores, and I want excitement, the air filled always. Would your participation fill your air? Or would it clutter what you are doing anyways. So if we have 48 pages, and we have BIG DADDY, and A Duncan, or two, a Jack Spicer, THE BIRD POEM, 12 a Joe Dunn, A Wieners, Steve Jonas, Robin Blaser,

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11 Uncertain whether this is Wieners’ or Rumaker’s handwriting.

12 Jack Spicer’s “Song for bird and myself” appeared in Measure #1. It is a dark poem, to say the least, beginning with the lines “I am dissatisfied with my poetry. / I am dissatisfied with
or am I wrong, is this clique? I don’t know, But I will always remain open to the poem, and your ears, too. BOSTON. SAN FRANCISCO.
You could be representative, listening, editing from there, also distributing. First though, I have to find out about the De Boer. I am so ignorant of this, the business part. Of course, we would have Marshall, since he has taken to coming back for weekends, this one coming up to read, and this still leaves open space for whatever you find, this leaves space for you, but I don’t know how much you want to inhabit. I have a Father poem, and then there is the one you wrote at BM, or would you rather just the story. Talk it up Michael with yourself. And let me know. Of course, there is the money problem, but we know some people here, and will ask for sponsors, at $10.00 or more head. 16 people! could pay for one issue. I need 1/3 of money in my hand by April 1st, with the entire copy also, because the process between galley proofs, returned back & forth, takes about 7 to 8 wks, and I would like it dated SUMMER 1957, for no reason, but then I wd. have the 300 copies in my living room June 1st, to begin distributing.

Write whatever you think soon, Mike, pro or con, even if it’s only a lunch-hour jot, and also leads as to what manuscripts you think you have heard, and cd. manage for this.

Pardon the haste, but this too is before the deadline of ‘I have to go to work’.

My LOVE,

John

And your own new poetry? – we could at least know what each other was doing through our mutual work on this –

Charles Olson

February 8, 1957

[Boston]

Dear Charles:

I wasn’t going to write again until you got back from there, but yesterday I heard from Villiers and they w/ print a mag. the size of Origin, maybe some, 10 pages shorter (all the better), 300 copies of same, for $163. So I am excited, and it is deep water for me, and so what, it can be done, because there isn’t much space, but there is a freedom permissible where else? And where do I get the money. 161 people at $10. a head and you have it. I can hustle that much in this city, plus selling in so many ways natural to me/

my sex life. / I am dissatisfied with the angels I believe in.” Robert Duncan’s reaction was to be “angry at his doing that Bird thing. Most angry because his lack of Measure misused the given experience, which had yielded otherwise a beautiful poem” (August 25, 1957, see appendix). Spicer was characteristically waspish about Measure, from its “littlemaggotish name” to Wieners’ selections: “Wieners had had the nerve to reject Spicer’s Boston piece, ‘Poem to the Reader of This Poem’…and to ask instead for ‘Imaginary Elegies,’ the suite of poems Spicer had written for Robin [Blaser], which he regarded as his best so far – and far too good for the upstart, no-nothing Wieners, who ‘only understands Black Mountain poetry and Cole Porter’” (PBLG 94).
What do you say. There is an excitement in my air, and I have written to Spicer, Rumaker, Dawson, Vande Wiele, asking for their ears. if only to listen for me. And distribute.

And it won’t be politics, I have no reputation to lose, nor none to make. And I am ignorant which is good.

And I write to you, so you can say, not junior league, with your eye upon it, clean, a ball to your bat.

A phrase of Blake: Bring out number weight & measure in a year of dearth.

I ask of you what you have, the poem.
Say, FIRST ISSUE.

Blaser
J. Williams
Spicer
Duncan
Marshall
Olson?
Dawson
Jonas
Rumaker

and let it stand on a height of the best of all of them.

I will send the entire copy out by April 1st, with 1/3 of money, then two months back&forth on galley proofs, and another 1/3, and on June 1st, I w/ have 300 copies in my living room, not to stay, dated, Summer, 1957.

I fit here, this use of energy, and feel behind me all the little creeps who sat down and decided they would publish a little magazine. No matter what, I have their strengths.

Whatever questions you have, ask them, and I offer you all the white space you want to walk in.

Don’t rush on an answer, as SF is probably in your mind, but it’s gonna be there on June 1st.

REVIEWS? This can be wide open, and that don’t mean ‘deviated”!

My love,

John

On the 20th of Jan, the snows Began to Melt
I saw a woman stagger on the train
With orange flowers in her hand

---

13 Fielding Dawson (1930-2002), American fiction writer and friend of Wieners’ from Black Mountain. A New York native, he was also known for his painting and collage work, as well as his longtime work teaching maximum-security prisoners. His 1970 Black Mountain Book is, like Michael Rumaker’s memoir, an extremely personal, impressionistic reminiscence about the school.

14 Gerald Van de Wiele (b. 1932), ex-Marine and art student at Black Mountain, handsome abstract expressionist who went on road trips from Swannanoa to New York with Wieners and fellow art student Basil King to explore artist lofts and studios (Boston Phoenix 1997).
ON JANUARY 20TH THE SNOWS BEGAN TO MELT\textsuperscript{15}

I saw a woman stagger on the train
With orange flowers in her hand
And I could not make up my mind
To be the woman or: orange flowers

carried underground on this
  suddenly before me a boy
came on
  and he hold in one hand
a bed,
  my mother
  would say,
of red
  gladiolas
a blur of carnations and yellow

A color to soak the black off death
& I know
dying or dead
  women who receive these
    see
blinds slashed,

like me in the tunnel under Charles St.
hot as a bee is, seized on their smell.

\textsuperscript{15} This poem appeared with a few changes (“on this” is removed, “hold” is changed to “holds,” and different lineation) in \textit{Floating Bear: a newsletter}, edited by Diane di Prima and LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka, in issue #10, which was devoted exclusively to Wieners’ early poems. They were gathered, di Prima says in her introduction to the \textit{Floating Bear} anthology, from manuscripts that he had left around at different people’s houses where he had stayed at one time or another. The really early stuff, from his Black Mountain days and right after, he had left at Frank O’Hara’s house years and years ago. Frank just laid the manuscript on me. John also stayed at LeRoi’s [Baraka’s] and left stuff there, and when I came out to the West Coast, I was given poems that he had left at Wallace Berman’s pad… There’s a huge stack of unpublished John Wieners floating around somewhere (ix).
Mrs. Abraham Corman

February 10, 1957

[Boston]

Dear Mrs. Corman,

It is with regret I read of the closing of Origin, not from sentiment, but simply that an important needed outlet is no longer in existence. Your son writes in the last issue that he hopes others will continue his labor. And that is what I hope to do.

Two days ago I received an answer from Villiers Press stating they could print a magazine the size of Origin with 10 or so less pages for a price I with two friends think we can manage. Since then I have written to the few writers I know over the country announcing this and asking for their poems and advice.

I am ignorant and a novice, so I need their strength. Whatever knowledges I have come mainly from my attendance at Black Mountain College and study under Charles Olson and Robert Duncan, with of course, my own writing and reading.

I write this simply to ask if I could come see you on a Sunday afternoon and receive advice on problems I am/might be aware of. Namely is De Boer reliable or would I do better sending in care of the writers in San Francisco, Chicago and New York?

Naturally there are the usual limited finances and so, at the beginning there will be only 300 copies an issue, with the first one dated Summer, 1957. Its contents though not certain probably will read:

Michael Rumaker  Robert Duncan
Jack Spicer    Jonathan Williams
Fielding Dawson  Steve Jonas
Edward Marshall  Charles Olson
Robin Blaser

along with the other writers I can find. I plan this copy to leave Boston April 1st.

Now I wait to hear what the above names contribute. I am in need of ‘new’ poets, their writings, and I am in need of potential over-subscribers and outlets.

I believe in the poem as Mr. Corman does and I believe in making space for it. As you know, there is little anywhere, along with the freedom it demands.

Knowing that Origin’s publisher Cid Corman was out of the country, Wieners wrote to the address listed in the magazine, mistaking Corman’s sister-in-law for his mother. In his letter of reply on February 18, 1957, Corman (at the time living in Italy) writes, “I think you flabbergasted my sister-in-law by labeling her my mother. Actually the relation is clearly stated at the back of ORIGIN #20. But I think no one was the worse for it, unless myself: I am inclined to believe one mother is enough for anyone” (See Appendix B).
I hope that you do not find this an imposition on my part, and that I may see you soon. If you prefer, I am open by mail, to whatever questions you may have.

Truly yours,

John Wieners

33 South Russell Street
Boston 14, Massachusetts

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Michael Rumaker

February 14, 1957

[Boston]

_Dorn’s The Rick of Wood_7 –

Gavin’s [illeg] Poem

Dear Michael:

Thanks for those words. The first answer and in the same mail, something from _trace_, asking for an entry from me. I know what they are, so I sent it, but I want none of that kind of poem.

“Bring out number weight and MEASURE in a year of dearth”

the man said.

That to run on the inside of front cover, with a woodcut, I hope of THE FOOL under it. With maybe the title: or the cover set up:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{NO} & \text{WGT} \leftarrow \text{(small)} \\
1 & 75\text{¢}
\end{array}
\]

&

MEASURE (BIG and spread across)

Contributors
listed here
and? A quarterly for of the poem.

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7 Ed Dorn’s “Rick of Green Wood” was first published in _Measure_ #1 and later featured in the Don Allen _New American Poetry_ anthology in 1960. It has most recently been published in 2012’s _Collected Poems_, edited by Jennifer Dunbar Dorn. Wieners would later apologize to Dorn that spacing had placed the last four lines of “Rick” on the next page, so the reader had to turn before getting to it. Page 16 of _Measure_, above the beginning of Larry Eigner’s “Millionem,” carry the last four lines:

in the november
air, in the world, that was getting colder
as we stood there in the woodyard talking
pleasantly, of the green wood and the dry.

18 James Boyer May (1904-1981), American publisher and editor based in Los Angeles, edited the literary journal _Trace_ for eighteen years.
Now I know that’s fancy, but if it goes, and I’m not at all sure, it will be the only fancy. I am afraid of MEASURE, its abstract – but again, I don’t want the limitation of BOSTON, or the little mag-ness of Wedge or Whetstone, etc. I’ll let it brew, because the first copy won’t go to Villiers until April 19. I have been working like I never did before, and exhilarated tremendously by it. Writing every where, to think that only 64 at $10 guarantees a year’s publication, without regard to sales from the drugstores.

There is so much to buck to avoid imitation of Origin or Trace or Bmr. But I know I can’t reach that “quality” (BMR) because I won’t get the contributors, at least at the beginning.

I want Olson and have written him same, but I don’t think he shall approve until it’s standing.

How About you. I don’t have the rewrite on “The Father,” and when you can get to it, within two weeks, ? send it. And I hope, forgive my selfishness, that Creeley won’t send a word on the critique of HOWL. But if you will strengthen me with it then, I wd. be most happy. Yes on both.

Marshall has written the most, (there are no words) and he shall open the magazine. Four of five. And there is no other copy of Tug of War, what you have, so he hopes it turns up. Save what you have. Anyway, it is committed to Charles as is Rhoday Straw,20 to the next issue of the Review. (BMR) Marshall is so funny, he offered me the unrevised copy of this, since I had less of a circulation than (BMR). But of course, he wonders, since he has heard nothing from Creeley for a year.

Do you know when it #7 comes out? I do regard it as BMR’s though. I think what he has done since is better!

If you can spare what you said without hardship, O.K. But I didn’t expect, though very happy you care that much. And I hope in return I can provide you, that this will even give you a stimulus, a space, a certainty that they will not remain unread.21

Prospects seem good, I am so much more sure than I was before I wrote you. Of myself, and of money. I have been in this town all my life, and this is all to my advantage. But no word yet on other MSS. So listen there, if you can, but don’t do it if it interferes because you sound good, and nothing comes before that.

I can only agree with what you state of Feb 9, in fact so much so, I have thgt. of printing the first paragraph.

“Rimbaud was right, and it seems to me more right now than ever that extreme point, no stinting, no compromise. … upto … one is forced to become inhuman in order to discover again what is human But are there enough around who will go that far?”

Of course, I wait on what you send and also on Howl.

19 Unclear whether this is Rumaker or Wieners’ handwritten addition – the former seems more likely.
20 Rhoday Straw
21 Rumaker has (hastily) handwritten on the letter:

John, do u think I am the right [illeg]? For Christ sake, Don’t get stuck on it an East Coast-West Coast axis. [illeg] schools of writing – I happen to be home. I don’t want anything [illeg] – and fuck the [illeg] where they group themselves and think they originate. all delusions & the quality of the writing is [illeg]. I’m a free-floating agent – have been & always will be.
Robert Duncan

February 14, 1957

[Boston]

Dear Robert:

I write to you after these quick months, because now I have something to tell you. It has come about, after an answer from Villiers, that a magazine of the poem is here. In the 10 days since they wrote prices and size ($163 for one like Orig.) a momentum has gathered that sends me surging.

Not money-wise, but contents, what can be inside, and I shall get the money out of this city, and I hope some from yours.

I write to ask you if you would want a finger, a fist or a nail in Yourself, the poem, and whatever else you are hot on, or pushing/ PLUS, the unknown voices you listen to, what you discover.

Now the first copy leaves Boston April 1\textsuperscript{st}, to printed by Villiers in London, and back to me finished by June 1\textsuperscript{st}, dated SUMMER, 1957. I also need 1/3 of the money by 4-1. But I have begun on this and soon I and a girl of six feet shall take to the streets.

Until today, I hesitated writing you, somehow a doubt on me, but now with a letter from Olson that “In any case depend on me for more than you can take!” I work from this word.

The first issue: as of the answers I have rec’d.

Marshall to open it, with 4 or so new ones.

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\textsuperscript{22} Mary Fiore, a Black Mountain student and the wife of painter and BMC instructor Joseph Fiore. In 1955 she saved Black Mountain by raising the $5250 needed to pay off the mortgage and keep the school open (she was paid back when BMC closed). She lives in New York City.

\textsuperscript{23} Denise Levertov (1923-1997) grew up in Britain but came to be identified as a poet in the American tradition. Her voluminous correspondence with Robert Duncan is a great resource for the period.
Olson, what he wants.
Rumaker, with a poem, and I hope a critique of HOWL. that is, if Creeley
don’t want it.

and Jonas, only if he reaches a height. Otherwise no. The others contacted
for this, but too soon to answer:

Spicer, Dunn (the same as Jonas) Larry Eigner, Fee Dawson, J. Williams.
Also Frank O’Hara if and only he has something.

So I am happy with this so far, what is certain so far, and I hope now your
ears will fill mine, and that you can supply me with others, that is, if you are willing.

“Bring out number weight & MEASURE in a year of dearth”

the man said:

to run over a linecut of THE FOOL. This for the inside front cover.
For the inside back cover, the 64 sponsors who will guarantee a year’s publication, at $10 a
head! Now I need their names and their yes. If you are aware of any potentials, cd. I have
their names, etc? and I will write with or without reference to you. But if this bothers you,
forget it.

I thgt. poss. some contacts there cd. handle distribution, but I guess a company w/
have to. Can you advise here?

Also, in place of the some of the 64, advertisements. 1/3 of a page (5 ½ x 8 ½) for
$10. There will be a heavy distribution in your area, and although there are 300 copies for
NO. I, it will jump to 500 for $25. more. So: San Francisco Poetry Center? The Six Gallery?
The Pocket Lights Bookshop? and even Arc? if it comes again. I hope only 3 pages
of them, if that.

So let go, Robert, whatever you think, and let me know if you can before the 1st
of the month, so I can start with that white space.

Love, and I hope this puts an excitement in your air. The freedom permissible, and
the charge that can be made, ahead.

PS. I have not forgotten the $2.50 for Faust F—

John

Larry Eigner

February 21 [1957]
[Boston]

Dear Larry Eigner:

Well, you dropped a bundle, that have kept me going thru them again & again. So, if
it’s all right with you to use:

from Passages: the second one called:

Millionem which I typed out exactly as you have it (p2).
Rolling (r3) unless you find out it belongs to somewhere else.
For Sleep (c7)
Set (The Bohemian Stage) (o9)

and one only with the number (73) beginning with:
'and the squirrel
    jerked behind the tree
Once it could be only the movements

and The Breath of once Live Th i

    n g s   (t)

In the field with Poe

    I will keep for a while longer and try it again within the week?
O.K. That really is the big question for me, and even if yes, it would not be in the first issue,
as you know I gotta make it a lot of places, at least in NO. ONE.

Now the copy goes to the printer April 1, and the ones mentioned go, or at least, if there are
changes in my mind, I'll let you know, of a holdover. The copy comes back from Villiers
JUNE 1.

So if there are any changes, could I know by at the latest March 10? A title for squirrel?
And I would be more happy to see whatever you are willing. Also if that hot stuff comes
back, send some, as you know, what I have seen before, has a / well whatever they have,
your stuff. So I wd. be willing to write anywhere you tell, as editor of MEASURE, saying
that I am most interested (in you) and wd. they release it as etc. etc. etc.

I also typed Rolling up, and don’t think I’m just taking this stuff, because as you’ll see,
the first issue is going to be hot, and you’ll be played off well.

Sorry that the confusion of last Sunday happened, but it sounded sort of funny, my
roomate in his drawers, etc, thinking you were THE STATE come to take out the music.

I'll write again letting you know how the thing measures out, I have
the first issue nearly paid for, and Jonathan Wms. is taking mimeo advance sheets across
country with him, and I wrote to Corman last night for his advice and aid, and I go to NYC
this weekend, to get Fee Dawson and what he's on to, all this and 35 hours a week at the
Lamont Library to make bread.

So maybe on a Wed. or Thursday I come down? to the sea.

The summer at BM was nothing like the prospectus, and violence was the main source of
activity, but I benefited much, from both of them, Duncan and Big Daddy, and he
mentioned to me too that précis, which I have a copy of, in pretty mangled form, which you
could tackle for a couple of weeks if you care to. Also, did you mean for me to keep
Combustion. If not, just say so. It was what I needed, address and interest-wise, for Canada
and I intend as soon as I get THE PAGE mimeographed to write Souster,24 the page being
the advance sheet.

24 Raymond Souster (1921-2012), Canadian poet and publisher who brought out the first
books of many important contemporary Canadian poets, and introduced many American
poets, including Olson, Levertov, and Creeley, to Canadian readers through his magazines
I take MEASURE from Williams’ business in Origin, also That ‘Bring out number weight & Measure in a year of dearth’ this to run over a line out of Le Fou, if I haven’t told you already. on the inside front cover –

O.K. It is three in the morning, so
John Wieners

I liked Millionem or at least found a surprise, language-wise, which is first rate. Also the sentimental me likes

o glorious
make believe make believe
time but don’t listen to me.

The Breath of once…

is something new for you, the line that is?

I am unsure of your prose – (what I’ve read in print) and I want to stick mainly to the poem – UNLESS you got good bitchy critiques, reviews – or just short reviews

No#2 – I hope to be MAGIC – poems – the dream, myth,
Tarot deck – black & white
incantations – fables from the pot –

Does any of that sound for you?
Maybe after No: I, you will get an idea of me – and know what I could make space for – of yours –

Michael Rumaker [San Francisco, CA] March 2 [1957] [Boston]

MEASURE

Dear Michael:

Sorry for the card, but it’s all the strength I got.

Got the Dorn from his, grace full, what I needed,

25 William Carlos Williams had published “On Measure—Statement for Cid Corman” in Origin in 1954, arguing that the old forms of poetry – enjoying renewed popularity in the post-War enthusiasm for New Criticism and formal verse – were moribund, and the formlessness being offered as an alternative was just as unsatisfactory. “Our lives also have lost all that in the past we had to measure them by, except outmoded standards that are meaningless to us,” Williams wrote. “In the same way our verses, of which our poems are made, are left without metrical construction of which you can speak, any recognizable, any new measure by which they can be pulled together” (202). Williams called for a “relative order,” a new measure that he would continue to work out in his own poetry.

26 “Le Fou,” by Tom Balas, is the first poem in Measure #1. The issue’s inside cover features a drawing by Fielding Dawson above subscription and submission information, as well as the disclaimer “Please understand that the opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the city.”
will also use Gavin. Was in Ny for a week, saw him, one of my 2 nites in the Cedar, his OK and address: 29 Bangs Street, NY. Promises he'll be there. Big sky fallen down on Cock Robin. Drawings by Dawson. Not them so much, but all facing27 me. Now about you, do you know yet? Had Ginsburg for about 8 hrs. in Ny. And the man is hot for all of us, he says, despite Basil. Tried to get stuff off Mary Fiore, no go. Much support though, and the wonder not shaken off me yet is that we all were there the same night under that Cedar Tree.

Much help from Jonathan (Much love, John) & Corman’s mailing list

* * * * *

With the urgency and energy that characterized all of the small magazines and mimeographed newsletters of the late fifties and sixties, Wieners was working on issue two before one was off the press. The second issue, as he’d written Larry Eigner on February 21, would be themed “MAGIC – poems – the dream, myth, Tarot deck – black & white incantations – fables from the pot.” His confidence was growing, the project a true reflection of the poetic world that Wieners inhabited. In this next letter to Olson he reports proudly on Measure. “It is all mine, ME the first two letters.” Of course, concomitant with youthful confidence is youthful cockiness, and the letters reflect this as well, most strikingly in upcoming letters to Barbara Guest and Philip Whalen. By the end of the summer, Wieners will ask Robert Duncan to “have patience with me,” admitting he “might have started M too young. Let it thicken with me.” But in just these two first issues Wieners was able to generate a great deal of new energy and work, giving many writers their first publications, including Kerouac’s first published poetry and excerpts from Burroughs’ Naked Lunch printed around the same time that the Chicago Review/Big Table was generating much controversy for doing the same thing. Like Black Mountain Review and Origin, Measure was truly a “ground of work,” as Duncan called it, a place for the widely dispersed New American poets to come together.

One of Wieners’ chief concerns for issue two was expanding the field of poets beyond his Black Mountain and Boston friends, and so these letters from the Spring and Summer of 1957 are to an ever-expanding roster of poets in New York, San Francisco, and abroad. Measure: One was a sterling calling card, and through its published authors and his other new friends he befriended others; he’d met Allen Ginsberg (whom he teasingly called “Ginsbergmessiah”) in the Cedar Tavern during one trip to New York, kicking off a life-long friendship. Through Ginsberg’s contacts – one letter to Wieners from this period has three pages of poet and potential sponsor

27 Either “facing” or “fazing”
names and addresses – Wieners was able to bring in newly famous Beat writers like Kerouac, Burroughs, and Whalen – and through Frank O'Hara and Don Allen he was able to plug in to new channels of the New York and San Francisco poetry communities.

In a 1982 Naropa class on Wieners, Ginsberg remembered meeting the younger poet during this time, a memory that sets an apt tone for this section of letters:

Wieners had come down from Boston and showed up in the Cedar Bar, with Ed Marshall, another poet, whose work is in this Don Allen anthology, *New American Poetry*. They were both gay. They were both from a sort of gay hustler’s benzedrine maybe-a-little-bit-of-junk scene … we were meeting in the ambience of Frank O’Hara. Frank O’Hara knew Wieners’ poetry and thought it was very good, and Frank was sort of the arbiter of taste, a social arbiter.28

Wieners’ letters to these young poets and writers, expanding out from old friends to new rising stars, offer a unique snapshot of these now widely known figures at a specific moment in their lives, all on the edge of breaking out (or just beyond it), all looking for a break.

* * * * *

Charles Olson

[March 3, 1957]

[Boston]

Dear Charles:

I write wondering whether you are back, and to say that I am ready for you. The first spin is over, with the 1st issue paid for, or nearly will be, if I let myself believe it. I don’t work as though I had not a penny and every pitch is the important one. All kinds of squabbles already from the far country-side/ but none in this house. It is all mine, ME the first two letters, and the sure ty coming from the ears I ask to stay open. So I assume the responsibility and the labor.

Mine the arête.29

But of course Marshall et you and Michael providing the fluid. OK now the space is yours. And I tell you some random thoughts. The second issue MAGIC poems on the tarot? *the book of dream* stuff, archetypes drifting their long “garments”, what else? So it doesn’t go to press until July 1st, could you make some notes on magic? etc

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28 The transcript of Ginsberg’s class was posted at the Allen Ginsberg Project as “Allen Ginsberg on John Wieners – part one” on what would have been Wieners 80th birthday, January 4, 2014.

29 In “Maximus to Gloucester,” Olson writes, “the only interesting thing / is if one can be / an image / of man, ‘The nobleness, and the arête.’” Arête, according to George Butterick’s *Guide to The Maximus Poems*, can be translated from Greek as “‘goodness, manly excellence,’ (similar to ‘virtue’)” (608).
Then again, some translations of Frobenius? Or is that walking in snow tracks, what about reprinting that article passed that spring from The New Age? And Larry Eigner writes that you thgt. Origin 20 wd. have “a précis” of the history course you taught at BM? So why not here? He wanted it, and others do. Me.

Some notes on BM if you wanted to step into that. What you and Duncan were brewing last summer. You see, all I want to do is open to you that this space is open, that there is no limit, I put none and want you to know none. Instead of filling it up with scrappy little verse from BM alumni and Ginsberg’s finds, two from you, one from her, three from etc/

... make each issue a contribution/ I hate wedge, but that.

Something that wasn’t there before.

With this kind of hammer in my hand, I get the fluid recharged over & over to attack fresh the problems of no money, no outlet, etc. And I hammer coin and outlet. Even POSTVIRGINAL did it, and what Jonas showd me last night, and Marshall every weekend. So when you get the rest and time, drop what you think, and of course, as soon, the verse/s. The first copy must leave here April 1, and green, I gotta make the page. So at your leisure, or I could make the copie, and send you back the original, if you prefer.

I wd enjoy it more than you think.

Very fine, all this work, with sinus in the air.

Thanks for the scalpel to the poems

I had my session in the tarnished places too, last week in NY amidst dirty sheets, and has taken me three days to move at the local speed again, which somehow means faster, despite their expressed. Marshall though a grand delight, taking me on tours of his new-found knowledge, as YOU SHALL SEE.

Come on now with your load,

of love

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30 Leo Frobenius (1873-1938), German ethnologist & archaeologist whose ideas on culture were foundational for the thinking of Ezra Pound, who corresponded with Frobenius in the 1920s and 30s and used his theory and stories of Africa in The Cantos.

31 Wieners is referring to the course at Black Mountain in Spring and summer of 1956 from whose notes would come Olson’s A Special View of History, published by Black Mountain student Robert Hawley’s Oyez Press in 1970. In her introduction to that edition, Ann Charters explains that Olson’s ideas on history (and the “stance” one takes toward it) are integral to understanding the Olsonian – and Black Mountain – project, the same work that Wieners would continue after his terms there. Charters writes, “THE SPECIAL VIEW is a tangible fragment of the Black Mountain experience: It was at Black Mountain preparing THE SPECIAL VIEW OF HISTORY that [Olson] fully realized that “a man’s life is an act of giving form to the condition or state of reality (concerned obviously as a moving thing himself) at the exact moment of his birth – So therefore error or truth in the execution of that imperative is the whole shot!” (11)
Ed Dorn

March 7, 1957

[Boston]

Dear Ed:

Now listen on your PS: (First a blast) Who ain’t we descended from. The kick is to take the same printer, they do LISTEN, MISCELANEOUS MAN, COCK, FUCK, AND a 100 others, but that don’t mean they ain’t the cheapest, or that they will print what others, I imagine, won’t. Also I don’t even know they are the cheapest. I simply wrote a letter of 100 wds. and on Feb 4th got back a price of $163, so I’m making it from there. And too lazy to ask anywhere else, for toilet paper, or prophylactics or whatever to print it on. The challenge is to use ½ at the most same authors and surprise all you know-it-all-readers-of-small-print by saying THIS is Villiers?

Also yours isn’t the first I received saying Goddam dull Villiers. Well, goddamn dull BMR? He did nothing more of course than hunt up a new format, but that took four issues, and no laying out the page, just drop your load. And that’s all Ark did. And Origin made an attempt. Just give the lady a chance to move the (her jewels around) that’s all I think of collage queens, they’re stitching, well, I’m looking forward to stitching a bit of sweet lace, and you know queens, they can’t see or won’t out from those false eye-lashes. That and other reasons.

Corman said he would print it for $75 if he stayed in Matera, but what does that help. I wd. have it on anything, if I was pleased with it. And I don’t like for one minute the smell already off Villiers.

John Sankey James Boyer May33 here in Hollywood, whose friends and whose self already loading me with crap and offers of same.

Already I got enough for an issue and an half, with a letter from Ginsbergmessiah, 3 pages of outlets, contributors, contacts. But none of it goes before what I got my beaded eye on. And

so no worry ever on the contents. You can kick on whatever but not what’s in it.

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32 In the bottom left corner of the letter, Wieners has drawn a layout of the Measure cover with captions “BOSTON: ONE,” “SUMMER 1957.” He has written vertically along the left margin: “aquarterlyto&bepoem&/YARDSTICKTOTHEVERTICAL”

33 John V. Sankey, editor of Villiers Press in London.
Now the pRICK of GW is in. And what was needed, and no gems in the setting to blind anyone else from, you'll see.

Also I want to impress on you that as long as you want it, a space is yours in MEASURE (now ain't that nice) you and Mike, and Marshall and the big voice, O, for me. The main point of all this is that I want to give certain ones the security that their stuff is going to be used etc etc looked for etc etc needed every quarter.

NO 2 did I write? is going to MAGIC. Do you want to do anything on this. Mystery above standard mystery. And don't be fooled by all the names, they're be there sometime, but some areas will be fooled, and need I show dirty underwear, only it ain't dirty, I just said, because above all this, no matter if I only print MARSHALL, I will stay clean, and nothing going anywhere, unless it meet, the clean line, it dock and scrape the pier/ J wms. for one who sends two pages of Jargonelles, and directions on how to print them, which is all right, but I can't. Although, he is my big help, distributing the enclosed across continent, etc. But I can't print them, maybe in second issue, under magic herbs or something, but an agony although I'm sure they're funny, and well made/ too much agony or happiness around. I asked him for others. But how has this turned into a defense of my politics. You know me, daddy.

*It ain't necessary*

About Lady Levertov, this and so many others, are following the ancestral tree. Beside 'fading darkening rose' don't. I want to use her and McClure, etc, but after I plant my own sap. And when you read NO I in June, you'll be glad.

Also, if you can send whatever when, it wd. be very fine. Re life, I still sleep with Abe, who do you? *tired blood but love*

*John*

PS Of course Jonathan Wms, and BMR waits, but I don't want that. I want it done, from these 57? and what you did, done and gone, and glean for when you come up with you mouth full again, there is something to heave it on, and then gone, and again. None of this, every year, something very special, bound in yarn.

Quantity, did not he say.

Well, we oral ones ingest a lot, and the sailors in the ports tell stories about it, they do too, so I'm capitalizing on it, and if I get these its 56 by whatever means, then I will thicken, if not sooner, just a good thick year or two, you can benefit by it, the knowledge that the Rick of Green when its cut again is not going to lie in the cellar for the mould, but toss its ash to my winds, blow everything, get in the eyes, as one of us said on the subway platform, when he had to put up his hands, and the doctors hands, in front, because the train went by so fast, that's what we all want to be, YOU KNOW THE STORY, ok, And there is a space to measure at the present time, you will agree? Where else? for any of us to put in the dime.

*Harvey's address?*

*Terry's " ?

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Robert Duncan

March 7, 1957

[Boston]

Dear Robert:
Two days ago Robin showed me (Propositions) and it elated me tremendously/ to have it for the first issue, just to have it.

The reason why I did not write you directly after I thought of this MEASURE as I did Michael & J. Dunn was simply I wanted to plant the thing myself – dig up the ground with my own nails) before I asked for what you had to plant – and I have – and I am surging fantastically – on promises. Despite the small squabble between R & myself & Spicer – which thing upset me for a few days – as the legs are not that strong to stand internal egos. All patched now.

Do you think 57PC cd. handle say 5 or so of those mimeos – or again interested in an add? Somehow I feel not. Besides those listed there will be a V.R. Lang (dead) Stuart Perkoff and Gavin’s “The Blanket”

Yesterday Ginsbergmessiah sent 3 pages of contacts in NY – contributors whose names you probably know – and people to ask support from. For as always $ is the problem. Still March 16 shd. help. Capacity 250 – shd. squeeze in 350 with hostesses in gowns & white roses circulating/ taking subscriptions. The best to you; and (over)

the second issue will go to press July 1 – and it will be a magic issue – objects – archetypes, I sd. to Charles – trailing their ‘garments’ / fables – a finger on the myth – your own – notes on magic2* whatever you think wd. enhance – mystery above the 25¢ ones.

And I hope you’ll be pleased with what drops on your roof June 3.

Dana & I still plan to be there for good sometime in Sept. But we can write on this later. Keep Spicer firm for me, if it isn’t a drag – John –

PS* – Words / on numbers – the Tarot deck –
the magic of vowels37 –

34 Robert Duncan’s poem “The Propositions,” which evocatively calls on the poem to be the field where “the unexpected / must come,” and was published in 1960’s tour-de-force The Opening of the Field.

35 Violet Ranney “Bunny” Lang (1924-July 1956), American poet, playwright, and founding member of the Cambridge Poets’ Theatre. In her “Memoir of the Fifties” Nora Sayre remembers Lang as “a former Boston debutante who had joined the chorus line in a Scollay Square burlesque house called the Old Howard when she needed to pay some debts, [who] either wrote, acted in, or directed each of the theater’s early productions” (100). Her collected poems and plays were edited with a memoir-introduction by Alison Lurie in 1977. By the time of her early death of Hodgkin’s at 32, she had already written multiple plays and published fifteen poems in Poetry magazine, more than her now much more renowned friends like John Ashbery and Frank O’Hara. The latter immortalized her in “A Letter to Bunny,” which ends “The sun / and the rain glue things together that are not / at all similar, and we are not taken in / by the nearness, the losses, or the cold. / Be always my heroine and flower. Love, Frank” (Collected Poems 23).

36 Stuart Z. Perkoff (1930-1974), American poet and artist, a native of St. Louis who moved to Venice, California, and became essential to the early Beat scene there. He was published in the second issue of Origin, and he was included in Donald Allen’s 1960 New American Poets.

37 Ginsberg would eventually offer, via a 1977 interview with Kenneth Koch in the New York Times, his ideas on the “vowelic melodiousness, adjusted towards speech syncopation” of his own verse, how the vowels “get hot” with words like “Howl”’s “Moloch,” “when long
Don Allen
March 30, 1957
[Boston]

Dear Don:

Thanking you for you sending the Helen Adam.\(^{38}\) Number One was filled, and had no idea that it was so long, or such a poem. A little to say it small, disappointed.

How do you write rejection letters? When you ask for a person? Maybe I will find out. I will send some poems, but really doubt you’ll use them. I feel very removed from the making of poems right now. And it is sad, for me. There is so little to replace it with. Movies aren’t better than… Have not been able to read all that prose in Number One, yours but am glad it’s here. Especially what’s coming. About MEASURE, it goes tomorrow finally to the printers, back on June 1\(^{st}\), if he’s fast and doesn’t balk, about all the crocheting I insist upon.

And I will put you down for a copy, as only other poets will read it, I imagine. Or care. Though who do you aim for, if not them.

Will be glad to meet again, and hope there is some kind of spring in this crazy city. Robin says there will be. Of course, he lives in a better part of the city.

John Wieners

Sorry, now that I look at date of your letter to be so late in answering, but there’s only me making measure, plus making bread for firemen, plus scheming money out of Boston’s tight pants.

Please drop a word if you want the poems quick. Otherwise, in about 10 days?

Michael Rumaker
March 30, 1957
[Boston]

Dearest Michael:

Well, it’s done, and I’m caught. In an energy that I have been using for say six weeks, then the respite, and the energy’s still there, and no place to go but walk the streets with it.

mellow mouthings of assonance” offer “inspiration in a literal way, as deep breath flowing out unobstructedly as long vowels, musical” (Koch n.p.).

Helen Adam (1909-1993), Scottish-born balladeer at the heart of the Berkeley/San Francisco Renaissance, member of Jack Spicer’s “Poetry as Magic” workshop, and author of the play San Francisco’s Burning! Her work has been gathered in Kristin Prevallet’s exemplary reclamation project A Helen Adam Reader (2007). At the suggestion of Jack Spicer, Allen had sent for Measure consideration Adam’s poem “Apartmetn on Twin Peaks,” with its delightfully spooky subversion of bourgeois marriage:

Moon over Twin Peaks glittering clear.
Then I’d whisper in his shrinking ear,
Like a dentist saying “Open wider,”
“Don’t you want to be a good provider?” (222)
Or write.

Something I haven’t done since it began. Except two nights ago, after that DD’s article in Pageant. Which sent me off sad, and then anger, so I dreamt that night I was living out my time on a small hill in my hometown we called The Mountain. It was on Valley Road, and I was there in a heavy snowstorm in my blue coat, and holding a black umbrella in one hand, as a house, and chasing pheasants through the underbush with a 2x4 for food. Then I laid down to sleep, but the snow was too heavy and I was freezing. When my parents turned the corner of the street down below, in our old Chevrolet, to take le babie home.

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I was going to open MEASURE with Marshall, but last Friday, Olson sent his three spring poems, and they say the season, make a measure; that he opens, and then Marshall. You in the second half of the book, setting a new ‘tone’ I use you as an MC ‘They are all their mother’s sons.’ what did it. Followed by Gavin. And then Spicer who sort of fucks everything up, but necessary.

Then Jonathan Two poems for Whitman, the husbandman. And Duncan closing with 9 printed pages of propositions. And spread throughout: Eigner, A Robin Blaser, Dorn’s rick, a newyorker Frank O’Hara, it took me or rather him a 30 page poem for me to find 60 lines I could use. But they ain’t bad, sort of an American surrealism, if I knew what that meant. And some surprises. Though no prose.

I do hope there will be some in NO 2. Not the story as much as comment, review, article, whatever.

Dana and I will come to the West in September for a couple of years, I guess. He always wanted to, and went once, but was led back three weeks later. So in June he graduates, and will hit the glory road to keep me in TIME I hope.

At times, I think NO:ONE grand, others I think it mediocre. Olson sent me a girdle ad, NEVER HAS SO LITTLE * DONE SO MUCH FOR SO MANY.

Which i wear.

And MC Richards sent 10.00. Which pleased tremendously.

Now about NO:2 I hope you can send me some dreams. Yours. Just write them down, as you said them. Featuring: A HANDBOOK OF DREAMS. NOTES ON MAGIC. A FINGER IN THE MYTH. Whatever you want. But I sort of want to follow up on you, let them know, you are a permanent. One. If not here, then I plan NO:3 to be THE CITY.

Of course, I don’t know where the money comes from, but I can always have another ‘gala party for poetry’ as I did two weeks ago, which brings something in. Honey, there were 175 there, the joint banked with flowers we stole off Mt. Auburn cemetery, lit by colored spotlights, a green, a fuschia, a lime, a blue, a white, a yellow, orange throws on the tables, tall girls in evening gowns, silver candleholders, candles up the arse of God 2.50 the stick, and 20 gallons of Italian table wine, which was

39 Mary Caroline (M.C.) Richards (1916-1999), American poet, writer, and potter who taught writing and studied dance at Black Mountain College in the late forties.
given to the guests as a rare potion from? littered with orange rinds, and lemon heels. H. I meant to fill the baskets of carnations, lilies, gladiolas, roses, red white and yellow, callalilies with success cards from the mayor, the lieut-governor, etc. but I was too busy putting on eye-make-up and greeting Tommy Jacksons and Alison Arnold, society editor of the Herald, who came because I told her Robert Lowell would be there, well I made 90.00 in all, but it’s poisoned me, that kind of bennie-dexie existence, so I want the doorbell ringing and horns blowing outside the window, and standing on the piano, but it will pass, as the full moon.

Can you answer this:

Are you enough in contact with Spicer to see that in June, when I send him the 100 copies he’s promised to ‘sell’ there, that they don’t sit in his bathroom? This does not mean you do anything towards distributing yourself, but ?? serve as a kind of a conscience so I’ll know anyway, what’s happening. MATA HARI/

don’t sell him out, but I could ask someone else if these appear to be going down the drain. There will only be 300 so 1/3 is such. Oh, don’t bother, what the hell. If they go down, they do.

Is Ann Stokes in SF or still in Philly. I would like to write her re the mag. and ask her for 10.00. So send address, and don’t mention any one else’s name in your next letter, or I’LL write them too.

(Whaever,) let me kiss off. Dorn sent two new ones, and I think is excited. (Whatever,) it is awfully good to be hearing from him. Is he still with Helene. I hesitate to ask in case he’s not. Saw Elaine and Chamberlain in NY, he being somewhat on a crescent to hell. At least that week, he knew it.

And Fee, who sent four drawings. Two of which I use in NO 1. Oh let them, let me be clean from this, I feel it now, feeding off the other one’s activity.

Still, I have my girdle.

love,

John

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40 Robert Lowell (1917-1977), American poet and teacher who helped create the “confessional” movement in post-war poetry. A Boston Brahmin scion, Lowell taught at the Iowa Writer’s Workshop and Boston University, where he taught Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. Like them, he placed his mental illness at the forefront of his poetry, especially in his lauded 1960 collection *Life Studies*. In a 1973 interview with Charles Shively, Wieners discussed his fellow Boston poet Lowell, the “Yankee man of leisure”:

This Brahmin Robert Lowell thing, I think, goes back a couple of hundred years; he wrote about Mt. Vernon Street, just around the corner – that gives me reinforcement. I’ve heard people speak in disfavor of him, but he’s a better writer in his contribution and substance of poetry; he is more intricate. But he treats homosexuals in his poetry in a demeaning and denigrating way – as if they were societal outcasts, irregularities (SP 295).

41 Both sets of parentheses are written in by hand.
Allen Ginsberg [Tangiers] [April 1957] [Boston]

Dear Allen:

I wanted to wait until No:1 had happened, and done with money and contents before I wrote. It is & printer writes ‘shd be a sellout if only by subsequent demand. But little doubt of it’. Advises I increase No:2 to 500 since it is to MAGICK: a handbook of dreams, the black & white voices of the enclosed and others: with a finger in the myth.” That’s on the back of One. I like layout if it don’t turn out the queen, crocheting.

I am following up all leads in your letter, which boosted me greatly, and will write and get K’s poetry from the man/ Perkoff sent a batch/ cd. only find one, he’s slow/ clogged in the stanza but nice jumping from 1 to another. Attempt at ritual, or something.

I am interested to have AGins in No:2 if you send it, give me a load to choose from, something contemporary with you now/ maybe a statement on the state of affairs? (That don’t sound good)

And I will write to the others, I will try, if I find the money to increase the 48 pages to 63. A great deal of mss. But it’s a lark to find out how few people can write and though flooded with crap, my own stuff seems to benefit, I do.

And I want you, after you get One, to let loose on its lacks, I am hot of course, to tell you what’s in it, but want it to surprise, as it will, if only for freedom there. There are other queer shoulders at the wheel, or well. I will mail copy as soon as it reaches here, which shd. be early June, so if you change let me know somehow and it is for you people the thing is made. To put the excitement for you? I need it every day/ the push to say/ it’s being done/ against the rest of the doing. And where? How often is it discovered, do I find anyone making it, the junkies just want to become vegetables, but maybe it’s only this town.

I got Corso’s42 book and like much/ and the queer poem better now, seeing it laid, and also Bird. The one I read was unfixed, I imagine, and if you want to, contact any of these people per me, that I am open, for I give 35 hours a week to making bread for Mr. Fireman and myself, which leaves after 5 for Measure, which is shit of a way of life. Pound said the business is not something you do on weekends/ but after Sept. he goes to the breadline and I have the 40 hr. day back.

No gripes though as this year is the best one yet.

Olson back at BM, after SF and a week of lectures. He opens No: One: then Marshall et al, with Duncan ending.

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42 Gregory Corso (1930-2001), American poet. Corso finished his formal schooling in the sixth grade, and grew up in foster homes, an orphanage, and prison. He met Ginsberg in 1950 and found himself at the center of the first Beat circle, alongside Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs; like Wieners, Corso traversed the New York, Boston, and San Francisco poetry scenes (and like Wieners, had a play produced at the Cambridge Poets’ Theatre, in 1955).
I hope Tangiers is good for the line and that you can choke me with a load of your stuff/ and direct those you yourself are hot on to my stoop. But don’t feel this last one a necessity, as if no word by, say, May, I will go after them myself. Am hot to give Lamantia a space, a feeling I have here.

Thanks for what you have done already.

Yours,

John

James Schuyler
April 22, 1957
[Boston]
Easter Monday

Dearest Jimmy:

I still have sleep seeds in my eyes and behind them there are whirling things. This is not just a well from your letter, how much of a boost it gave me. I have spent the last few days addressing those announcements to every library that spends over $20,000 on books/ and the knowledge that there might be others / and you have their names makes me very joyous, sent their names. I am glad because if nothing Measure in intent is out to make the a measure for those who need it us. We’re the ones who need the lift. The others got TV. We need elevators. Highheels?

Well, I have the drafts of letters I was going to write you about your poems. They are the last ones in the folder. The two I intend to use ‘I think that we (rich) should get down on our knees and thank God we have money’. That poem has all sorts of Magicks in it. A nice statement. The magic of objects in it.

I have broken two typewriters. Of course if all the others reply to those announcements, there will be no copies left. The printer writes me I shd expect a sellout on NO: 1, if only by subsequent dem. But little doubt of it! Also to increase No: 2 as ‘esoteric numbers’ sell well.

I am most enthusiastic about you sending me your new poems. And I will wait until then before I return those of the first batch I won’t use.

I wd. like to be in New York again. In fact I am awake from a dream in which a NY painter Michael De (something) was in my bedroom in Milton explaining a large painting of his that hung on the wall. He had once had a very intimate relation with F O’H and was waiting until I got packed because we were going to the Silver City together. But I dont remember any hint of a coitus between us.

He was tall, say and thin, with an Adam’s apple and thin neck and Italian. Something I don’t usually dream about as sexual figures. So it’s very strange. A male muse? Anyway he had knowledges and I felt I very much wanted to go with him. In fact anxious because I was taking so much time in picking out the right clothes.

I will follow up this very morning with announcements to those you list. I wd. rather they had it than the University of Tulsa,

Phillip Lamantia (1927-2005), American poet and publisher born in San Francisco. According to his biography in The New American Poetry, he was “hailed by André Breton as an authentic surrealist poet; first appearances in View, 1943-45; broke with surrealism by 1946. Since then mostly underground, and traveling” (440). His long-awaited Collected Poems was published by the University of California Press in 2013.
Yesterday was abscess tooth day but I am recovered. And wd. struggle up from a novocaine haze to address 10 more libraries and then back to coma.

I have written 2 poems I sort of like & if I ever get the typewriter (one is borrowed) fixed, the first thing I intend to do is type them up & send you & Frank a copy. They are the type where I speak as sort of the grand madam of this city giving advice & warnings to two of the Lady’s Handmaids who are on their way here.

‘Flair says wear big rings when you ask for matches
and my flair’s
hair
under the hat
for daylight.

I leave addresses in the hoof of the horse across the State House on Tuesdays and never never forget where we come from, what can’t be sold, or sucked off.

There’s something green in the marquee lights
they use on Washington Street so wear same
but only the lowers.

I’ll tell the musicians
you’re coming if
you tell me."

Love,
The Local One

Do send them/ and I thank you for the kind words and poets don’t pay.

The other poem I liked for its swiftness:
Father or Son.
only I cursed in it that you had not broken the line where the breath (yours) demanded rather than let measure out to a certain space. Please read if you haven’t Olson’s essay 1950: Projective Verse – in fact I’ll send it if you can get it back. It has large rough spots etc but a tremendous help to all of us, if WCWm.s. reprints ½ of it in his Auto-biography. You do it in Joint & somehow thing that’s a newer poem.

Just a ps) I can’t find the pen –
What Olson does demand of us is that we go back blind / have no rules but as he says those the poem under hand demand.

A very basic thing and the subject/content of those poems becomes more immediate to us. Thus a poem on boredom – wd. have contained in it perceptions that all we are running over – we vitalize thru the process of running to catch up with what is going on at the act of writing. It cd take us over the precipice – vide Le Fou – it cd take us to Babyland. Cd fuck up the sentence as we know it, as W.S. Merwin will never know it.

Bring an excitement form wise – not just word-wise excitement but the twist of the hip – even the way we walk will be put in the poem - it gets that basic. Should if we let it. Thus those damn readers get their money’s worth. They meet us. Watch us dance.

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I am very happy right now.

Charles Olson

Thursday, April 25 [1957]
[Boston]

Dear Charles:

I’m on my third machine. Having busted two, the last two borrowed. So I got this tonight to send off the two enclosed and let you see.

Disregard the Holliday bit, as it went in as I was typing.

They are the strangest poems because they switch in my affections. Right now it is the short one I want to be a part of again. But they do have excitement and show a way for me, nothing excluded, in fact, the white hand on white stockings

said it so that I wanted to get these to you quick. As everything else about us.

I have not done a thing with the poems you blueinked, except that I go to that tunnel every morning & night, and at night I think of me in it, and the flowers and the boy advancing. You see if I start this, then I don’t make Measure for a while

BUT WE HAVE PAN SIES.

And the black magic is simply something I latched onto thinking you all wd. pick it up/ not my own, in fact no one’s, as no one picks it up, objects in fact/

but another thing, I wd. like to have some Rumaker dreams, and have pushed him so that there will be. Great ones, if the letter that arrived with yours is any inkling. Oh, has he churned hisself. Black waters, so that I am filled, run over with them, am in accord with all he says from his self.

Do you know where the fairies have come from? Jonas. In fact, I send it along, as it is in the first issue, and it scares for what they can do by implication to you people. but I hope you say OK. Language. And I threw out the dedication, as we can’t be that inread thing, I don’t think. And the ending’s nothing, except for Mr. Luce.

NO: ONE being printed, with the proofs shd. have been here three days ago. No word from Marshall, through the address which I list below is the same one I think you used except I put on Rm. 23. I have nor have any of us (jonas) heard from him since late February. Which is very strange.
I agree completely with the note, except that no one writes it. In fact, I find, so few can write. I am flooded with stuff which becomes an awful weight, because I have to write back kind encouraging letters. There is always enough to encourage. But to write one as Marshall does, or as SPRING over and over again does, is very rare. In fact nowhere.

I still work a full week with ‘the dear Harvard boys’ which or who literally drive all the queer staff crazy, so much intrigue and foot tapping and shaking shadows on the walls and dropped trousers/ that we dash frantic all afternoon from one level to the next saying here comes scuffed loafers, or Miss Mulatto went in again, that each month gets more crowded, and they should have stuck to Weld Hall.

Achilles Fang\textsuperscript{44} wrote also what do I think of the idea he does ‘a small paper on Pound and Mussolini (20pp)... But I do not see any earthly use in such stuff’. Nor do I. Of course, we’d sell out and be assured for life, insured, but I think to have Fang wd. be good. How it came about, was I met him in Grolier’s\textsuperscript{45} and he suggested to make the magazine, I include one big name a month, whether I like the poetry or not. I told him I wd. lose my enthusiasm, and he said nonsense, only one page.

So two nights later I wrote

‘re our conversation in Grolier’s how would you like to be the ‘name’ in No: 2.’

‘You may get some translations from me after this summer’ which I think would be good enough. I wd. like to hear what you think of this. I will see him next week and tell you then. Also that P & M is a temptation. As he might make it exciting. Then again it wd. be cashing in on something I don’t give a damn about. But mss-wise I got some more Marshall for No: 2. And Jonas says he has two on the Tarot Deck (The Hanged Man) and (The Tower) and I thgt. I would write to Robert Creeley and ask him for some.

I also think if you want to do it, and send me a wide poem, I wd. send it first to Villiers and say can you print this as is, because I did go back to all those you mentioned to see the job, and they do cut it off/ but with enough voice at them, it does not have to be so in the future. Or they could be printed sideways/ the whole damn book. Then again, I know you have Evergreen #3 after you, and that means money, etc. so I would go there for as much as they want. Still the hungry says there must be something left over.

\textsuperscript{44} Achilles Fang (1910-1995), sinologist and editor whose legendary (among Pound scholars) 865-page Harvard dissertation was a study of every single allusion in the \textit{Cantos}, which he did not publish for fear of offending Pound by pointing out errors with sources. He was a close correspondent of Pound’s during the latter’s incarceration at St. Elizabeth’s. Asked for his opinion on including Fang’s proposed essay in \textit{Measure}, Robert Duncan replied, “This Pound-Mussolini thing is a dead horse. There is no issue in making \textit{Measure} an agency for Pound” (n.d., 1957).

\textsuperscript{45} Founded by Gordon Cairnie (1895-1973) in 1927 using his own thousands of volumes as the stock, the Grolier Book Shop is a legendary Harvard Square haven for poets and writers operated by Cairnie until his death. From 1974 through 2006 the Grolier was owned by Louisa Solano, before being sold to Nigerian poet and Wellesley professor Ifeanyi Menkiti.
I am timid to put my foot in [illeg] we plan this fall, Mike pulling out, and so many faces looking in the window at you, but Dana wd. never take Mexico (yet)

If you come to Boston, be assured any time this summer that you can have the use of this apt. all set up, for a couple of weeks, Dana putting out fires again on the North Shore, and I cd. live with parents or anywhere for as long as you want it here. It’s two nice high ceilinged rooms, with kitchen and bath, and I guarantee you no interference of any sort, except the woman upstairs has heavy heels on the stairs in the morning. We live in a house built 1790, they tell me, and its all furnished.

And we cd. have a poetry reading both Boston & Cambridge, big ears here now. 2 (nearly three years) a long time to spread the word, but it’s spread. and I’d get you a 100, at least. Though Dana says we’ve got to go to NC on our way out. So. have gone

Michael Rumaker  
April 28, 1957  
[Boston]  

Dearest Michael:

I shd. be in bed, but your letter has made such demands on me, I think I am even getting a poem out of it on my mother, her ground and mine, that I have to write something to you, and let this serve as cover to a short poem I wrote to serve as prologue to a long one about the same ladies:

of the night.

Mary Butts and Leah [illeg]. 46

I am glad of the dreams.
I will gossip a bit for I am inadequate to anything else.
Don Allen was here last night, and it is very exciting because he does believe in you in yours.
He takes off terrifically on Exit 3, although he talks about an ambiguity of the ‘I’, which I am sure he will write you of. Then it was and still a pleasure to have a stranger talk of you, believing I am a stranger to you also, or he did.

Then I wrote to Lady Corman tonight for the Origin’s, which you cd. have done if you known. No matter, as I sent a 5.00 order/ and quantity reduces the rate, a dime or so.

Ann Stokes sent a 1.00 which I loved on blue paper. And asked if there weren’t going to be any lady writers in MEasure. And Olson writes in No: 2 I must stress silk stockings, panties,
white hands on the ladies white legs, so I sent him my handmaid poem, which I won’t use, for I want to stay out of Measure, only as editor, until later, if then. It depends if I write it to match the contributors. I am writing to Creeley within a few days and asking him for a batch. And Achilles Fang suggests an article on Pound & Mussolini, which wd. make us immortal, but I don’t think I want to cash in on same. Then again, I will go and talk to him, and see what he has up his wherever.

46 Looks like “Facad.”
I AM RISEN, I think of that never, but I compare the agony of last year with this, the furnished room with this, and I do nothing but hug the day to my heart/ because I am making it in it.

GOOD ON THE SPICER. One must keep it same. You must. And one loses, one believes in other agonies (than his,) the unstated ones. In him who has nothing but his agony, I never knew or felt the Olson strictures on me, until I am confronted it in Spicer, I see me in him

Oh the ground you talk on, from your self to another’s/ my mother’s and mine, how Richard Duerden has raised a hand, nail polish over the Rockies.
I am possessed this spring with the accouterments of women, I have my toenails painted red, and take great delight on the subway/ and when I stick them out of bed in the morning, this is what God is or should be, crimson toenails. I shouldn’t write to you, I know, because it lays on you, it must, to be prompt. Although it delights me to have it. NOTHING from Marshall since February, and a worry now, because we wandered very much there, answering ads for roomates etc. Hope you like the poem (I w/ send the long one later), somewhat and that you can say a word or so on them, I feel things changing between us, that it deeps or thickens. this isn’t emotion, or what is happening not emotion, but that more can be said, or what is said, at least to me, is going to a deeper place, a formative place. So nothing is evident from it, but a new part in me I am most anxious to read what you send.

love,
John

I re-read the poem/
and am completely removed from its graces,
so don’t feel you have to say anything.

James Schuyler
April 28 [1957]
[Boston]
Dear J:

All rec’d and being used. PLEASE don’t hurry back the Olson, because it deepens again & again, at least it does for me. He don’t knock John, he uses him to slap the others. In fact Keats’ ‘intensity of object’ which you are possessed by too, is O’s delight. Have you read Ernest Fennollosa’s Essay on the Chinese Written Character, trans. by EP, in a book of his INSTIGATIONS.(Sounds) I die now to see your new poems. Methodology, (the study of method) I wd. imagine, in other’s stuff, how they did it, & to where, from where we gotta go. ‘I’ll see you again’ soon, somehow it’s faded. His name alone is enough to keep him around the house. Look at Dana.

Love
J

Richard Duerden (d. 2000), San Francisco poet and publisher, part of the Stinson Beach crowd, close friends with Duncan and Jess and Jack Spicer. He published many of his contemporaries in the small magazines Foot and Rivoli.
Robert Duncan  May 1, 1957  [Boston]

Dear Robert:

Robin ten days ago brought over your long-playing etc and the machine was broken so it stuck on the last band of both sides. Three days later I went to Robin's and we played it again & I HEARD the last poem on Side Two and it has filled me with an excitement for you that I write to ask if you can send it for yours in Number 2 of Measure. Now the surprise is still with me/ of the whole and the envy but not a sour one.

I wd. call it the girl in the gown I don’t own. So it wd. make me very happy/ as I want Measure to be major, spend my energies so and this belief grows with each day that there is no necessity for it unless we can find there those EVENTS in form that are nowhere else. The true groping(s). I am compelled to push. Never believe I will get it from any of you unless I present the space available as important.

Achilles Fang suggests 20 pp on Pound & Mussolini /and if I decide on it is decided that this matters (I am reading Jefferson and/or) then I wd. add 20pp to Issue 3 or 4 – and call that issue The State with No: 3 The City. Anyway he promises translations for end of summer.

The proofs for No 1 w/be here by end of week and shd. be available as book in early June. THOUGH I am having trouble in having him lay it out (double page) as I want it/ what he calls bad typography and mechanical obstacles. Etc shit.

(Proportions) will close NO: 1 filling the last 9 pages of the 48 allowed. Which I hope to increase by 2. Olson two days ago sent $5.00 check ‘for Robert Duncan’ so I print the sponsors in the back. Do you want yr. name printed as such. If not, then the name of whoever you want credited. Robin is using the pseudonym of James Felts. Do you want to be Christopher Marlow?

I can’t say any individual thing about what poem, etc. came off best ONLY that there is a recorded dance/ what strains I hear. Nice variations (in voice) the voice being part but it is the excitement of the last poem/ in so many ways not had from you before that has me up. A card wd. do yes or no – and then at yr. leisure for mss. if yes. From mid-may’s child on. Thank you for the people you directed – esp. Duerden. I don’t think Eve Triem sent her best. Be assured that both Robin & I go over all 4 or 5 times reading & re-reading aloud to each other. That’s confidential

48 Jefferson And/Or Mussolini, Ezra Pound’s 1935 apologia for the utopian fascism he saw in Mussolini’s Italy. The dialectical title indicates Pound’s project, an attempt to destabilize any oppositions between a father of American democracy and Italy’s fascist leader (with a heavy layer of anti-Semitism). Perhaps the best summary of the hard-to-find book comes from Jeffrey Mehlman, who called it “maddeningly wrong-headed” (Mehlman 8).

49 Eve Triem (1902-1992), American poet and participant in the 1950s San Francisco poetry scene, including Jack Spicer’s “Poetry as Magic” workshop; as a matter of fact, money from a “lesbian gym teacher” who had a mad crush on Triem was funneled into the Poetry Center, via Robert Duncan, to pay for the workshop. Triem was one of Robert Duncan’s “Maidens,” a group of six poets who met monthly for food and reading and performance, along with James Broughton, Helen Adam, Madeline Gleason, Duncan, and Jess. “Members were issued an icon, a svelte Art Nouveau moon goddess figurine rescued from the marble base of a ‘bar stool’ when a local soda fountain was demolished” (PBLG 79, 92). Triem’s collection New as a Wave was published by Dragon Gate Press in 1984.
Michael Rumaker

May 7 [1957]

[Boston]

Dear Mike:

A new one/ and the circumstance of it all so much in my eyes and my everywhere, that I want to go to sleep again quick, so I typed up two copies, one for you and one for Mr Big and I send Origin XIX off with the both, I lost the card, so I took it you meant me to send him his.

Otherwise all is fine. And I’ll write again, and your letter gave me great joy, and the poem I have read twice and will hold off on, until the dreams, the poem is one too, I wd say.

Scarlett O’Hara survived the burning of At., Ga. so?? why not? What kept me off the streets, the what appears tonight to be the destruction of same, is what spurred the poem, after 11 dexamyls Sunday, and where do we it all ends. Nevertheless we survive, and can come to that common ground, CHRIST, how I wd want to walk on yours, then again tomorrow will return with its personal joys. I aint one to believe in agony. As any kind of instrument of knowledge, only the 

LOVE always, funny how that word wdn’t be written.

John

A PROPOSITION

Let me tell you a story/

and I warn you

BORE. me/it

but baby, it’s here

and I lay down for it, on me

for two years to let it out.

As Blaze Star
Uta Graf, how Blake makes
a word straight and Keats is clutteredup
with fairywings.

Now some of us are such
we hold our tongues out for love, into death
or is it life/ I cant answer
only we are thin bellies without it
With it we destroy it.

LOVE

Olson says if he heard the word anymore
he’d go sick on it.
I am sick on it.
The Cock/
    is the door down below, no
opening for me?
Rockbottom Blaser wd say.
An expression of the personal, Duncan.

but we partake of the agony
of the toss on white sheets

My mother called tonight, a thin voice
as she shall call many nights before she dies
(and after) I’ll hear her

she has no rocking chair/ and I can have
no country fantasy of surprising her in one.
Nor a picket fence/ around the house

when I came home from school and found her in the kitchen
with the baker on top of her.

Nor when I helped her to bed
and pored the last whiskey for sleep.

And that aint record covers

Mr Big, nor Diana Barrymore

but just part of a day/ as we have put blood
in ours, our house;
    Oh Rose thou art sick

baby/

No wall
    no window
thick enough
to keep out the bread bandit
that man who stole my childhood cookies.
And Mr. Bear on the westcoast
    this is not Miss Millay, nor is Ladies Home journal.

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50 Wieners is quoting William Blake’s “The Sick Rose,” “Oh Rose thou art sick! / The invisible worm, / that flies in the night, / in the howling storm, // has found out thy bed / of crimson joy.” Allen Ginsberg wrote in “Howl” of his 1948 vision after reading the poem. In his memoir Ed Sanders describes the revelation, when Ginsberg heard the ghostly voice of William Blake chanting the poems from The Songs of Experience beginning ‘Oh Rose, Thou Art Sick’ and ‘Ah, Sunflower, Weary of Time’ in an apartment in Spanish Harlem. From 1948 through half of 1963 he had obeyed the implications of his Blake visions, searching for personal Illuminations and Ecstasy (Sanders 1).
A way of making the day. Or
    saying
Howl for me sisters, Hell?
Honey you aint been on your knees enough,
nor do I intend to wait there
for you to find me.
A baker's cock,
    so we raise our arms
and the muscles swell
Its black and blue
    you better change yr way
of living or there wont be none left.

For you aint ever quite safe enough
no ladies riding out to green fields
or madeup meadows or beds
    work up
the blue eye so it glistens for the few
who cant give their bodies
    learn that
they get mothers
or want hair on your chest, so we turn

And poor poem?  you bear it?
No dice. Wont take it like the black man
who wants to suck off the world, and youre on your knees waiting
and he's on his
    and never the tongue shall meet.
NOW LISTEN. I'm asking nothing
I'm dropping in a few nickels
from a poor pocket, with holes
the prices go up at 9, make it
DRAMA, wipe it off your nose, and the kleiglights,
no one's catching the dance,
    you & the word,
    in the empty
house, with a little piano music

from the Adams family out the bedroom window.

A source to draw off
    that some other
    maybe my old lady
laid down in tears and some good fairy gathered up
for the occasion.
Don Allen

May 16 [1957]

[Boston]

Dana wishes a full month.

Dear Don:

Just to get things back to you quick. PLEASE care for the Olson as you say a copy aint nowhere, and I love it more than the rests, almost.

The THIS is accurate, setup etc, except in the fancy printing the left a ½ space after commas, and I tried this with no luck, so…

Also enclosed my copy of Olson’s biography copied from source.

I have already written him re Evergreen 3 and I have a letter done today, so I will add news in yr note, at least jubilation over interest. Though thinking on, I don’t know what his reactions are. (Mine) ➔ Much respect for you doing it, not that in five years, he wont be there anyway.

He also has a completed unpublished book on the later Shakespeare, (plays), from which he read one chapter in class. Excitements there, no doubt. You have read his essays, I suppose, and Projective Verse, which really set new things, I am sure, in the Trail Blaser’s air. Though Robin went one up, when he wrote O ‘breath as texture’ rather than Corman’s ‘sound’ alone. So O came back strong with long excited letter, which will serve as another Maximus; at least Max gets in notes to Robin.

His Address is simply:
Charles Olson
Black Mountain College
Black Mountain, North Carolina

Also I have the old Twice-a-Years, oh fuck it, I aint no lending letter (library and I sound too fevered to go on.

Very nerve-wrack time, Steve being evicted, and having to appear in court Sat morning, his neighbors signed a petition on the ‘music’ he not owning a phonograph for 3 mos. And They trying to break into his apt. last Mon or Tues/ with a 2x4, smashing two panels, so now he bringing counter suit for attempt to do bodily harm etc (damages not to exceed 5,000 dollars) all this & eviction/ with Blas suffering appendicitis attack tonight/ and who knows what they’ll find wrong (he dont eat) but yeast pills and bennies. So to stay/ one has to move

scratch the scalp

attempt to take giant steps, the cracks are that wide
in the pavement.

But we’ll all go to court Sat and stand there with Dr Fineberg across the room muttering, I’ll get you out you black bastard, and red-headed George Murphy muttering, they’re the last of that bohemian crowd left over from last year, oh yes, we have grand plans for Mr Jonas, well,

51 In a footnote to Olson’s essay “Quantity in Verse, and Shakespeare’s Late Plays,” editors Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander note that “Although his published output offers no hint, Olson worked assiduously in the 1950s to produce a book on Shakespeare—ten chapters are preserved in Olson’s papers at Storrs. Out of that attempt came the essay at hand, ‘banged out’ in 1956” (431).
there’ll be paideuma
in the sky
bye and bye. 52

Thanks for the subscription, gave me a lift, and write as you can from
Yaddo 53 of the lovely ones,
Yes Frank has two full pages, from Second Ave. in Measure 1 54
Our best,
John

Charles Olson

May 16 [1957]
[Boston]

Dear Charles:

Just wanted to get this off to you. How this whole ‘culture’ wears on one (me). If I did not have the knowledge of me at BM, could entertain the fantasy of shoving it all and going off to ‘the fabulous island’ (Tiamat?) For even that sheepdip (BM’s) can’t do it. We come soiled & needy, from our mothers the white living rooms and it is piled on before our eyes/ are open, turned into consumers, customers at a bad bargain basement. And of course, Measure means a kind of personal whip at it and me. Now this sds. guilt-ridden etc. but not so – its that
when the talisman comes under the hand/ then one sees the past filth of things of full ears & ‘entertainment’. Too much lying back in the silk cushions. And only when one is shook to see the struggle / just what’s up and how most of the time we aint up at it. Spend the day in a frenzy of waste. Oh, I suppose they all saw this. Wordsworth too late and soon only I ask myself the way out, like the bull.

How Measure obligates (the 10.00 more than before) and it means I must reaffirm myself, you know, keep the blue eye blue. And then again/ only by staying in its midst and letting the heart get a good, only by walking a sure foot down the primrose path / only it aint inertia or sin

52 “Paideuma” is a term from Leo Frobenius that Pound uses to describe ”the tangle or complex of the inrooted ideas of any period.” Pound insists, “The Paideuma is not the Zeitgeist”; rather, it refers to “the grisly roots of ideas that are in action” (Guide to Kulchur 58).
53 Yaddo, artists’ colony in Saratoga Springs, New York, which began hosting artist residents in 1926.
54 Wieners published “Section 9” of Second Avenue, O’Hara’s book-length poem released in full by Totem Press in 1960. In this great city poem, O’Hara evokes
Memories of home, which is an island, of course
and historical, of course, and full of ass, of course. Yes,
may you trip on a blue fire-escape and go up when it’s raining!
What dismal monster cannot be electrocuted? what fool
not rumpled, what miserable wretch not forced upon the happiness
which kills. I witness at last the calmness of ordure. (Measure 21)
letting the energies be misdirected to the / or whatever, the passing parade (no band)

And the law you're under/ or were maybe gone now per Blaser's letter. Only I think often of where you can go and as you do, others take their lead. Let that be stated. I take the lead from footprints. Now anyways. That is why what you do this year will be a lead for many – what a burden, you don't want but such at is – MEASURE, a true wedge for us all to beat our space on- hobnail boots. Well, we do go on. And that's the wonder that each month seems to be greener, a new bush, than the last.

Yours,

John

This really is a pretty dreary message – no answer expected, a personal catharsis. One knows the direction. Only the strength goes at times. Now I plan for No: 2 with some worked vacation money to have a page for & of contributors. That means that if you don't take offense at the idea there will be a montage page of the face (yrs) of all those in the issue. I don't know what yet maybe in form like that of the enclosed. Do you have a photograph, a 25¢ penny arcade will do.

Only later I thgt what I got to afford avoid is the jazz record cover. Anyway, trust me on it. You won't be wearing a ladies hat, etc.

Find 3.00 for Maximus II, if you still have them. It took me this long.

When I got home there was a letter from Don Allen (Grove Press, ed. Evergreen Review) 'I've written asking Olson to submit a ms. of poems to [illeg – Grige?] for book publication. Please say urging word if you can, for we want to have a chance…' also asking me for a typed copy of this which I send off in this mail, along with a copy of Call Me Ishmael which can't be got in NY except for 12.00! That's better, honey, than Pound. So I send that too, and mentioned yr bk on Shakes

‘2) we want to consider Call Me Ishmael as a paperback I don't know yr reaction to this. I told him so. Yet he is a basic concerned person, and wants to very much be participant in some forces as must be evident.

OK. No word from Marshall, but nothing has been returned from this address with the notation: PLEASE FORWARD or Return in 5 days.

301 West 13th Street Room 23 New York, NY

Oh, the Pound-Mussolini out. Fang thinking I wd. be particularly interested, and obligated I think by his remarks to do something. So if I get translations at end of summer, that wd. be enough.

55 Call Me Ishmael, Charles Olson’s first book, a study of Moby-Dick first published in 1947. It begins with his unforgettable declaration “I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy” (CP 17).
My best to Betty &

Love

Then again its just at times, one enjoys things so much. I never get over the feeling that German girl gives me from the phonograph, about her bed and how she must lie in it. A waltz step one looks for over & over again everywhere.  

---

Charles Olson

[Late May, 1957]

[Boston]

Dear Charles:

An instant reply (which I have been trying to write since I got yours at 6: now 8:15)

That you seized on something wasn’t there. Blaser had showed me your letter (there was no one else to) and one has to share that kind, no? He even photo’d it to keep the pink paper in the house. Per it, I knew thou to be free. No more chain on the chain on the eagle leg. This what I meant. And where shall be roost?

And the statement: ‘where you can go’ really a question. For it has been with me, this where? – I entertain daydreams. Nightdreams. Gloucester in the hand to give you! Last night, you in a gray silk suit, sitting, very long legs, and someone on my right (smiling, encourage, Duncan?) as I climbed onto your knee Danny Boy. Now that is the most embarrassing six words I have ever had to write. You were smiling also. Though later angry! though I dont remember naturally why.

Then last week, there was a cottage in Provincetown, a galleyinn where Dana & I usta go. And your new wife was there, a woman I had never seen before. You will laugh, but she was very motherly, and plump, hausfrau, hair pulled back in a bun, black hair, and full cheeks, loving, I kissed her on the cheek, she was making dinner for us. Dana & I & Elizabeth (her name) and you came in from town/ and we sat down to eat, talking of old things at a wood table, the sea at the other end of the room, out the windows, and the waves breaking in the warm sound like they do at Provincetown under the house.

SO DAD, take it as you will, its there, Im afraid. But all right, I know, meant to be such, in fact, filling me with a surety.

Since last September, the two of us planned SF, after graduation, etc. A season in the firehouse. Then Measure happened. Now I dont want to bring it out to their laps. I want it somewhere like Boston, with an aura around it, what Boston has to them (all).

---

56 Below this are Olson’s handwritten notes, mostly lists of names and numbers, using the page as scratch paper.

57 Wieners is responding to the May 15, 1957, letter in which Olson demands:

Please write instantly what you mean by

“And the law you’re under / or were maybe some how per Blaser’s letter”

please expatiate. Wld like very much (wld help) to know what you think I was on, & the other statement “where you can go” ?? WOW. Tell me.

I’m – lookin’! (“the sea under the house” v. 1, 32)
It has come to me that it is the internal ‘city’ that counts. The many mansions of/ and in me moviehouses. I dont need SF anymore. Nor have you ever.

In the silent films they used a technique called THE IRIS SHOT. Birth of a Nation! ‘Mothers & children weep while a Great Conquerer rides to the sea’

And the screen is black except for that woman & hers (1914) huddled left nothing else, then it widens & we are on a hill, its a mountain, and in the great valley below, as big as fingernails ride 5000 horses. The camera dont move, IT OPENS. And the cavalcade, even the lead(er) what is uncovered. And somehow I heard the sound. Nothing moves really, but the children getting in closer, lifesize, the bugs below moving out

Then the fist closes down again & we are left, as opening, with ma & kids.

COULD coming here be an IRIS PERISCOPE for you? That the countryside will be revealed. Except something must be offered. And to pull out in September, is nothing, a hack, as the goldgal says. It’s a terrible problem pour moi, as has been all in which you are concerned. The each decision has brought knowledges (the consequences of each) I wd. be impoverished without.

You in New England will (would) cause a ‘great stir,’ that Maximus walks on his literal ground. In San Francisco, another displaced person. Then there’s Mexico & Wenner Cren. But not Maximus’ land. Where the source is (not the honey nor the bees) that’s where he’s gotta go.

And source means return? The internal. Texture is determined by.

Structure.

What ground its laid/

The sea under the house.

Now you mean by law weightier things than I did, with the legal.

Your phrase in last letter I took my lead from:

‘Law/Property’.

But you come try us.
And I realize the pressures on you, so I leave the lead
‘the thread from the right shoulder. And from the forehead’ ‘s YOURS.
But what we have here is also

Re Mike: He sent, on my urging, those dreams we heard him speak at BM, two of them exactly as said then. About 10 others, I took 8 to open Measure: 2. But I wrote immediately what you say: though he said last April Creeley took ‘The Use of the Unconscious in Writing’ for BMR 7.

Great to have face, & I write to Redl, for on thgt, I wd like the eyes there too. Whatever, the face does it, no biographical crap/

Christ, its a hell of a season. Blaser & I devour each other/ and trying to gobble you up in it.

“Please comply.”

My Love
John

Re poems, dont feel no necessity re them. I got a good lift there, and I shall continue in the current of that force. Glad to be rid of the loveburden at last, the immediate one, I mean, our life together is much better for it/ There is a larger desire to participate in.

I sent you a large card of Bunker Hill Monument last Saturday, but felt guilty jabbing at you so much, so tore it up, but if you dont mind, I will continue, have patience, we'll see what happens, init.

By all means YES on Adolph, by Dr Murray or who?
'The secret of secrets’ I aim to keep/ preserve. Cd you come up with a line for/on England at the same time? It sounds good to hear you say
‘Law-dee-dah’
possibly the lifting of it’s done it.

that as we lay them down
we lift law, can

Despite orders –
the cloth comes measured
to our size / in-
sides-

That you do not pass port

I wish I cd. say what I think you was on, have only the result, here, since 1950. PV: that has been a law one learns like walking, with all that goes in learning such a process/ all fours, till finally you get to the knees on the other side of the room, AND HANG ON.
Deadline for 2 is middle June – if anything comes
Duncan: “Do try to get from Charles his satyrs poem for #2."

Robert Duncan May 21 [1957]
[Boston]

Dear Robert [Duncan]:

Could you please pardon haste here? I just want to get off to you how Measure 2 stands, or has its back up, but not against a wall, good?

A digression first? Yr statement on the personal ever since first quoted to me by Robin has of course been a thing in my mind (also I remember now At BM) Poetry not a statement of, or expression of self, but a participation in (is this right) the/or/a created world.

Now this is hard on me, because I carry the personal so around me (not any longer the loveburden) I wrote O tonight, there is a larger desire to participate in, (but there was nothing I cd do about same until it had removed itself, this immediate desire) but I still have the personal/ personae?
That I believe & must state it somehow the objects of my world/ the belly grinders, etc compulse me to write of them, that we only have our own eyes, what their structure forces them to see, how some lights are shut out. This all ties in with me as editor, that I cannot afford any partial vision, any personal one, and thus yrs against Spicer I believe in / BECAUSE I have seen it in action, know the (can I call it evil) source, the misery it feeds on, how it creates the situation to feed on, how it becomes homeless without same. And that it comes down to nothing more than ego, or self, & exploiting of same. ‘Bandwagon,’ beat yr own drum, etc. And if your own sounds hollow, then find a head to beat.

A heart.

An actual blood sucking, but this leads as in the case of Jonas’ later poetry here to a participation in larger matters, that He (Jonas) despite trapped always by this intramural play with whomever he is in contact with, has managed to create, rather, dredged up ‘the mystical recurrence of things’.

Back to Jack: There is no excitement in form. His Song for Bird in Measure I is the most boring of all, in fact none other bore, even O’Hara, in his chi-chi, has a quality (you’ll see) but Spicer lays on the page, no care, it aint ideas he thrills to, I feel its feelings only, where he has participated HIMSELF in like feelings. Rexroth who’s done more work, but who now really is nothing more than a performer. I think maybe none of us shd have success. That our word is waited for.

‘the beginning again and the beginning again and again’
That never are we/ have we made it.
So much tho I have had to be taught. This business that this world owed me.

I OWE IT everything.

Well, these statements have demanded themselves, so they end.

And I go to the business:
Creeley will be in 2. He promises. So I am all for that. Tho he says all his poems are out, still there w/ be notes or article, something. I know, of value. Re Levertov, if she dont respond per yr urging, I will write, but probably in 3. You see, I wanted to make the foundation w/o the reliance on those that Origin & Arc & BMR had. Completely – not the same. I wrote ‘Turnbull’ after reading ‘To You I write’ which excited me at the time, but which has since worn off. After all, I bought the thing for the Duncan, so it was an added

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58 In the letter to which Wieners is responding, from May 24, Duncan had enthusiastically advised Wieners on Measure, which he considered “An open challenge that I might face.” He wrote:

Keep the objects of your world – just look at ‘em straight on. Belly grinders, when all is in focus, is as real as trees. This focus, (a turning between subject and object; right declaration of where and when; exact placing and timing) needs more practice with belly grinders than trees?

What I sense as needed in your work is some not making too much of a good thing. Even perhaps an artificial impoverishment of wit (your mind is so ready with material) to begin with?

59 Gael Turnbull (1928-2004), Scottish physician, poet, and publisher whose work appeared in the Black Mountain Review, Ray Souster’s Contact and Cid Corman’s Origin. He was a close correspondent with the Black Mountain poets, and helped distribute much of their work through his Migrant Press, including Ed Dorn’s What I See in the Maximus Poems in 1960.
surprise to have that last summer’s poem, and I got a little carried off. Wrote him a semihysterical letter, enclosed that dreadful one of mine, which took off from one of his lines.

I am very pleased with The Dance. Heard it again Saturday night. Also Rumaker sent DREAMS, to make the handbook. And yr piece on Maidens is EXACTLY what was needed.

Now I ask a further grant: That on some page of Measure, there shall be a page of & for contributors. A Montage of Faces, tho I don’t know yet what form, The EYES,

A background of the Public Gardens, with all of you there, and the houses across the street. So far, I got two of the bearded Olson, & he mentions a Harry Redl, who has some he spoke highly of, & told me to write. No address. Though I wrote to Mike, he might not have same, so if you do, cc. you send, or contact him, if convenient. If not, OK.

BUT MOST IMPORTANT, that I get yr mug. The Eyes, even the penny arcade shot will do. It will be a job fitting together, but might be fun, and of course, omit all the biography or identification. Let the face make it. The Heading

CONTRIBUTORS TO MEASURE.

I hope in 2 there will be sixty-four pages and 500 copies. Deadline mid-June. So if anything happens in the time, you think fits, please send, As of now, I just have fragments & not able to gather.

Very late now, Robert. love
John

Olson says all his long poems Villiers ruins, so he can’t give same, that means Satyrs. Though I buzz him a bit every letter. I tell him I’ll print sideways, etc. But he must take his own lead, so after the buildup I’m sure he’ll relent. Though Grove after him for book. A busy season.

Yet one must gather strength, not piss it about as so many seem to be doing. Robin a great pleasure. His energy amazes me.

Write re suggestions or things I might be turned on. I hope to Make Measure until the end of the decade.

1960

I have Here & Now – the two you mention sound delightful already –
Fang is out. He didn’t see much sense in it either/
but wanted to do something. It’s a chapter from his book/
where he says the Pisan Cantos are a mass for the dead /
Mussolini R.I.P. – PS That photo of you & Creeley if a negative around? wd that make it?
Ed Dorn

5-22 [1957]
(Boston)

Dear Edvardo:

As ‘Saint Billie of the Horsemen’ said: People say I lost my voice. I’m still singin’, they just ain’t listening.

Maybe in the wrong ears. Now I got plan for contributors page in 2. No biographical crap. Let the FACE make it, the eyes. So a photo montage? With a common background, throw you all in as you camping there. The Public Gardens. Heading CONTRIBUTORS TO MEASURE: that’s all. You gotta trust me on this, if its a ball, I'll do it, otherwise, w/return. Olson sent two, him ‘white fuzz on the puss’. So send yrs. Even a penny arcade: I’ll put you in a treetop, maybe I shd save that for the put you in a treetop, maybe I shd save that for the fairies. Measure 1 slow becuz of printer, not funds. Set to go on 2. Middle of June deadline. Cd. I have photo by end of this month? LOVE, man.

John

Barbara Guest

May 23 [1957]
(Boston)

Dear Barbara Guest:

There is not enough. I have gone over them 3 times after receiving them & now again – different. This time their qualities are here for me much more. But I want more. Maybe this cannot be. That you are not structured such.

I give you your intent.

Also this is a liberty I take for you didnt ask anything still something compels me to write this out. BECUZ you’ve read me, I believe. Not sure of this, but believe so. Thus something has been created. Enough on cause.

It is the intent that these are intimate poems. Addressed to the cause of them. I suppose the ‘prose’ piece makes it more w/ with me. For the form of it. And the technique.

You arent particularly careful in it. As I sense in the others you care too much what happens – too conscious this is the poem underhand. We’re young. We shd. take every chance in the world w/ the form. The painters do.

I also feel you & me weaned on different people.

Now today May 24

the prose piece comes thru so clear that I wd want to use it if you can send me more to fill out a bit. Not this/ but others of yours. If not at this time, I’ll keep it & wait UNTIL YOU DO THEM. I am interested. Qualities I sense that are nowhere else.

The first 2 lines of Geliebte Frau and then are we eating lettuce, nein NO! for me.

PS: Also the ‘to echoes in marble & grass’ If that means what I think I love it but I cant be sure because you have just given me nouns could mean anyplace/where? Place it for us. This is not advice to rework these simply for when it happens again. How dense of me. You must have Verlaine and I dont know him at all.

I have the sense that you and I are defeated before we even begin, that you will resent this, but I take the chance in case in case you dont.

Have you read Charles Olson’s
PROJECTIVE VERSE essay 1950

Appeared first No;2 Poetry: NY (not london!) Jim Schuyler has my only copy – which he w/ return soon if you wd like, I wd gladly send same. Just for stimulus only. It’s terrible to the touch, the paper it’s on. Also WCW reprinted first ½ in his Auto-biography.

May I tell you what I think deters/detours?

Obvious invention.

‘singsonging’

I dont understand ‘which you seek to transgress’

The ocean? She’s gonna wade it?

Again/ we all ‘breathe/ most necessarily’

There is such precise vision in all three. That these kind of vaguenesses interfere.

Now you are not at the place & time for the outside to be interfering like this letter/ but if you can, I wd. enjoy reading more and also knowing more who you are in communion with/ spirit-wise. Who are those ones you feel know the same ground as you. That is the exciting thing about the little you sent. The feeling here that you have your own ground.

And I want to know more of it. I dont want to send you off to Magic but for a great many reasons Mary Butts – some novels – you wd love.

June 30

So you can see where I been these weeks: nowhere. New York once, for abt 24 highwalking hours.

Don Allen writes that you have done some beautiful poems/ Well, you just got to send them. And Jim, if you wd get after him, has done some very interesting ones, I will print in Measure II. You will forgive the delay, but I have been in a terrible funk, emphasis on terror, which tonight I begin to struggle out of it. And if it wd be not obligation on you, it wd give me great pleasure to have your new things. Have you also read:

Earnest Fennolosa’s


Jim will have a copy of this, or can be had from the Square Dollar Series for $1.00. I can get you this. If you send me a Schuyler ‘Truth Dollar’. Whatever, I have thgt about you often. A friend who read your three, said you are an excellent metricist.

‘I say to you, Ursula,

There are immense problems,’

not for Measure fortunately, which goes ahead under encouragement from the entire countryside. No II upto 64 pages (wow) etc. But not a single woman yet, except two small poems of VR Lang. So there is space.

My best to you,

John W.

And be more prompt than this one.
Allen Ginsberg

May 26 [1957]

[Boston]

Dear Allen:

The deadline for 2 is the middle of June. So far OK, I have 10 pages at least of Kerouac from his BOOK which I got from Lord per yr letter. I also wrote Lamantia but no answer. If you got nothing on this MAGICK theme, its airtight as 3 w/ be the city. 2 also features a handbk of dreams and a photo-montage of CONTRIBUTORS – no biographical crap – simply let the face say it. The EYES. So if you can get some poems off to me/dreams like you would tell them around the table/ also include photo for this. If it dont ball, then I’ll drop it.

There w/ be no particular identification of faces, a heading like capital letters above w/ a common background – the Public Gardens?

With this letter will go one to Whalen for his & Snyder’s poetry. And I know I have cut time short, but if they dont get in 2, then 3. Its just that Myths & Texts⁶⁰ sounds like good for MAGICK. Long poem of Perkoff’s in 2 you will go wild on. Also I’ll send One to you when it comes out – though printer is slow, no promises kept by him, STILL, due middle of June. Creeley also on 2.

It’s hard to write to you baby things being such. But hope you’re moving well as before. It was a nice night in the city for me. Cant forget.

O, I’ve been following you up whenever – NOW Combustion did have the piece for me – Don Allen, a Robin Blaser and myself all dug it one night here in Boston, taking turns reading it – A YELLOW STREAK OF LOVE, Blaser kept saying, alright I know it’s a streak of yellow love, but he made it both ways.⁶¹ Then IE 6 I finally got to. As story – Wow, Coastlines, no go as I did not go for it. Still those other two, the story of Joan – came through, no attempt at narrative? but there. And the last stanza with the adjectives did not interfere, the STRAINing after, a, death, quiet.

If you think Lamantia’s out, say so. If not, I will try again/ as I have liked done in the past.

My best to you and

also to the loveboy.

By the way I sent a flyer to Louis Ginsberg for a subscription and got back 3 poems. No results from sending that whole crowd flyers but then I’m pledging this body to Harvard

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⁶⁰ Gary Snyder (b. 1930), American poet, environmental activist, and scholar whose three volume book-length poem *Myths and Texts* was completed in 1956 but published in 1960 by Totem Press. It begins by responding to the memorable last line of Thoreau’s Walden, “The sun is but a morning star,” with a rejoinder: “The morning star is not a star.” Later the poet on his mountaintop calls “Poetry a riprap on the slick rock of metaphysics.” From 1960 to 1964 he was married to Joanne Kyger (b. 1934), Wieners’ San Francisco roommate and close friend. Kyger’s *Strange Big Moon* provides an invaluable account of her travels through Japan and India with Snyder and Allen Ginsberg during those same years.

⁶¹ Ginsberg’s poem “Fragment 1956” contains a revelation of the sins of the original Beat poets from 1947, “Jack / the worst murderer, Allen the most cowardly / with a streak of yellow love running through / my poems, a fag in the city” (*Collected Poems* 149).
Medical School after decease & they give you 150-250? clams. Pay for No:3. Main support old ladies, painting fringes, in NY, badpoets, and boyhood ‘chums’.

No complaint though —

Want to run till 1960 —

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[Boston]

Dear Allen:

Received yr very delightful letter, /but the reason for this is simply you forgot to enclose yr own photo. Got the Burroughs,62 and will print “Fragment of a Blue Movie” in No:3 for the underlying thing is the man, the city man. Also in 2, a 7 page poem of Perkoff’s: Feasts of Death, Feasts of Love. And 7 pages of Kerouac.

So the urgent request of this: wd. it be possible you send yr own photo as soon as you can, that I will never run of these again, and I dont want to leave anyone out. Snyder, I am afraid yes, as Whalen did not include one of him. Now if you cant find one, there must be a sidewalk photoman there, who’ll do it for a quarter.

I am going to write a letter re what you sent, it cant be here, for it is 4:25 and office closes at 5/ Let me say this off the top of my head.

You more than any of US are in a position to lead. This new generation Duncan speaks of apart from his own. Duncan Creeley Olson. The fathers. Simply in measure of production, you stride both. And this is the generation MEASURE will establish. And I will do all I can to push you as this leader. I am in concord with what you are.

What all of you stand for, not stand for, but live.

Kerouac and you, the rest, Jonas, here, where the poem comes from in this striding two generations bunch. A foot in both. You have.

But I dont want to print a stuff that does not measure up to what has gone before. The poems in Howl. Howl itself. SEATTLE, I am most pleased with of the lot. And this section in OVER KANSAS:

‘Who rides that lone road now?  
What heart? Who smokes and loves 
in Kansas auto now?  
Who’s talking magic 
under the night? Who walks 
downtown and drinks black beer 
in his eternity? Whose eyes 
collect the streets and mountaintops 
for storage in his memory? 
What sage in the darkness? 

IT IS A PLEASURE TO TYPE IT.

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62 William S Burroughs (1914-1997), American poet and writer. A central figure in the Beat movement and the larger American avant-garde, he is known for surreal, gritty novels like Junky and Queer. Before challenging censorship laws in Boston and Los Angeles in 1962, Naked Lunch was published in excerpts in the Chicago Review, the Black Mountain Review, and Measure, where it appeared under the pseudonym William Lee.
But if it means waiting six months, until you do the new, OK. And let Seattle go, as bait to them. Because they wait for you. Let them wait, until you can give them, only yr best ‘that we live our proper lives in print’. Sure, I cd print the whole batch and it wd sell. But not you

IN THE LEAD. Am I wrong here? You have made it such. That you are allowed to give out only yr very best. At peril of losing so much, if you do otherwise. Now you keep them coming here, as you do them, even sections from yr notebook, and grow as the magazine does, so that you will be seen init, will be measured over the years, by what you contributed to it. That it must not be reversal,

this does not mean I am adverse to the poem in process, simply from all of us, the space available demands our very best. Whatever, if you have an instant, come back on this, and I will answer yr letter proper after 2 goes off. June 17th. Or I’ll wait until I get yr photo.

My best, and pardon the haste

John

James Schuyler

June 11 [1957]

Boston

Dear Jimmy:

Let me just say this off the top of my head, that you are going to have a tough time making it alone / verse-wise, there. Now, I dont mean you wont have ears, and people liking what you do, but you will not find many truly digging what you are trying to do. Frank & who else? They might like the feeling : quote, but why you write this way (knowing there is no other) they’ll plague you, cause you self-doubt, being weaned on Poetry: Chicago. So this initially is to urge you to develop all you can yr resistances, even – when you think you have made a real hit: send off to Olson, for he is most open to any effort. Robin Blaser did just that, and rec’d back reams of stimuli. This is, only in case, you want to go back, to Tiamat, the easy couches.

USE, the man said, of yr self, as object, of the others as objects/ no hurt ego in the way, well, you dont have to worry here. That is more my kick.

I am most excited over what I call: yr market poems. That Christ, yes, this can be our gallery, will have to be.

That you are committed, involved & I suppose that is why the advice, because the involvement is such, you wd. go anywhere, where you think the green field is, & I dont want you in the wrong pastures.

PV set off a decade (1950 and MEASURE if my energies hold on out, will end it. We must see ourselves as the new generation, initially our youth in these ten years, &

if we survive,

after 1960, then we will be at the point of departure. As Pd, Wms, Marianne have all departed bringing up their own wonderful gifts.

Now is the time for the dredge, the pooling of energies, where we can learn to be sure.
Olson is one of our fathers, and those others are our grandpeople. It is a continuity. And that bastard strain of Wilbur, Booth, Hall, on and on and on, They are everywhere, a reversal, a falling away from the ‘new’ going thing. They must be ignored, as one wd imposters at a clan gathering.

This does not mean any sacrifice of individual quality, kicks, diseases, etc, simply that we are in agreement, these are here simply to be used, allowed in to lead us on. They the determinants. The individual perceptions, how yr eyes are like no one elses, and never should you look for someone else’s eyeshade to wear.

Of course, it means continual work/ it sleeps, stays down, away from us, if we sleep. And so much has been done already, even the grandpeople still at times set the pace. It means exhausting all that they have, and still having enough to go on. That is why Olson cursed once, he only had his sixty or so yrs. Of course, he wrote first poem in mid-thirties, (his) so that is why he feels behind. Also of course, why he has/ does take such giant-steps. To catch up.

Now abt poems in particular:

I wd venture you been reading Wms. Night Sky. One of his women. I wish there was more of her there. When a situation like this happens, fuck the landscape, the setting, leave it all to that woman, and if she’s taken off into the bus too quick, then end the poem there. Nice discontinuities here, tho.

I wd say ‘continuously’ a bad word. Gives us nothing. Of course, I have always found these the hardest poems to write, as observer, with me completely out of it. Remember in Journey to Love, the Doctor sees the old man on the subway, the old Wms. wd have left it just watching him, but the later Wms. sees in the old man’s face HIS FATHER’S face, or his own, both. A lot of going things in Night Sky & I am keeping it despite ending, which is added on to end it. The poem ended somewhere before, I dont know where, that’s yr problem.

Shed Market: the best for me. All there, and I will print it, to go with JOINT. OK? The syllables, such technique, that I am assured you are, one of us.

Snobitch. I am. But a delight, even cutey: Chesapeake! Only you NYers cd do that.

POEM:

wet
the tide out’ A good one too, despite that ending again.
’soft wet smell
of March’ Let me be very particular here.
‘Pale’ is not needed: the phrase reads better:
a red pulse
under the skin
throbs. What can I say abt this? Here are the qualities that make it for me. ‘Donald’s garage’ that particular, always be this particular.
‘when you turn your head
light’
a return to garage image, plus the added evocation of the sex bizness. I dont think you’ve said enough here, dodged off by calling it ‘March’ instead of calling it what it is. It cd even end at ‘hard running river’. (I hope you have copies so you know what I’m talking abt)

In fact, this one, gets richer, as the images take depth. But you are precise, exact, sometimes, & others, not. I wd work on this poem, maybe? Or does it still matter. If so, work here, cd. be of profit. Just a half hour on it, fighting that vagueness at end.

I also keep Rachmaninoff’s Third. It too delights. again, quicknesse on yr part. The image thrown precise, nice switches, oh the poem is so close to a burlesque dancer, I cant tell you. When it’s like this. I see now why the /word/ ‘dance’ has been in the mouth of our better ones I saw Sally Rand, two weeks ago, and she danced by the wings, and before our very eyes, her dress removed, a new dancer up there, a new treat. Still keeping her own skin.

And one can: say

Chopin

and leave it in the air

Dont make doilies for yr hard chair, or cushions. Give it to us hard.

‘is that what
sort of regularly spaced sounds
late at night
(what a big room you live in
and the Hudson instead of a pet dog
instead of a yard –
the tip of Manhattan what a tip)
say ‘

There is enough breakthrough there, that shd keep you working until 1960. Form-wise. The form of that. You do see the vitality there. The use of language. Letting the image set in the word said.

Again:

a bird

shaped by

Now the follow up on Olson of course, is the Fenollosa article
Pound has raved for 40 years; ESSAY ON THE CHINESE WRITTEN CHARACTER. (as a medium for Poetry) which can be got thru

T D Horton
1419 Clifton Street NW
Washington 9, D C
Apt 14 (for one buck) The Square Dollar Series

Or send me it, and I’ll order it, having done business there before, & he might be slow.
Also in this series what you might like:
GISTS FROM AGASSIZ: (or passages on the intelligence working in nature)

Dont despair baby, its all there waiting for you, for USE.

OK I’m in a sweat. But let me end with this: No 2 will have Joint, Shed Market, Father or Son, & let anyone try to tell me they aint Magick.

Re No: One, I die too to see it, have sent fiery letters off to London, have not even rec’d sample copy yet, and bulk take, he says 2-3 weeks later. Does it take 6 weeks to print 48 pages? Please dont build up expectation too much, as I’m petrified, so much hope so many places. It only shows what need there is, that everywhere they’re looking for them green fields to take a toes in.
2 will have 64 pages, and I use the profile photograph, because of the mystic smile.

I want to say more abt the poems too, because I feel in these you’ve made a breaktho, that was not apparent in the first batch. That you are sure, assured here, despite the agony of writing them. Did you arrange them as they had been written? I think so, because my excitement increased, as I went on, especially after SHED. That’s why the advice again. I dont want you to feel alone, in the act, of verse. No one else there is doing what you are. And when I see traces (and its only that) of you doing what the others are, then I want to warn you.

You know the power:

that’s a verse line you mean:
came up to me the way a line can fill a space

YOU CANT DO:

now gone, and high---
no one was in the streets but I ---

It’s me. We can’t pervert the language. Chop it up, yes,

And Distraction reads better for me: if it began
‘Five years ago this winter’
But you have not given yrself over entirely to the subject of this poem. Too painful? And if so, better leave alone. For a while. Until it demands. Disturbing it this way, will only disperse it before you’re ready to use it.

FLASHES has its merits too. You see how that bird breaks thru the steam, vapor etc. And ‘tar roof’ too. How the object has its power. ‘the secrets objects share’ I wrote you that already. And us, all in the middle of it. It’s a joy. A miracle, man. I feel I just left a Technicolor movie. In fact, after I finish this, I am going to see one. Anyone. Because you have given me so much. Day after day, they give me so much. And the trick to learn is to see it & remember in the weary times. Like I was in sickbed before yr poems arrived & now I am sitting in my redshirt, pecking away.
I’ve got sinus so bad, I have to keep my head up to let it run off. Or otherwise, I become a balloon.

Do you believe a poem can begin with
‘today --- look at it ---
it might as well be L.A.’

It can.

SOMETIMES. The poem turns on ‘tenderly’  The tenderness you feel. Except the word has been ruined.  Lose the word, but as Kerouac says: ‘Derange pas ta tendresse’. Another job for us. Make clean those feelings, shat on in the jukeboxes, much as I love jb’s, they besmirch, as bad poets. It’s simply a question, of use of language, our own, and the reality (s we are involved in. Whatever are realities to us. Moviehouses, too, a part of it. Frank’s wonderful moviestars. Damn, I shd print that poem on them of his. HUDSON FERRY: more economy cd be practiced?

‘… its buds
at the sun
going down in front of City Hall
Fuck’wide and pointing!  they cleaned it.

(That’s enough) no sense to say it looks new.
I just noticed yr economy with punctuation, and that is also good for the speed we need. You might like the poems of a Larry Eigner, who will have a long one in Measure I, for this quality of quickness and the line you use in Poem & Flashes.

Dana still here, graduating today from College. George on way to NH, and says working hard. Wrote a poem after seeing faces in Esquire. Well, don’t worry, if you’re busy, abt coming back quick on this. Just keep the poems going, and be assured there is an ear here for you.

Write whenever you can, on those lonely weekends, of course, that’s when I never can. Gotta fly about, and gobble up the other solitary ones. One of my favorite scenes. Judy Holliday in Central Park on that lonely sunday, when she sees Gladys Glover high over it all.

Do wish I was there, and able to spend some of those Sundays together. Swanboats in the park?

Much love
John

Subscriptions from:

Fairfield Porter
John Gruen
Morris Golde
James Laughlin
Allan Kaprow
Grove Press
Time-Life

so I thank you. Let me know on the Fennollosa. It’s not long.
PS:

How HUDSON FERRY on re-reading now 3\textsuperscript{rd} or 4\textsuperscript{th} time has all the qualities. That you need not worry about anything/ but sufficient work. That you strip until you think you'll have nothing left, but three lines, that you be tight, and when you see it, set it down, even if this ‘it’ is yourself, it does not need be ‘objective’ as Big Daddy tells us.

But in the act of it, pin down, and watching so all the loose material be cut down away, as Ginsberg aint learned yet, in his compulsions, that too much is there that dont matter to anyone but him. And that’s wrong, becuz, stating them is not enough sometimes, as he does, that those myriad things dont even matter to him, because he has not taken the care to ‘order the ‘experience’ to its own rules, its own syntax, jumps,

allow me to faint dead now. go home.

When

\textit{can I expect more?}
\textit{As you do them, maybe?}
\textit{I cd. handle better than batches –}

\textit{oh – you make the rules –}

Robert Duncan \hspace{1cm} June 19 [1957] \\
[Boston]

Dear Robt:

Just to say: I attack the mountain. Such a flood of mss. I can’t pull my head up/ instead look for dodges. Now I meant re Maiden, that it goes in #2.

And is a bulwark for the section: Ladies.

And I cd not bear to see same in Slaughterhouse. Thank you for attention to poems. Since there is such a wealth of material for II, I do not want to include myself, also because you nicked on a point that I am most aware of: the influencing forms. On my work. It simply means work on my part, & until I feel I am standing/ a force unto myself in the poem, that I made it from what was given me, not adopting the means of other men, then I stay out of Measure, it is their discovery (s). As you say SPRING 1956 has Wieners, OK, but it is rooming house, so legitimately it cd. go with more work in THE CITY (111) Gerry Van De Wiele, has helped money-wise in Chicago, so 2, if I dont get too fancy & big for my britches, is nearly paid for.

I cant remember whether I thanked you for sponsoring. Whatever, yr name is included as sponsor in No: 2, and not I which went to press April 1\textsuperscript{st}. 2 goes to press this Monday, or Tuesday, waiting up on the Creeley mss. so I do hope you can send that Mallorca Photo.

Re yr sponsoring: I rec’d 5.00 check from Charles, minus 2.50 for Faust Foutu, leaving 2.50 left. Shd. I get this off Robin? He says yes. And if no answer on this, I will take same & regard as paid in full. OK Baby now I got one other question: when you say

‘I certainly have the sense that you do best when you go straight’
do you mean non-queen? That is, leave the trappings, green eyepaint behind? If so, I shd say: to be queen is not my choice. That the Exchange of Handmaids comes out of desire. That I think of it as a field, for future work, that I can explore there. And that it is not particularly disturb'd. It is business. Has objects. A way of life for many, a way where truths come to me. That in writing it, a sense of freedom came (however vague that sounds) that I cd not call it a search for identity, that I sense it as a city-operative, what the city flourishes on/ the ladies. Male or female. They propel it. And it is their code what underlines the poem

“never forget where we came from, what cant be sold or sucked off.”

Also my language seems to be used to its best/ with these people. Whatever, just observations on this hot afternoon.

A thing, if you dont mind, I will fill yr ear with, as they come to me. With no obligation on yr part to respond. Altho that you do, is what keeps me going.

Re generation: I was most disappointed in Magic Mss. that there was no Joe Dunn, that I kept rushing thru, to where he wd be, and then none.

If you cd get after him: so that I cd print somethings, at least in City.

I count Robin ours / simply by period when his production began. That Hunger of Sound is of our time, that his attack on the poem

‘means more’ to him now / than before. But again, as I have told him: he is of both, ‘pre-war model’ Is that Korean war?

You cant put yrself pre-war II. And I was most pleased that you list 1950, as yr date. Olson’s PV: 1950. Yr Poems 1949-1950.

I do hope that the new aesthetic extends further than us, as you list us. That it be broader, that we come to stand: but please dont come to regard Measure as our magazine. It is a rallying of forces. All that force in. Olson says: Use us. Robin’s Close Ranks. And I get that silly vision of a march down Tremont St.

In August, we will have more knowledge of money, how much we can afford there, and maybe start buying SF’s Sunday papers here and it shd be three rooms, Dana says ‘with a view’. And it wd be nice. But Robin says: Can you write when you’re watching a fire?

Hope I can send Measure to you soon, & that Propositions shows on the page: the care we took to put it out there, and the care you took.

Yes: by all means,

juicy

fruit gum

Thank you for the magic mss. It is too soon to know how any strike, tho Helen Adam is going to get every inch of attention I can bring.

63 In his June 21 response (see Appendix B for the full letter), Duncan answered this concern: Don’t remember exact context of remark re. “going straight” – but at the moment I’d take it don’t mean non-queen; you can wear feathers and go at a thing straight on. “That in writing it, a sense of freedom came” I’ll take as a criterion.
Dear Phillip Whalen:

I'm sitting here, saying: Let's get this show on the road. Three weeks I've been away from Measure, for no reason I can find but it got too big for me, too many of you. So there has been a flight into Egypt, or the Rialto Theatre, somewhere, a lot of places, I won't remember.

You are the first/ on my return. And the hardest. The book opened that way. I very much would like to use a great deal of what you do in Measure. A going thing. From issue to issue, as you do it. However it comes to you. Not only the poem. But say reviews, bitches, COMMENT. Put the man in. I'll leave the comeback on this to you. But there is space for you & the others, as I tell them. We will last. A necessity here.

I have just re-read the poems, for I wd say, the fifth time. Over the weeks, much on my mind. But nonetheless, I can't bring myself to say: yes, they go. It's me you gotta make happy. And I aint. Not with yours, or the four Allen sent me, or most of Mr Snyder. Now what right have I got to say that. Me, I never, at least for months, wrote a poem that makes it as well, as ANY of these. That has the wealth these poems, esp. yours have. I'm not a critic. And they're not anywhere so near so I can even say what I don't like. If they were bad, yes, it wd. be easy, I cd. fill this space up what where you shd. go, what's not there, etc. but I can't. Because the poems don't allow it. The intrusion of my 2cts.

I know the process & I'll call it, the agony. How this, the poem, is the reason for all of us. I wish Measure I was in, & I cd send it, and it wd. say those things that please me in the poem, or at least expose myself. I intend to print a lot, that don't please me personally, & even if I never dig your work, which isn't so, as I do: SMALL TANTRIC SERMON & THE ROAD*RUNNER/ and a great many parts of both Sour-dough Mt. and esp. The SlopBarrell.

So take this, as an effort on my part, I am not entirely equipped for, or equipped for, at all, at least this kind of letter. Being of no help at all/ only stating the wish that you will send for the two or three years left Measure, your poems as you do them. And I will print those ones I see fit, for Measure. And use you as much as you give yourself into my hands. Right now, I aint making it, with any of you. I hope you can see me thru this, that I am only asking more of you. Since I believe it's been demonstrated, there is. Right up to that fucking limit. I gotta end this, or I'll call you up on the telephone. Will you come back with your new stuff, no matter what?

My best to you,
John Wieners

And yours to me. (sure). And the 1st half of "Invocation & Dark Saying"
Michael Rumaker  
[July 2, 1957]  
[Boston]

Dearest Mike:

Just the shortest possible to say: all is well, & that we leave prob. Sept 15, so if you smell an apt, do something, three rooms at least, oh fuck, we’ll find it ourselves.

MEASURE I finally arrived, first copy, the rest coming by boat, shd be here anyway, & I’ll send one. Measure II thus held up, so it goes out finally end of week, with you, & Creeley & Duncan. Charles (short poem) Kerouac poems, one great one by Duerden, Richard.

Anyway, I am working, and writing poems like crazy, which if I myself ever got them typed up, would send you.

64 pages in Measure II, but I feel I told you all this before.

Reading: Sons and Lovers. (still)

Dips into new edition of Rimbaud: Illuminations, also my heart is quite light and Boston has exposed herself, itself more to me in the last month than my entire life here, her people, alleys, dawns.

So I feel I’m up her skirt, and altho the dark terrifies, the night does, there is so much to touch, eat that I never knew before. The mornings on milkcartons down on Washington street, or from Balas’s roof,64 the junkies, and bums MINE, me swinging with them, as one, worth what one pays in physical losses. Thieves. We are them.

Let me get back to business, just wanted to send love and do hope we cross somewhere, it will be good to share what we both have come unto.

L –

John

Michael Rumaker  
July 6 [1957]  
[Boston]

Dearest Michael:

This will probably turn out to be a short note, but I want to write. For the past three weeks, I have been very sick, & I want you not to tell anyone there that, for I been flying high on wings not my own, anyway I dont think it wd be good for Measure if they knew I at times went on wing so far removed. Dana after graduation is back on the FireDept in Swampscott, so that means a great deal of time not here, and w/o my knowing it, this disrupted my work of the last three months so much I went out the window, so I wd stay up on pills for 40 or 50 hours: NOT doing a bit of work but wandering everywhere in the city, dredging, crawling in the gutters baby. Have been to my job abt 2 days, dont even know if I

64 The Balases, old friends of Wieners’ from bohemian Boston.
still got it, but think so, since they know I'm getting thru in Sept. they will have some
patience with me. Anyway you go so low, you do hit bottom, and that is where I was
yesterday: but dont think I'M silly, I got yrs yesterday and one from O, which lifted me
enuf, so today I am somewhat restored, and after a bath & some food, I will try to return.
Also got involved with a group of on again off again addicts, who have some glamour I am
prone to.

Magick book not yet off, yet this too you must keep to yrself. It all works out tho, as
Olson sent short poem which fits so beautifully. Marshall also called this morning, will see
him tonight.

I dont know what else to say, but that we still plan to be there, leave here
mid-september, and if you wd not find it an intrusion, cd find you in NM whenever, as we
will go to Taos, & you will be somewhere near by. Anyway, Dana even knows nothing of
this, w/o him I wd be completely lost, a fucking straw on the tide. With him I have a home,
a pattern which allows work.

This letter will come as a burden to you, but I am alright
now, so dont worry, & I plan complete retreat until I can leave this dying city. One thing, I
do feel it most important that no one there know of this, believing they wd lose faith in
Measure. Its first issue has not yet arrived, thru no fault of mine, as I have $$$ enuf to print
2, simply printer slack, but two weeks ago promised 1st copy here “shortly” whatever that
means. This also has been a thorn, since I promised so many the 1st of JUNE. I will send it
to you right off, and you'll know that things are alright here then.
I intend to stay completely away from any stimulant, and to bring myself up to the job
underhand, it’s just I wanted you to know my silence. Things are not well with you either (I
feel) & I think NM a good idea, the city can be of no use to us. A place where we cannot see
the process, which does not allow us part, so we go to those means which allow us, fake
means to take part. The trip west will be good, slow, & of a purgative nature.

Yes, I use only Part I, I thgt that set.
It opens the magazine, darling. Do write as you can, it is this renewing of old bonds that
causes rebirth. A rebirth only in the sense that the sun is one. This dont mean obligation
on anyone’s part, but that we shd not despair at complete loneliness, becuz there really cant
be any for us. Ultimate loneliness, yes, but not complete. Not full, only that the lower forces
do invade with a sense of completeness, they dont really have.

I have made a copy of yr
picture, and will return original as soon as…
Thank you for yr letter and do hope its soon we share only a meal together.

love
John

I aint sad

Literally there are 50 letters to answer! Also there about 100 subscribers to Measure. Some tho for only
single copies.
The Origins only cost $1.50
What can I buy you. Poetry: Chicago,
for the other 50¢
Ed Dorn
July 24, 57
[Boston]

Dear Ed:

Let me stay on business, if I can. That 4 of yr 5 pages of notes from the fields, I dig. Esp the arm across the field, and carrying that over to Roehm. So much so, I ‘gasped’. Like the exhilaration after Reading Rumaker’s dream; that joy.

What I dont like, and don’t want to use: vast
the section on Page 3: A disturbing sense of loneliness,

(that paragraph) which stands between the presentation of the action in the field & yr discovery of what it corresponds to, what it actually is. In all, only a matter of 6 lines.

Then: One day I worked in a silo, despite change of place, the description comes only as that, where elsewhere, it escapes, sometimes only a hairbreadth, but escapes, and lets the field in/ describing the silo aint the silo. You know this, and a minor point, with what has been done thru out. A pleasure, and an exploration. An establishment of author, as you say, PLUS, the EYE. How very fine it is.

That’s why I cant junk it, up. Also, I want to erase yr ultimatum, all or nothin’. ALL is there, with this elimination of 100 words. I am at a too fast clip to go read right now, so this is an impression (decision made 10 days ago) and maybe I is wrong:

I have as not yet given the poems more than 2 readings, and say hold on, becuz there is a lot for me, that I want to use, but dont want to talk yet, if I get this thorn out of my side. Plus, if you insist on all, I gotta chop other people out. But I dont want to coerce, I want you to see, what I sez, whether, these two places ride smooth with you, if riding smooth is important.

LET ME KNOW AS YOU CAN. SOON.. Even YES or NO, thru yr lady Helene. Let me go now lover, lotte
Hun is whispering

old song in my ear.
‘German jazz distracts my ear’. Write whatever you feel, explode if you want to, there aint nothing if ther’s no honesty between those who know what it means. Or want to. Shutup, love

(Sample copy of I in await bulk on boat) They fit so well in body of poem book.

NO on middle paragraph (p. 3). Thank you for what you done so far.

If I dont hear from you: I will go ahead w/o the two objections. Lemme. There is a lot waiting for us –
I feel (somewhere) & it aint joy.
Robert Duncan  
July 26 [1957]  
[Boston]

Dear Robert:

Long delay due to making MEASURE II presentable also more to the truth: opening of Boston’s secrets in a way not known before. In fact, I am / have been for the last month flooded with ‘a disordering of the senses’ that makes me believe in the Elect (‘The secret’s stashed & only I know where it is’) both the damned & saved. Rimbaud: I alone have the key to this savage sideshow. Boston is that now. A show of junkies, cocksuckers, outriders, THIEVES. But to get to business. All personal revelations can wait until October. Dana & I leave here at latest Sept 15. Measure One IN but bulk still arriving by boat (he says). All paid for & ½ sold out. City Lights\(^65\) w/ stock 10 in SF. Its main joy to me is that room is left for II to show improvement. Not CONTENT*wise but editorial surety. And I w/take whatever chances with it in future open themselves to me.

(Propositions) major poem of issue. Its substance pleases me. And I have to make apology for one line printer has omitted.

P42.

\[\text{‘Dr Sea must go on. He demands}\
\text{cosmetic tortures now to shame some}\
\text{(deceptive shore line) } \rightarrow \text{ omitted}\]

\[\text{but the eyes}\]

which I have no idea how it happened, proofs did not read that way. I cd have made up errata slip, but it is too late now. It is the worst sort of thing that cd happen to a poem/ becuz the reader wont know. RB & I were so careful we frightened printer into paralysis by our demands, replacing of spaces in proofs, I cant understand the error. & Ten minutes ago, I discover another one in Olson’s:

\[\text{instead of matutinal cock (it reads) clock.}^\text{66}\]

Receiving no pay, & now not even adequate printing, is not method to encourage any of you to continue submission to Measure.

ON Robin’s advice, I am writing to inquire cost of page proofs for future issues, so that this at least can be eliminated.

There has been drought here. And we suffer for it in daytime. Night undos her richness. Send the Robin back with water for us. // The main worry is time-lag on printing. He is as slow as can be. Also that too much is expected of Measure One/ many will be put off, tho they shldn’t be.

---

\(^{65}\) City Lights, independent bookstore in San Francisco, founded by poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti in 1953. After publishing Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl and Other Poems* in 1956, Ferlinghetti was tried and acquitted of obscenity charges in a landmark trial.

\(^{66}\) See note on Wieners’ letter to Larry Eigner of May 8, 1957, for a fuller explanation of the error.
Re other little mags: the worth of my working at Lamont has been the availability of their Collection. CONTACT yes after yr letter, then the BLUES. The LITTLE REVIEW I had before. VIEW I cant find here.

I can see no reason in Magic poems for them to be of use to Measure. What do they contribute? Knowledge like what Magick is? NO The well-made poem/ no or a hammer from/against ‘whatever’. NO. Dunn has not sent poem beyond 1st batch which did not contain Recipes. It’s OK. If he’s got it there, I will print him in 3

Unfortunately also, printer slow down on One makes MEASURE appear as riding an asshole of Ever Rev. Tho one fact. Measure distinctly a little mag

for those who get there / more leads than I dont know where else.

Why not you review HD’s THREE BOOKS OF THE WAR for either 3 or 4? They can fit in either. Say 400-500 words. Cd be lead to Amer pub. for how complete will be Grove’s Sel Poems.


I wd like yr prose in III. But this does not necessarily mean Notes or Journal, if that wd be labor.

A direct handling of whatever book excites at the MOMENT. Zukovsky? No excitement/ what abt Basil Bunting poems. Or New Directions 16. If Robin had more time! Damn our needs. OK I ramble on. But do let me know what you wd like to see done. The lack where you feel it. And then I will try to fill it w/ my Measure.

Photographs out. At present anyway. Still w/ have copies made for you $$$ mostly the reason. We’re alright but I dont want to overstep. Let the bills his in 1960.

On apts: What Dana likes has to go. Say abt $70. 3 rooms. ANYWAY we’ll look. No hurry. much love

m 68

John

August 6

Much changes in my own life. Fired from Lamont. Good. Measure can roll. I got to raise more money, & time now to do it. Start again from the beginning, as if making new.

---

67 The final volume of H.D.’s “War Trilogy,” The Flowering of the Rod, was published in England in 1946, but the book-length poems were not published in the United States until New Directions brought them out together in 1973. The trilogy, along with H.D.’s other late work, especially The Hermetic Definition and Helen in Egypt, was central to Robert Duncan’s poetics, and to the ongoing work that would be published posthumously as The H.D. Book.

68 Wyndham Lewis (1882-March 1957), British painter and writer closely associated with the Modernist movement Pound labeled “Vorticist.”

69 Basil Bunting (1900-1985), British modernist poet, journalist, Quaker activist, and spy to whom, along with Bunting’s close friend Louis Zukofsky, Ezra Pound dedicated Guide to Kulchur in 1938.
Bulk arrived & all mailed out this afternoon. Say what you will, I will dig it the most, no matter if you only bitch. There’s no reason why I don’t bring in a whole new crazy crew in III, if only there were some kind of crew around. Bruce Boyd?! Arthur Kloth?! Barbara Guest?  

Again, my apology on the omission. It negates so much, also highlights my own inertia. This is not directed to receive a denial of latter from you. I know.

HD’s Sel Poems, now out. What dya think? It wd be great to bypass it completely & still do The THREE BOOKS. Tho the last poem in Sel Poems is such a hit. Review worth it, just to quote it entire in Measure. Sorry on long delay, but have not been swinging on much of anything of late. Do write & send yr friends to the City Lights, tho more important, I lose money on bookstore sales, 40% discount, & Measure costs .60¢ to print. So have them send bucks here.

Please push Helen Adam so I can USE her in Measure & have patience with me.

might have started M too young. Let it thicken with me

* * * * *

With *Measure* 2 at the printers, fired from his uninspiring job at Lamont Library, most of his new friends living in either New York or San Francisco, John Wieners was ready for another change. Despite his suspicion that San Francisco was losing its luster – That “glassunicorntown,” he calls it in a letter to Charles Olson, “San Francisco & I’ve got to go live there” – he decided he and Dana would make the move west. In these letters from the early fall of 1957 Wieners lays the groundwork for the move, lining up new opportunities and beginning work on *Measure* 3, “The City,” the final issue which would, due to vicissitudes of San Francisco life, drug use, and eventual institutionalization, would be postponed for another five years. But the rest of 1957 and most of 1958 would be an exhilarating time of new work and friends, a season of new highs and lows that will lead to a crash at the end of 1959. At the end of August 1957, a few weeks before the move West, he writes to Robert Duncan that “we beginners have so much work spaded for us,” but “we go deeper now, if we dare.”

* * * * *

70 Bruce Boyd (b. 1928), important member of the Venice West community of Beat poets alongside Stuart Perkoff, he was included in Allen’s *New American Poetry*. Arthur Kloth was a Berkeley friend of Jack Spicer’s who, according to Ellingham and Killian, wound up relocating to New York. Barbara Guest (1920-2006), American poet and writer known as a compatriot of O’Hara and Ashbery in the first generation New York School of poets. In 1984 she wrote a biography of H.D., called *Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World*.

71 In 1957, Grove Press published the *Selected Poems* of H.D., her only American collection until New Directions’ *Collected Poems* in 1983.
Dear Don:

Just the shortest possible note to say that He and I leave Boston Sept 15, and that 3 weeks later we dock there, and that now I am w/o work, but MEASURE II has gone to printer, and I feel I can put my accounts in order; also want to give you thanks for Evergreen II, the HELP it has given me, to have those people appear in both places; prestige, or something.

I finally answered Barbara Guest, sending back what I think were two early things, keeping one, & asking for more. But the letter was off the top of the heart, so maybe she got afraid I cant be chic.

Checking yr card, it means that if you leave there, Sept 15, you will be in NY when we go thru it, a couple of days amid University Place, so we will see you. OK All best,

John

And write about you and the town, I am wager for all news, (if you can, write, ie.)

((letters))

Allen Ginsberg

Dear Allen:

Most tired out/ 7:10 Am, so dont expect much of a letter from me. I just want to return things via this (WSB's photo & letter) but more important to say: how much I dug yr letter from Venice. That I wd like to print it in MEASURE in the CITY issue, No:3, for in my mind it establishes the poet, integral part of city, wldnt you say? As much as burly queen, anyway. Measure: Two being printed now, and I am sure I sent you One, so whatever you can say/ no matter/ I wd dig the most, cuz all the old cats are keeping silent. And that is a drag.

Eigner came on great, and NO, we aint, me aint anti-semitic.

Anyway, let me know re letter MEASURE ONE & printing of yr letter. Yah, Blaser has been after me to correct impression I gave you in 1st letter, that it was not his misquoting of yr poem, simply my mis-quoting to you of what I thgt the line was. Maybe I told you this before. He’s such a priss on his ‘effect’.

If you want me to send yr Venice letter to you, so you can check what’s said, will do.72

72 From Ginsberg’s response, written from Paris on September 6, 1957:

Print the letter I last sent you, if I wrote it it’s me, there’s no point my looking at it & trying to censor it now. Besides I thought secretly you would anyway, while I was writing it – that’s one of the problems I find now, vanity &
Let me come back now as I read yrs over: by no means do I advocate ‘war’. Except that unfeeling, the non-anything, even the non-deathers, or non-blacks & I dont mean color. That its been said before, I advocate seeing, and the bad line/ vague line causes the eyesight to be fuzzed up more, the ear clogged, etc. What all the big daddies have said so well before me.

I cannot print Over Kansas. *That is not meant bitchy.*

Sakyamuni: yes, but damn I want Seattle, I have me heart set on it, daddy. So what’s so wrong abt that last line:

… I float past, birds cry,
Salvation Army offers soup on rotting block, 6000 beggars groan
at a meal of hope.

(six thousand is written out). *So much is there,* that it’s foolish to scrap same. I believe in process, and the line aint that bad, like I feel some are in OverK so much, I cant be part of it. Anyway, Wm Lee’s *Fragment of a blue movie* is in the same issue, also Snyder’s Kyoto poem and whorehouse poem/ then Corso ‘with some ratface lines, and Philip Whalen and I are on a thing, I wd like to print his:

**AGAINST THE MAGIC WAR: AN OPEN LETTER TO ROBERT DUNCAN.**

but we’ll see. I wrote an awful screwball letter last Sunday, *to him.*

Whatever at the worst, MEASURE will still be in bizness six months, in fact, as I say 1960, so there’s no haste, if you do insist on NO, *now.* I move w/ Mr Warmback to San Francisco on Sept 15, so after that, until October: c/o Rumaker, 1430 Sacramento, SF9, for mail, if something (the boomerang) hits.

**MEASURE: TWO** will have 64 pages, a 100 more copies printed, as now there’s only 75 left of 300 1st printing.

I am happy, *re Mezuh’s bizness,* despite word from anyone, each mail brings a 3.00 check. I cannot approach, it seems John Hollander, my own withdrawal, altho I wd like to. Harvard fired me two weeks ago, also, *But not becuz of Measure,* tho I am sure that was part of it.

I’ll line up Two:

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*She went to stay.*

*Selfconsciousness – also the feeling I’ll be suddenly stopped in my tracks by some frightening fiery Judgment – come pitiless eye in an objective alley full of real bones.*
Two unknown 20th century short swipes.

Kerouac: A chorus
Perkoff: Feasts of Death, Feasts of Love (6p poem)
Dorn: Notes from the fields, Skagit valley (prose)
Duncan: The Dance
The magick of object
V R Lang: The recidivists
McClure: Two poems: One and Two
Schuyler: Joint
Shed market
Creeley: The tunnel
Just friends
Jonas: Book III and IV from
A long poem for jack spicer because he needs it.

So you can see what a relief III will be/ has to be, that yr voices are needed, if the f..... thing is not to be poolhall corner crowd, sounds.

Oh a nice one (also in II) by a Richard Duerden of Sausalito, who you will hear more from.

Called: musica #3: pickup on some numbers & balances.

Then too, in #3, a John Haines from Fairbanks, Alaska, who knew O in Washington, DC, and writes Eskimo poems, their gods, etc; also yr father has subscribed & sent groups of poems, which I havent read yet: but he says it wd be interesting if he cd appear in same issue as Allen, and man I agree.

Anyway try not to give too much any of above information away as it will not be back from Glue Alley until October. I do not think I am going to like SF at all, that so much has happened to me right in this stinking home town, that I cannot begin writing you abt it, as it wd all, like you say, be running cups, that is how I feel about this Saturday dawn I am in now. It's my own poems that I guess have done it, which I shall include in III so that Boston will be covered. I want this kind of poet's survey of the world's cities. Also there will be further Kerouac choruses in Three.

(Enough, shyster John, enough)

Now that I have re-read Sakyamuni,73 I see that it shd have gone into Magick issue/ but I had my mind made up, closed from that 1st week’s reading, so I never went back to it, not even after your letter.

I am trying to open Measure up wider, but am blocked at all turns; wd like Basil Bunting, but no can locate, and Phillip Lamantia, still nothing. Also that Peter Heliczer,74 but they have him locked up in Conn. And some women. Olson cd open it up so very wide, but he is not coming thru.

---

73 Ginsberg’s poem “Sakyamuni Coming Out from the Mountain,” written in 1953.
74 Wieners is referring to Piero Heliczer (1937-1993), Italian-born poet, filmmaker, and publisher who produced and appeared in many underground films including Jack Smith’s 1963 experimental classic Flaming Creatures. Wieners’ and Heliczer’s poetry would also appear
Dont worry abt lack of output/ nature has (yr nature) its reasons for 
 inertia, and that all shall be laid out to you/ open so, the foot fits in & more.

I guess I said what I had to/ ‘end yr moan & come away’, - editor – I hate that word

But the yrs letter shd be made available to the ones with ears; and it is not exploitation, a 
position of arms neither, simply: statement of a man called poet. Made poet. The one who 
thrives on City. Survives, on what’s left. Junk, use of what the rest of country refuses.

Thanks again for help given.

Yours,

John W.

Photo- montage: out/ picture back \rightarrow Peter? Him the one in it? I cd not tell. I look forward to his 
churchfront/ Saint Francis

Deadline on 2 October 1st.

But nobody remembers.

Did you know that I cannot pay/ and there is nothing to do abt same, ever. $ -- in case WSB cared.

will send Peg G. flyer/

---

**Michael Rumaker**

Aug 17 [1957]

[Boston]

Dear Michael:

   Thank you for your kind words/ & esp. if you was exhausted, then to use words is 
an agony/ I am in state that they run off at my mouth, but my ‘typing fingers’ are so sore, 
that I will, after this, for rest of night, write longhand. I stopped the letter business with one 
to Gerry, and that was 3:45PM. Whalen’s answer came with yrs/ WOW, never have I been 
so misunderstood. I gotta watch my mouth. But I did scrape off an answer:

   the only important thing to me now, is that he return my original letter, so I can take 
up, the glories. He says: last page, rather last page & ½ were a delight/ & yet cant see that 
crap of previous 2 ½ pages was necessary to get that last one and ½ out.

& a page and ½ of delight is 
rare enough these days, such phrasing that I ache to get it back. I wd say it wd be better not 
to mention to fracas to anyone, esp. Duncan, as Whalen wanted to speak to him abt: 
Against the magic war: an open letter to RD, before, I did, as if I wd. He demanded his 
mss. back, which I regretted sending, but poss. after he reads M. he’ll see how crazy wrong: 
telling me I shd go after live material: etc, mixing me up with Harvard & the Cambridge 
academics, Yvor Winters, Lowes, Mathew Arnold, etc. simply becuz I took a chisel to 

together in John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch’s *Locus Solus* magazine #5 in 1962, and Ira 

---
particular words he used, in poem. That you know: I am careless: as eigner says: M has that: the casual.

So I go now, esp. with such manifest vagueness as Whalen’s stuff, most care-

full-y. & he cant see regard for le mot juste, I doubt. Of course, I had misunderstood, so much, his intent/ but told him that in letter; ONE.

But in Letter: TWO (today’s) i had no patience, laid in

real fine, and I wear the snarl well on certain days. Let me go on to M.

Re: drawings: I shd never have tried to find a continuity to the two of them & used a single space for both, as neither get proper air. Tho Dawson is ecstatic w/ them. Maybe that accounts for grossness/ too much before the eye, when to turn a page wd have rested us.

I am going to omit drawings in II, except for a sketch contained in a letter that I will not tell you who from, until you see it/ and then you’ll know;

II is such an improvement in weight. Eigner found it ONE ‘quite a dash’. ‘Dada, Koshare, the hard core, the Marshall ONE*TWO, S Jonas’ Word, then O’Hara rail too, and Spicer chewing butterflies, plus blanket, yet those breaks of shorter pieces of less crushing plentitudes, the brakes, the husbandman linchpin perhaps at least in itself sort of a little too much on casual side,’ which I take as the most, ‘Your cover brings koshare back : “magick”-aleck seems kind of swagger-tail mountebank.” (I like)

which I think TWO has more of, at least the blurb On What the City Issue Will Be Like: has a nice kind of ‘know’-ing to it. And there is a line that goes:

Bandwaggin man: ‘end your moan & come away.’ which is aimed at the Boss’s Dictation Chief, Kenny Rexroth. Oh I am gonna hate SF. Dawson: the only other written word & that is full of superlatives, says Eigner best of his he has ever seen, I wd agree here, too/ at least more seems to be presented in BRINK, than he usually gives us.

Yes, MEASURE remains, as is, tho drawing on inside front goes (out).

---

75 Yvor Winters (1900-1968), American poet and critic and a leading voice of New Criticism in the academy; John Livingston Lowes (1867-1945), Harvard professor known for his work on Coleridge and Chaucer; Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), British poet, writer, and scholar who worked towards a systematic view of poetry that prized “high truth” and “high seriousness.”

76 The page facing Olson’s “She who hits at will” features an uncredited drawing by Olson of a shaky hand, with the handwritten text

WHITE HANDS
(or the ladies’
white legs – no
dirtiness LEFT

This magic
is not for, or for only
the PRIESTS

This short poem was included in the posthumous Olson collection *Archaeologist of Morning* (1970), edited by Albert Glover for Cape Goliard.

77 See Wiener’s letter to Eigner on May 8, 1957, asking whether Eigner meant to say “Koshare” or “Kosher.” Koshare are sacred clowns in Hopi religious culture.
TITLE
Author’s names will not be on Cover in 2. The word magic laid out in lower case vertically, where author’s names are now/ except the letters will be printed backwards, so we’ll pretend you need a mirror to dig what it says/ and you might.

The color red moves up to front cover, this issue, color of cover paper gray, and the ad (blurb) for the city on back cover, shall be blue, of course.

Re Big Man on the Mt: true, very much of a hit home, (what you say) about poem that I never thgt Olson was there much at all. A labored poem, I think. Listen, I’ll send you four short things, from this Boston crowd, if YOU PROMISE absolutely NO ONE ELSE reads them: Duncan, Dunn, Allen, Tom, etc: NONE. You will send them back here, in a couple of days, I just want you to see change, I think/ with some loss of dramah, but a more moving (in sense of going) thing.

These are the ones the girl in Chicago has, & they’ll be ret’d/ but you see, I am on verge printing them in MEASURE III, but they are still in process/ and if I know their secrets are out, then I’ll stop work: SO IT MUST ONLY BE YOU, she said. And if you’re tired, please dont feel you have to open yr mouth re any of it.

Did I tell you that final editing of TWO, makes Seven Dreams by Rumaker.

In Marshall: go look up in Funk & Wagnalls: Dictionary of Folklore: who Tiamat and Marduk are: raises my respect for Marshall’s hits. & McClure dares call Measure queer, not to me yet/ but a robín carries news. Again, dont confront him w/ this, it simply displays how much he’s hung on something.

No Marshall in TWO; as he is a city BOY, and moving back to Boston late fall from NY, I wd say, prepared to write the great thing about NC. (Rimbaud moving back to me in the country; for writing down Saison en enfers) Marshall moving back to our country, and in with Jonas, again. SO: (wow) there’ll be a big blast from Marshall in III, and Eigner & Duerden will have big space in Four. & why charles aint coming thru more, worries me.

We’ll see when Measure sticks in his craw/ what comes out. Do you have Denise L’s address?

Do follow up the ladyfriend, who w/ subscribe, as it is simply these scattered $3.00 that have done it. Vocal response has been good here, too.

Two gentle men have requested that their names no longer be printed as sponsors in such a magazine as Measure. They would like to receive, however, its future issues.’

starts off back inside page for II. It’s TIME all this tomfoolery was bought back in, as long, as one dont waste more than 25 words/ or more than a minute & ½ of the reader’s time. In other words, these establish the presence of editor, a hand, still I dont think, interfering with content of anyone.

Do you think Measure lacks humor/ (who cares) let him watch TV!
Michael Rumaker  August 17 [1957]  [Boston]

Dearest Michael:

Your red letters have been the utmost joy to me: the spontaneity of them, the actual taking that wide trip alone right in yr mouth, so there is a great tipsy joy/ delight even in the disgust, man, their almost good enuf to print, but you dont --- no, we won’t even go into it.

Anyway, thanks also for turning me onto Connie O, as I sent her MEASURE, then one high afternoon, two days ago, I just walked into Beacon Press / and there she was at THE desk, and all was of the greatest order. I never sensed before her actual high-borness. An embarrassing thing to come back at her, probably, so dont, but I sensed it off so much of her. And SHE liked Measure, which was a surprise, when I knew that yr fuckin glassunicorntown wd. not. Of course, it’s not yr town. I do hope you write what you once mentioned: thing on the myth of SF.

For you: dont be put off by surface qualities of M: One, as I repeat, it has a breadth to it. And not queer, as some think.

That has no weight here, the queer. There is so little actually to choose from, if say, Olson doesn’t come thru/ or if one believes in making it on strengths not already used by other magazines.

Stop the defenses, John, it’s not needed. Two will be different. Of more substance, I think. No MARSHALL, who is now asleep five feet away, do you have & will you be willing to give over to me the 8 pages of copy you made from his TUG OF WAR? He found 3 himself of what I think was a 20 page poem.

Also, could I have all mail after September 15 forwarded care of:

Rumaker
1130 Sacramento
San Francisco 9, that is, upto the 1st week in October or maybe a week later/ but other than this; collecting it out of box, I wd put no obligation on you. If you say yet, do you have a reliable box? As checks arrive say twice or so a week, only $3.00 ones, but what makes M. real?

And then: there wd be an absolute deluge of bookclub circulars, bills, maybe a few books, other mags, & letters, a few. You really are the only one I can think of with trust. Somehow I wd rather keep my personal away from Robt. Not that I have any reason to say that. but our judging days of each other are done. And his of me are not, or mine of him. Joe & Mary F were here, but did not see them, Connie said they spent week at Wellfleet, and wdn’t it be great if she wrote? I am after Connie too, but I doubt she will. She started going around, taking books off the shelves for me, & sent me out on wings. She said: drop in here anytime; I said, if you are sure it’s not an imposition: she said: dont be silly, imposition’s a pleasure.

I got fired two weeks ago from Harvard, and god, I am writing or just stopped two days ago, like I never have before.
So I will even print this section of Boston junk/alan poems in Measure: Three, the CITY, which is shaping, so I am pleased with that & the STATE, Eigner having done his best, on the theme.

The artEditor of Chicago Rev. said she had seen my poems thru Gerry Vande & asked if I wd send some for consideration in CR. That was 6 wks ago, so tonight I did/ all these new wild things, & told her, almost dared her ChiRvd not print same.

They turn out as the richest farewell I cd make to this beloved homeland of mind, & I dread There, knowing that I will retire from the participation I think I thrive on, poem-wise.

Connie regrets she did not turn on The Beacon Press to you/ & I do too. Simply that it is a place the others do not inhabit so easily, not that I am snob/ but the valued shd be placed apart. That dont mean: flaunting.

I have been at this machine since literally 11PM beginning with the letter A (Allen, Don) and it is now 11:10 AM! and I do not intend to stop until W(Whalen, Philip) has his. & this is only the important other letters/ rejections, business, I have ignored.

It’s not that Mezuh is that busy, simply that I cannot work at a thing day after… so it builds a mountain to the sky.

(After reading yrs of July 28) If thru any chance, you plan to leave SF for those heart-lands you talk abt, please do not let the mail question hold you up, OK. I wonder what happened that night of July 28, & what w/ the vocalist? All these will wait I guess until we can talk, if we do, are able, and do not feel you shd defend me among the glasspitters, or Measure, cuz I know it’s getting done in. Somehow its value to me increaseth, & again: only 75 copies of original edition remain, out of 300.

You see what I fear out there. ARK II cd not make it. So how can a magazine that keeps BOSTON on its cover. Unless I do as before, earn the bread myself. Which really is best.

---

78 Eila Kokkinen, an art history student at the time, was made art editor of the Chicago Review in the Spring of 1957, when the Review was beginning its peak period of rebellion and (in retrospect) Beat canon-formation under the strident editorship of Irving Rosenthal. The Spring 1958 Review was dedicated to “Ten San Francisco Poets,” including the by-then San Franciscan Wieners; Rosenthal printed Wieners’ poems “From End Chapters in an Autobiography” and “The Bridge Word (on brown paper),” neither of which has been reprinted. The Chicago Review’s Winter 1959 issue set off a censorship war, publishing eight excerpts from Burroughs’ Naked Lunch (another excerpt from which was published in Measure #2 that same year). Rosenthal was fired, and Kokkinen and the rest of the staff quit in protest. Rosenthal and Paul Carroll formed Big Table as a way of reprinting the censored issue of the Review.
Tell me yr plans, & I’d send you the poems: but I wd rather just one night: read them to you/ that’s all, no discussion, just relive their creation very privately.

Night, how it comes down, and how the sun breaks it up/ has been with me the past month. I avoid sleep like plague: find it’s the Great Eraser, that after it, nothing is left from the night before. & one arrives at a high perceptive state, after initial exhaustion is met, say/ after being up 50 to 70 hours (a six hour snooze was the only stop) but say those last 15 hrs were hysteric with knowledge: all of which I threw at P Whalen last Sunday/ & which I dont even know he was prepared for, but I hope he sends letter back, knowledges there I will never regain again. RE BLACK & WHITE, which side I finally found myself on. & it’s the White: male, which I carry, of course, this manic letter to him, is actual end to series of poems, so the cat better not burn it. It came out of reading his (again: secret as far as I know) AGAINST THE MAGIC WAR: AN OPEN LETTER TO ROBERT DUNCAN, of course, all the things (criticisms) I said were wrong, misunderstandings, etc, not digging the poem as its intent demanded/ but still being given ‘the secret’ out on a paper platter.

Rimbaud: (did I quote this to you already or Duncan:)
‘I alone have the key to this savage sideshow.’ and Wellington; an axman here: ‘the secret’s stashed & only I know where it is.’

Of course, sleep washes all this away.

I cant write no more. My wrists

much love
John

and hope you’ll be able to write much –
letters – here or soon anyway – on the other thing like O
wd say: you have no choice.
How did Rimbaud escape: that is the
wonder/ that he was allowed to stop or
maybe be reached/ had gone so far that
be bad actually laid so much out / be caught
up with what (if we’re lucky) will take our
lifetimes

A POEM OF DESPONDANCIES

We go whatever route to run un-
obstructed. “A city without seasons”
may bug a man who needs thunder storms,
snow, frost-bitten leaves to clear away
stagnant August.
Keres, dirty little things that fill the air

79 “A Poem of Despondancies” remains unpublished.
80 In Greek mythology, “Keres” are death-spirits, sisters of fate, doom, and other baleful entities. In his August 19th letter to Wiener (see Appendix B), Olson quotes Robert Duncan writing of Stéphane Mallarmé looming over his own poetry, “Keres from his world scuttering in to attend the séance of each poem.”
obscure a weather’s message.
What softness massage festering reason?
In Ireland fairies
coverd with hair scare girls and
prepare twisted paths into the mire,
false landscapes, blight light,
sour dawn, noon or evening gloom
to reflect heart’s discontent or
raise vapours from sexual treasure

as gold rots in the ground sprouts fever
This green is obscene, seeded
where the will moves not, no
stout stalk leaf of the grass
but the green keres, no furies, fly
up from bog of

----insatiable under the hand urge?
It’s the fearful rising where the cock
won’t rise
that sickens the eyes, tricks
the domestic poseur.
Black bile not blood drips
from the enclosure.

This is the way the land lies.

As who from dreams as from marsh
wakes.
They are mosquitoes biting wet flanks
of natural flesh.

Did you? Did you? Who oepend the damnd
box? But
I hate locks. I wish I could give you
such openness,
filths, upswarms of fervor, to hold.

A man held so, up-
held we see in staind unmoving
sea moved sustaind in
Hell,

mannd against calm.

Aug 19
I finish this right off, tho I cant mail same until tonight for I spent two days, working on poems/ then leave them all in Dana’s car as he’s gone home until, etc.

But I write so much that I will send it all/ also Big Man on the Mt.
In fact, I just remembered:

  tonight, in car, I revised four of those done last night, so they have bee re-typed again, also did a bit on first part of Big Man on Mt. (3 pgs, [illeg])

I havent thgt of poem for a year, I guess, so I cant say. But I wont end it on

  Because there were tears in the tent of years
  my moth\[^{81}\]
  the wouds of the world.\[^{82}\]

I wd omit that completely. And end on: lines

  before /A man loves touched scar tissue. /

  His scar tissue? Anyway poem’s in car, so cant say.

Reason for this added note: I am going wild over Number 3, all sorts of kicks & surprises, aiming at all “pitches.”

and I mean to have many priestesses of the city, included.

Do you have Denise Levertov’s address, if it has changed. If not, I'll go back to one of yr old letters, where I think you list it. I wrote to M C Richards, Madeleine Gleason,\[^{83}\]

Marianne Moore,\[^{84}\] I told her for a statement, poem, whatever ‘from Brooklyn’ for I plan poems From Kyoto, from Boston, from Fairbanks, from Mexico City, from New York, etc from as many places as they come in, measuring up of course, but also using the city, to a different sound, pitch of voice. I told her no one has her voice, and that it wd not be exploitation with M Moore on the cover, but her name as everyone else’s under her city.

But the letter got a little confused at end, so, also I sent Measure I, as R Blaser, told me she & Duncan corresponded, and she might stumble onto other contents, but I told her: they probably will not please you. You’re safe. In fact, I shd have said AND page 2 and page 28. Anyway, we’ll see. DONT again mention this. Because if she doesn’t appear, it might be a disappoint. I do not want to build up expectation in any quarters again. The magazine (quality & frequency of mss so intermittent) does not stand its own chance, as an exploration. So YOU is my own confidant. Cuz I gotta yap somewhere.

So if you can do, quick – Denise address
  postal OK
  yr love

my thanks & so many poems soon, I dont think you’ll ever smile again. Just read ‘em and send them back, I’ll supply postal supplies.

\[^{81}\]Either “moth” or “math.”

\[^{82}\]These three lines are lightly crossed out with an “x” in blue ink.

\[^{83}\]Madeline Gleason (1903-1979), American poet.

\[^{84}\]Marianne Moore (1887-1972), American Modernist poet and writer whose influence on twentieth century poetry cannot be overstated. She spent the last forty-three years of her life living in New York, thirty-seven at the same apartment in Brooklyn.
Charles Olson

August 19 [1957]

[Boston]

Dear Charles:

Well old silent one, I wonder where you are. I have been writing poems like crazy & fired from Lamont & where are you? I thgt crossing Park Street church front last Thursday, that you were going by in a car, and that any minute I’d hear you yell across street. Measure One out, I feel the weight of all the damning words on me. That glassunicorntown, I write when I can sneak it into a letter, San Francisco & I’ve got to go live there.

I am very sure Measure One is alright, that if they stopped to dig below the surface, they wd not be put off by the surface violence — hate, aridity of same. & If There is only that in same, so what.

Measure II being printed now, early this time, so there will be no holdup.

It is 64 pages, and 400 copies being printed. NO photo-montage, as I did not get all the photos in time, plus extra money. I have two rephotos from those you sent here, which I enclose. One I doubled in size, and it looks great on wall, at my eye. I have not given up this plan, [word cropped]

I think I gave you contents of II before, it is III now that has all kinds of excitements potential.

A ‘wide spread coverage of the city: and I remember how you dont dig it: polis yes/ but the city I dont think so. Why not then an anti-city statement, oh shit, a waste of time. You wont do it, and & I aint gonna moan. I try to remember how hectic it must be there, if you are still there, & if not, how more hectic elsewhere.

I have 20 new poems as bait & truthfully no one to read them to: Robin feeling not on this city swing which is what these rooftop poems are. Junk poems. Refuse poems. Wellington w/ his horn heralding dawn poems.

And not even the ear by mail, so I am dropping them on Mike tonight, all and his eyesights bad from lading bills.

Olson wrote in Maximus of the polis, which George Butterick defines as “the Greek city and concept of the city,” but not in the sense of the modern city. The polis must be able to contain “the very whole world,” Olson writes, “the State,” “the System.” Butterick quotes a 1956 essay in which Olson explains that “POLIS, then, is a filled up thing (in the passive as city, the community or body of citizens, not their dwellings, not their houses, not their being as material, but being as group with will” (qtd. 25). After tracing the concept back to the Greeks and beyond them to the Sumerians, Olson concludes that “the last polis or city is Gloucester.”
Marshall here last weekend, will be here next weekend. Definitely resident of Boston late this fall, with Jonas.

If I knew you were strong on Measure still, I could somehow come on to these creeps different, creeps being westcoastpoets. Now I tread by mail on those fuckingeggshells. I give you plan anyway on Measure III, two I am sure will please everybody from My Public Library on down.

*I didn’t print any editorial statement*

*thank you for telegram on same.*

Start off with a city ‘survey’

From Kyoto, from Fairbanks, from Mexico city, from seattle, San Fran, Boston (me & marshall who I kept out of Two for this reason) Toronto (souster?) London (Turnbull) NY? more than the pansy voice, I want.

Namely a striving after pitch, I even wrote Moore this AM asking if she’d write a walk back from Grocery Store, for her pitch, I am hooked that bad.

Then: The priestesses of City:
Lump them all together: Denise (1st appearance if she comes thru) Helen Adam, Madeline Gleason, Statement by Jennifer, stripper at the casino, with 2 pages of original jazz score after her thing. A boston Dowager on birdwalks, flowerbeds or the Hotel Brunswick, ? A movie review by Pauline Kail? All this indefinite on what they do, if anything.

Then Jess Collins Dick Tracy collage, with Statement From Fagin, by one.

Jon Wms: at least review of Combustion, which is closest thing we got to a newspaper.

I am not sure whether I shd move into a statement on the painting by say, Kline, or Larry Rivers, //maybe stay out of there altogether.

Then a Building, one that is central in mind’s eye for some city. Boston: Hancock Tower, but I want to move it out from here.

Say Empire or Eiffel. Just one poem. Buses, or anything that has to move on schedule. Also the park, Central.

Then city-characters, which I abound in. The junkies, thieves, prostitutes, queers, freaks (MUST NOT predominate) musicians, strippers, dowagers, young girls (puella), the girl in the black sheathe dress.

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86. Wieners had driven back from San Francisco to Boston with Jennifer and first tried heroin with her; she and some friends were arrested with drugs stolen from a pharmacy, in an apartment Wieners had fortunately just left to go visit Olson. A local paper ran the headline “Stripper Nabbed in Drug Arrest” (Selected Poems 301).

87. Pauline Kael (1919-2001), American film critic who was also a close friend and correspondent of Robert Duncan.

88. Larry Rivers (1923-2002), American painter, sculptor, and jazz saxophonist (he studied at Julliard with Miles Davis). Widely considered a father of “Pop Art,” he was a close friend of Frank O’Hara, and delivered a eulogy at O’Hara’s funeral.
a girl of fashion, Eigner’s slumped, back on wall
   The officebunch, but who knows them or writes of them.
   The coal-black (marshall lovely thing on this)
   The cleaning women / trash wanderers) childless couples)

The temple, Toji, Snyder — his also on whorehouse. Kerouac’s bums (in verse
‘Inquisitive plaidshirt
Pops…’
   Dorn’s misanthropic. 80 lines of Corso by YAAAAH: a nice spoken thing.

Marshall’s leatherjackets. Noel Stock90 (Australia): short on
   ‘Montague has achieved perfection.’ Eigner: on (The Bohemian Stage) Marshall on govt employees: all these very short, & hot.

So I dont know and doubt that any of this serves as lead in for you on MEASURE: THREE. But I wish it did, & that you would take my head off with what you submit. Altho, I feel you are still with me/ but if you aint, please tell me, so I can know how much strength the enemie has, now.
   I do not know if time-intent here was told you: but that I feel Measure should end the decade you began with Projective-Verse 1950. Also if Measure ONE sticks in yr craw, tell me. Someone wrote:
   ‘no word is better than bitter word/ but bitter word says/ you live.’
   Thank you for D S#1. It is in M#2.
   the proverb-ial bartender—
   a woman ties xmas bells to her window vines so the passersby ask up what kind of flowers are those/
   the poodle walkers. The absolute
   aridity of most city life / and of course—
   a poem on an apt building wd be enough
   for this.

   where is the quantity (from poets) I was taught? “They’re afraid of me, that’s what they are,” he said, falling on 5th Avenue.

   Anyway: poems are somewhere where I never was before. UP—

89 The Puella is the archetype of the young girl (puella aeternus, Latin for “the eternal girl”), an idea developed around Jung’s frequent writings on the male Puer.
90 Noel Stock (b. 1929), Australian scholar, editor, and biographer of Ezra Pound. At the invitation of Hugh Kenner, Stock made contact with Pound while the latter was at St. Elizabeth Hospital, beginning a five-year correspondence of over a hundred letters. After Pound was released and returned to Italy, Stock moved to Tirolo di Merano, Italy, and began decades of work collaborating with, editing, and teaching Pound.
Dear Robert:

I started one to you this morning, but it got so confused & dull, I threw away: and before, it took three tries to get an inadequate one off to Madeleine Gleason, asking for those many poems, but on condition she cd not get money from off Grove for same. Or let’s face it, his rejects, which…

leads me into (the robinwings) yr Essay on Marianne Moore. Yasee, I am planning in Four at end of book: that the individual as state be set down, a man involved in the affairs of his state, whether the body or spirit. His estate. To be followed by State Heros, whom we thank, honor (worship). Now O has an old thing to me how ‘Nature, like god/ is not so interesting. Man/ is interesting.’ which opens this last 1/3, followed by Perkoff: 1st hipster: maybe he does, man/ there is some light/ inside his eyes/ he looks/ like an out cat now, man/ the first up/ off the knees, then Ginsberg’s letter as himself as Napoleon, etc. my cup runneth over, his SAKYAMUNI COMING OUT FROM THE MOUNTAIN, Eigner: The age of ann frank, Cantelli, / Marshall’s Jesus:

A clear Picture – a Picture! of nature set/ aright as it is in/ persona – Jesus Christus. So I thgt of Marianne M as perfect for this section: ie, if Grove makes demands on changes, etc. that you send it here, & I print same, no matter ‘thickness’ of lang/ or length – Then again this morning, I wrote to Miss Moore, enclosing Measure One! asking if I cd have a statement/poem ‘from Brooklyn’ to join city survey, even a walk back from Grocerystore or library; to get her ‘pitch’ which is like no one else’s… Promised no exploitation but simply her name like all the others under her city. (I wont get it)

Robin mentions you have written a poem To Mike McClure in defense of San Francisco, which altho I wanted to have prose more so than the poem of yours in III, this seems to also set again a different pitch for you than either in One or Two.

Well these are immediate questions, I put to you via mail, because I shd have all mss. on III by Sept 15th, departure date – in auto for one month after that, and I want very much to keep MEASURE on TIME. Despite slowness of the Gluefactory on One. Immediacy: important.

If BM News cd have been. A review of Combustion in III, simply because it is the closest thing to a newspaper we’ve got.

If you wd also be so kind as to send Helen Adam’s address, I would appreciate same. I am sending back Magick poems tomorrow, after I see Robin, but I keep HUSH, for another take later, I wdnt tell Kostelvsky, in case nothing happens.

Also, a few mentions on the back of a card re what prose, sections of, you think wd fit re THE CITY: objects/ things of busses, anything that moves on schedule. I will have I hope a 2 page orig. jazz score, plus a tape record (500 words) with alto-sax jazzplayer on music. Carry this thru the other arts, I am writing Jess for this mail, if he would send a DickTracy comic-strip collage, to go with Statement by Fagin, here. Statement & word by Robin on Jennifer (stripper at the Casino) will go with music: then to I. Rivers or Franz Kline or Jess for a thing, on the painting (but I doubt the painters will dig using the word) still it can be as short as they want. the Building ‘one that holds it all together in the mind’s eye’ is another thing I want.

So are any of these leads for you, what to look for among yr work?
Plus of course, HD book wd be of great pleasure, if a review came (3 Books of the War, I mean) to go in State also. Eigner's review of Denise & Marie P will go in 3: under CityLites

(the priestesses: M Moore: Denise, Madeline G, Helen Adam, Eleo Curtis here, (Boston dowager who might do a word on flowerbeds—birdwalks,) plus the international city survey. (ah). all for THREE)

I yapped enough, so I'll look forward, if you can manage some kind of encouraging word for this dreary NE bird. That all is OK, & you're i.e. (me) gonna make it if you learn the breast stroke, etc. what I need to hear right now.

Faithfully
love
John

I shdnt complain, even w/o a good breast movement, for Two is paid for & that means: all energy (guns, mine, this time).

Oh, I thgt I explained, ms for Measure I had gone to printer on April 1st, & I guess I had not known then you were to be a sponsor. There were 3 others also who were left out, but wonder why. It was simply that dreadful time hold-up. And Robin was wrong, that Measure I did not stay here for more than 1 day, it was the sample copy I had 2-3 weeks earlier & the bulk went out, post-haste once in, me bedroom, where 75-100 still sit.

I have yr letter dated March 6 ‘enclose Charles’ check’ but it came later, so if I wasn’t such a distrustful cat, I shd have printed your name, and I am sorry. I guess anyway, check must have come before April 1st. No matter: all the names will be in the next one.

(Pardon the overall chaos, as I been put down so much, I am trying to grab thru every window at once, now that things are winging thru again)

---

Jess

August 19, 1957

[Boston]

Dear Jess Collins:

Would it be possible for you to send for the third issue of Measure a Dick Tracy collage, or any kind of comic-strip collage in which the fuzz* is included, trapping & triumphing over the thief? Thief: ‘if he was an honest man, he’d be dead by now’, will also be represented in same area by a Statement from Fagin.

I would leave choice of, number etc up to you. One would be enough, (see PS) & if you do say yes, the size specifications for cut. I guess I dont have to say that you are free to do, content-wise, whatever you wish. Robin Blaser has also mentioned that you have a great many city-collages, which if you would want to send, I would like to print one. It depends actually on what you would like to see in.

Enclosed find return of Hermetic NightJar. Thank you for sending it.
I had planned a photo-montage in II, but money covered only increase in pages & printing number of copies. I have not given up plan, however, it’s too good. I leave Boston September 15th, so could I have an answer any time before then?

Sincerely,

John Wieners

John Wieners

*police-man

PS: If they are small, we could run four or five strips on one page, laying out a story: and if I see them early, Fagin could conform his anecdotes as tho he was REAL man stepping out of strip, w/o any reference to it.

Right now, having no knowledge of any of them, Dick T sounds the ultimate you could go under limitations of Fagin thing.

But if you have Fagin escape in strip; on opposite page, in another country, he could tell us what happened since then in REAL country. But this is a little premature. Whatever, thank you.

Allen Ginsberg

August 19 [1957]
[Boston]

Dear Allen:

Letter was ret’d because of postage due: so I opened it & re-read it/ and most times I am unintelligible even to myself: that a letter becomes so much a part of the instant it is written it, that I get carried off by the speed with which subjects demand. But that I communicate with you is most important, I feel, & that you see how much clarity yr letter has, that it shd be made available to other men/ and that it stand; as the voice of the true city-reporter. In fact, it stands for more than the city alone: that it is the poet in the whole state: republic, whatever.

And it shd be saved until FOUR as shd SAKYAMUNI; as he too is a state hero, as is the poet.

And yr poem honors. Therefore only SEATTLE will go in Number: Three. Plus of course, if you turn up with something before deadline, which always is flexible.

Since I wrote enclosed, I have plotted out both 3 & 4, & that 4 will be the richer, what with material on hand. Kerouac too will be there.

Four will be built on this structure: please dont be put off with connotations these words have: as they will not appear & have come to my mind only out of what has been written & accepted beforehand.

Eigner opens with 2 short poems of raceknowledges,
‘while from Europe the narrators
escaped, as in childhood, destroyers, again, to
face the blast’
- then followed by Marshall:

‘Crewcuts, coxwain
    cut from culture (Kultur)
    a brush – (why not a mop)
    that I would take the legs
    in mid-aid
    and sweep the earth
    in recompense
    for Dachau’

Then Eigner again: who features in 4 so far:

If the individual dies, why
    not the race?

‘and pain is
    for what we know’

then another one:
    T h i n k

‘Think of me. I expected to write
on America’s failure, and go on living’

(I know a few lines dont make the poem, but I include
the quotes cuz they say what the poem does better than me)

Then Kerouac’s 51st chorus ending:

    Every one of us Roman Circus
    sacrifices, every one,
    Returned for payment
    in America Madhouse

then Eigner again:
    H e l l with it
then a Duerden (Richard) 4 pages called KNOWING

2 more Kerouac’s. 149th & 150th. How not to see ‘real life’ how he sets a ‘still life’ before
the other then an unkown:
Eric Cashen (Vermont) who has a crazy thing (4p) makes a poem like Mondrian painting who I do not dig/ but this kid makes me want to. His repetitions of phrase, except different, his moving force under the words that don't seem to be going at all (first stanza) no title:

O let the whelp be whelped
And the dog, in the ear
Be spoken.

Of course,
If we are to reassemble the teaparty,
In all the exactitude that is necessary
If we are to be people,

let the black and
white
squares

In the lamplight; be reflected, by a big
bridge,

A big hand.

(dig this)

We must
be ready, to be prepared, to be
warlike,
On any occasion, that demands peace.

This & another marshall poem bring to end section called ATTACK (in my head)

On the fire of heaven

then opening of section which shall be a gathering of
forces (underworld, any place) that have been dispersed, and forced into hiding.

A Jonas four page HYMN

‘a testament to dirt’

COME junkies pervers
boosters pimps prostitutes

you hip tossers shakers you

who mount horsemen barebacked

you wops you hunkies you

kikes spicks frogs you

brits chinks Come

form your coronal creeps
from under all the caves and seas of the old world’

Eigner: BOXES where it ends:

‘state of the mind

---

91 Eric Cashen was the post-collegiate pseudonym of William Ritchie Darling (1934-2006), an American poet and a professor for many years in New Hampshire. When he was a young man Ritchie contributed many poems under his pseudonym to, among others, Trace and The Black Mountain Review (Brooker and Thacker 992).
infancy

in books

turn in itself

the governors’

this section I take establishing general values of the republic/ its defenses AFTER attack of
1st section Olson: ‘toujours l’attaque’ (1st) then gather strengths / one is given them because
of the positive nature of the A, that is, if the A is positive/

now we get to a more particular

TAO I wd say poems on the 5 senses: in LORCA’s order

sight, touch, hearing, smell, taste

Duerden’s Bee: flowers

‘he lowers, lights (does it move?) & then

6 legs crawl him in’

a 1 page poem ending

“Then, full

he goes, shoves off.

The bee: flowers.

which is the hive, the

bee poem. (I was just thinking (sound must be

in experience of this poem, bee at all, smell also, so I’ll use this

as a joiner from one sense to the other. I’ll open this section with

a one of his (short) called:

real #6

‘at the joint of 2 branches
torn it looks

like a kneecap, opened.’

In other words, this section looks like it shd contain any poem that teaches

us how to use the 5 again. A McClure Canticle

‘The tendons whisper to the skeleton

Listen/ Listen/ listen/ Listen/ Listen’ (sic)

I need poems on the other 3 senses for this I’d say: we’re no good (the whole issues useless,

if they don’t turn up.)

A short Perkoff: Pithecanthropus erectus

-- for Charles Mingus

1st hipster

maybe he does, man

there is some light

inside his eyes

he looks

like an out cat now, man

---

92 Frederico García Lorca famously said that “The poet must be a professor of the five physical senses… in this order: sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste.”
93 *Pithecanthropus erectus* was a breakthrough album in 1956 for jazz genius Charles Mingus.
the first up
off the knees’

(that’s the ending & it opens the section on man, the State Hero, whatever, a combo of the 1st & the last man (poet), ie.

Olson’s  The Post Virginal

The Ginsberg letter, following direct
on his word that:  Nature, like god
is not so interesting.  Man/ is interesting...â

Then a Marshall (3 long pages, single spaced, loooong lined, in which he proves, or demonstrates yr letter, but having written this 18 months ago, & using none of yr words, etc/ sort of the other side of the coin, just a man in there making, & telling abt it,
‘I too met you at the garden, a zoo at times
And from there I shall speak to you about
you – only about you revealed
by word regarded by you as mighty important but
I shall speak to you about your action.

For it was in bed the first time when the light was’

Then we move onto:  the honoring of the hero, rather than letting him make his own demonstration of his power (viz: yr letter & marshall’s drawing up his measure, his actual embracing of, & nearly drowning from the cup that runs over.) So: SAKYAMUNI here.

Eigner’s :  the age of ann frank
:  Cantelli
Marshall:  ‘in persona – Jesus Christus.’
Eigner :  PL E I N
(after seeing lust for life, it’s to Van Gogh)
and he ends it)

‘you should have cut an eye
and remembered how that was

we can lose so little’

so I take it, that the honoring of heroes does keep us of on guard of that: we can lose so little –

and there’s a little ominous note, I end mag with from Alaska:

River rising all summer long
rising and yet to fall –
flooded flats where geese
call unheeding

Smoke on the hills
from fires of a dry season.
Salmon come
to tangle the net and die
in a strange water.

Mosquitoes whirl in the shade,
raspberries redden,
swallows leave the nest
and the nights darken –

How long before the frost?

By the roadside wild
rhubarb already bears its seed.

Alright, I know it’s a pretty
narrow (author-wise thing) but that what I mention takes not any more than ½ the issue, so
there’s so much great can happen: Duncan is writing an essay on M Moore; (for Grove) but
they usually fall down on promises, esp. since the prose has already been criticized as too
thick by Don: & I’ll see him (Duncan) in October, etc while deadline on this issue is not
until January.

TO COME OUT NEW like the spring will be doing, if there is any,
in that place. Whew, it’s daylight again.

But I will go after these and see what happens:
James Broughton: poems on children. (Be a gain as) (is still there)
Creeley on Lawrence or Judson Crews on Taos, etc. what of Law i; all to build up here,
because he is the source, we as individual state either thrive or die on. YOU SEE YR
LETTER STARTS THAT OFF, with intro from Olson and perko on MAN, big letters,
you bring it around, to man as in poet, followed by lesser heroes, painters, conductors, little
girls, maybe place where one was, etc.

1º: ATTACK (BLIND – INSTINCT – BLOOD)
strengthening then, calling in of DEFENSES, just in case, we are
weaker than we might know.

Then FOUNDATIONS, basics, to how those who aint CAN
BE: tao. the Five senses. (this section can be great if the stuff comes)

Demonstration of cats using same. Worship, thanks, etc to those ones in
past who also did so.

And of course, more will reveal as the mss come on, I am sending
out spirit calls. We’ll see if there is a state of the spirit, & whether it can hear me. There will
be no politics.

94 James Broughton (1913-1999), American poet and experimental filmmaker, a founder of the
Radical Faeries (with Harry Hay) and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (as Sister
Sermonetta).

95 Judson Crews (1917-2010), American poet, publisher, and bookseller. Among his many
publications and presses were Motive and The Naked Ear, which published many of Wieners’
friends and peers like Creeley, Eigner, Baraka, and di Prima.
On 3: much more is certain, I just got to get busy, and get all this stuff.

THE CITY
from: the priestesses: M6 Richards, Helen Adam, Madeleine Gleason, Pauline Kail (movie review), Eleo Curis (Boston dowager) Statement by Jennifer, burlesque dancer at the Casino (yes). Also M Moore: a statement on Brooklyn or poem.

Then William Wellington: 500-1000 tape recorded words on music) – alto sax player, (fuck it, they'll never open this) junky. Danny Kent – 2 pages of jazz score.

Statement by Fagin. Denise Levertov, up w. priestesses. Jon Wms, some hot prose on the City, maybe a review of Combustion, it’s the closes thing we have to a newspaper, with a comic strip collage Dick Tracy – Jess Collins, Father Feeney SJ: Boston hatepriest, poet, who might come through.

Statement on painting? Larry Rivers, F Kline, maybe better a city collage, by JESS

That’s all doubtful in my mind, whether the painter (anyone of them) I cd get to do it.


Most of that is I'll have to scrape but this I do not.


96 William Wellington (1925-2000), Boston jazz musician and librarian.
97 Leonard Feeney (1898-1978), Jesuit priest in Boston who was excommunicated in 1953. He published a frequently anti-Semitic conservative newsletter called The Point from 1952-1959, earning him a reputation as Boston’s homegrown Father Coughlin.
98 Edwin Denby (1903-1983), American poet, novelist, and dance critic whose work was celebrated especially by the second generation of New York poets, after Ted Berrigan devoted an issue of his magazine C to the work of Denby. Anne Waldman and Larry Fagin would go on to publish his books for their Angel Hair and Adventures in Poetry presses, respectively. Full Court Press (Waldman, Joan Simon, and Ron Padgett) published Denby’s Collected Poems in 1975. Wieners’ interest in Denby’s outlook on “the old world” would have stemmed from the latter’s 1956 Mediterranean Cities, an art book of Denby’s sonnets paired with partner Rudy Burckhardt’s photographs from a Mediterranean journey. The book was reviewed favorably in Poetry by Wieners’ friend Frank O’Hara (Katz).
99 John Myers (1920?-1987), art dealer and writer who co-founded the Tibor de Nagy gallery in New York in 1951. Tibor de Nagy was responsible for the first solo shows of many of the New York school of painters, including Larry Rivers, Helen Frankenthaler, and Grace Hartigan; Myers himself tirelessly promoted the nascent New York School poets he befriended, like John Ashbery, Frank O’Hara, James Schuyler, and Barbara Guest. Myers also edited the magazine Semi-Colon, which gave Wieners his first publication in 1956, “With J.R. Morton.”
100 Carl Larsen (b. 1934), American poet, playwright, and editor of Exterminaria, a Journal of Existant Hysteria, published in the late 50s out of Hermosa Beach, and 7 Poets’ Press, which published Charles Bukowski and Richard Brautigan in the 1960s.
perfection’ in other words we have swung into city types. He edits EDGE in Australia, which publishes 5 Pound translations of Rimbaud in its 1st issue. Marshall’s 10 lines on leather jackets. Fielding Dawson on Dike in the square & other prose: The woman in the black sheath dress, some short movie poems by various ones, swinging into FRAGMENT OF A BLUE, which I am so happy abt, two junk choruses by K: 120 & 121, then a BALLAD OF ALICE O’BRIEN, an Eigner review to close book on Denise L & Marie P (City Lights), he quotes 21 lines of ‘America I’m putting my queer shoulder to the wheel’ which I’d know is the whole poem, if I was able ever to buy a copy of yr book. Is this alright by the way, this quote of you? It’s favorable for he opens up with remark ‘Yet perhaps the best I can say is that I would like to contribute these lines of Ginsberg’s to the newspaper (and all the 6th fleet), even without credit.’

then goes to quote poem/ but the rest of review is filled up with 5 lines of critique, then a couple of Denise’s poem, then 3 lines of critique, then a Ponsot poem, one more line of his:

‘calm down wild bells, we know you’re here’
then 3 more poems of Ponsot, for 8 pages double spaced pages. Tho I’m cutting out the last 3 pages of his, when he moves into LAYTON, so it makes it only 5.

Oh I’ll have some Achilles Fang china translations, MC Richards is a translator of Artaud,\textsuperscript{101} and I might write Corman/ but for what?: ‘What it’s like to make a little mag!’ Blackburn (remember that article in BMR 6, A Sad Story) it was on Provencal, etc the destruction of Janeism, etc.\textsuperscript{102} He might be good for state. But I shd put aside filling of that, until 3 is done. The women, I hope., turn up with some good poems, & NY will reveal itself, I hope, when I go Sept 15 for a few days, that I shd dig a lot there, or line a lot up, don’t you think. I wrote F R Miller & got no reply, & now, I guess, is time to follow others up, becuz we are all city bred, in important sense & I want a lot of VOICES shouting abt its flowers and its cocksuckers on opposite pages, its bird walks, and its burlesque stages.

Oh I go to sleep. Don’t feel at all you gotta come back on any of this, I just felt like dumping a little on you, and then I couldn’t stop, Just a yes or no whether I can go ahead on Seattle, which I forgot to include above, wd be the greatest. I made two prints of Burrroughs photo, but none of yrs. So I might want it back some time, alright? Let me know if postage is expensive, just how much exactly, & I will pay it, on anything, you are hot on & heavy it is, send it. Not Peter. The poem. But I am more pleased with what I got. There has not been any man I have dug, whose work has been immediately enjoyed by me. Also that wonderful return thing, Dr Wms, talks abt. And Gertie says: the new is abhorrent, or somesuch. But then again, yr letter was like wings when you been tied down.

OK

Postage will be raised now to 80 cents. I hope it’s not that expensive there for you. Please tell me. 2/3rds of those lines in OverK (reread 5 times) almost tempt me.

\textsuperscript{101} Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), French poet, playwright, translator, and critic whose influence over late-50s bohemia was enormous. Former Black Mountain teacher MC Richards was working on translations of Artaud that would be published by Grove Press in 1958 as of The Theater and Its Double, its first edition in English.

\textsuperscript{102} The story to which Wieners refers is an essay on the thirteenth-century Albigensian (or Cathar) Crusade, published in the BMR’s fifth issue.
Dearest Charles:

The PM shadows make wings on my floor: because the pleasures from Measure are PM, & so many after the exhaustion of the last two weeks, which I have worked as never before at the poem/ failed to come thru with the light word, the dawn

But it’s 5 pm and the word makes activity in the room.

YES, of course come in this Sunday night & bunk over. We’ll talk & etc (depending on you & yr weight then stay here as \textit{love} lord of the house & have Kate in for breakfast.

I DONT leave for WG (thepicthouse) until SEPT. 16 & I am busted at Lamont this past month (so free to make nightday. I will not do anything to tie up. yr run.

The number is La-3-8388, and USE it as if your own. The best time & certain for me to be here:

Noon every day. 5-8 every day midnight on.

\textit{(Proofs due before I leave so you SEE)}

Measure II is being printed now. but III with much Marshall is being made. It’s the CITY ISSUE, & I dont feel you like City (polis yes: so I do hope with all my heart that you will substance it for me. \textit{Have to} – if \textit{we want to keep them} –

As you can -- & if it breaks the city walls, all to the better.

The FOURTH* The State, the individual one, his estate.

Measure II has DG #1, NO word \textit{\leftarrow} (editorial thanks for that telegram)

Marshall was here last weekend/ and is due in again for this one, but I will find out tonight when definitely, he’ll be here. (You can be here alone Sunday or have him – Blaser – Jonas in to see you, whatever) I myself found much wrong with ONE, & hope Two of a wider reach.

Also \textit{our} itinerary at Sept 16 takes us down to some Civil War battlegrounds/ so maybe we can meet again at Black Mountain;

that doesn't mean I'm gonna let you off seeing/ me here.

What shd be in Measure is the short swipe: the rabbit punch, so I do hope (god how much) you use yr dump truck, back it up here

I got poems maybe so UP; anyhow they’re where I’ve never been before.

In fact I been as free poem-wise/ time-wise cock-wise

She runs for me in August.
You certainly is a traveling man.
Marshall moving back here is set to do his escape from hell, the word on his season, there.
So maybe you is the bug for his ear, in there.

My love, & welcome home.

JAWN

Please use me NOW anyway I can be of help —

---

**Ed Dorn**

**Aug 21 [1957]**

**[Boston]**

The Girls in the Bank

Are so lovely
framed in the white door.
The ten O’clock sun.
All that setting.
Venitian blinds.

There’s cleaning power
here, their skin reflects it
one feels.
After a breath of air
they walk away. In
their hands
they’ve green & gray money.
One feels perverse.

One can’t get the numbers
on the bills out of one’s
head.

* * *

Deere Ed: To go w. letter finished a few minutes ago, that it was thru no editorial placing
(spacing) that put the assend of yr poem, over on that other page, when both the other page
& yrs wd have been so IMPROVED, if they cd have retained their own space, NAME, none
of that jamming, there was no need of, just want you to know, in case you think: blind/man.

Olson’s clock (next to last-line shd be ‘cock’ and Duncan lost a line,

J.

---

103 This poem by Dorn remains unpublished.
Robert Duncan
Aug 22 [1957]
[Boston]

Dear Robert:

When the phone rings & it says Hello John this is Charles, it's a special night, wow – he’s in Gloucester and will stay until middle of Sept, then back to BM for business, then I imagine, becoming a NEer; so I leave town: but it is happiness he’s here and also a pain, that one must take him on his terms and that there is so little time. But I will spend a few days in The Fishousetown: and work on the structure of Measure: what he is already riding on he said was the City-State issues, but I think too those other demands disperse him.

Yr letter is of such importance that I wd like to print it totally in Measure. Do you think this alright? of course, I will be there by the time III has to go off, so if there are deletions etc, you can tell me. It fits better in Four, with Ginsberg's which is of such a different order, namely only a definition of self, his is, his image of himself as Napoleon poet: while yrs is concerned with the process, how we must use ourselves. The state of the poem –

I think personally for you, that you/ we must go where our likes in yr sense of conviction are, where we are freest formwise, where the wings can have their full spread: that is what I look for: breadth of a man’s reach, how much his eye can hold, the ‘direction of will’ so if I was say: a lover of poetry only, Measure wd offend me, but if for my practice, I realized the moist ground of the thing, (which Spicer, is not particularly fertile) then I wd say; I must put my hands in this, altho it looks like shit, it is where this new grows, & where I must, if I am to survive. I have no choice but go here. Measure is edited simply by my conviction: and it is and always will be: a thing of process also, that it is opened onto new territories by nearly every one of yr letters, that others must see as you is I think reason enuf to print yrs of the 18th.

The beginning of 3rd paragraph was simply to say: dont push yrself to a ground, where the stench is so bad, you will die, where yr Green Lady has no field to ride. For you have been able to match the both grounds in yr stride: & this of course is what makes you of Measure to all of us. Those who cant shd be included in Measure, I agree, simply because our country at times is pretty stark, savage neonwise (Helen has the moon) languagewise – but Spicer’s Bird is a rare one for him, he wont find that one homing unless he admits it might be over in our land. & of course, he fails on both sides/ but less in Bird than in any other of his I read, still Psychoanalysis I think his best. Then Bird.

Spicer shdnt really come in because he is limited on both counts: his structure wont allow in what his (ego) dont ‘like’. Olson shut out, Creeley, anything BM; but anything that gives pleasure or pain to him: where he can identify, yes—that’s for me, that’s poetry; that’s why we dont talk abt poetry anymore, it is so filled with this kind of sick bird, looking for songs to accompany them down to hell, men’s rooms/ or into the arms of ‘Jesus;’ looking for messages with the sound they have on their own personal ‘phonograph records’. I dont think we shd put up with their opinions, weights, etc. any longer. That it must be the poem, the ‘health of it’ we are digging,
They’re sick: (the word) *their use of it abuses – also their “love” & conviction (they have them)* is abused, but we can’t be infected.

Again it is by our language we show, make manifest everything. That it is in our hands: that we constantly fill it w/ life, jumps, / creating the patterns in it, we see around us: and these patterns are not rymed couplets or always correct grammar, or measured lines, sometimes even obscene patterns, that shd not be doing what they do, have no right, sucking the life off others: all these we have to include.// Also the neat formal ones. But everyone thinks there wd be no place for that in Measure / did they read Dorn, / or that we’re queer, did they read Olson/ that there is not enough substance/ did they read Duncan/

Olson said in that letter to RB: ‘And the problem, anyway, is reality and language, any use of it – ’ wait, I’ll go on and give the rest of it: it’s that important if the attack there gets too strong on M:

‘And the problem, anyway, is reality and language, any use of it – a use of it, not just a poem. Lord! If we wrote a poem except both (a) to write a poem and (b) because we can’t help to, and breathe!

Wow. I sure say breath, like testing whether a person is alive, on a mirror, does it show, I mean nor the mirror, it is now opaque, there is fog on it, this girl does breathe! Aint it the greatest?

Esau’s hand, as well as Jacob’s, as well as: hair on it, or not, but that the word or not the word in that moment – “space” – is right. C’est pas le mot juste, c’est le mot shaggy ou glossy, le polysyllable ou le monosyllable.’

But of course, if the word is right at that moment, whether or not the moment is, makes it le mot juste. I Believe in le mot juste, as well as le polys. etc. etc. There are wrong moments in Measure, but they come as illumination that its space shd contain all (ticks on the clock, but that’s another thing.

I don’t want it clique, it won’t be, there is always someone breaking in, or off. I think maybe reading back, that O cd contain more exactitude, that he improves when he does. That exactitude is good for the practice, that it develops strength of eye, etc. I will get off the box now: just want to assure you that I am in accord with yrs, that there is was much dispersal of me at too many times, that Measure must be brought up, to a tightness so that all these will be able to have full play w. out danger of the ground giving away.

I think that I could not be convinced by what I did not appreciate. I believe yr conviction, but I think that yr appreciation also lies here. That if you do wonder how you can still allow Helen A in, is because you allow yr conviction of where you, yrself must go, to bypass, and allow hers full swing.

Also, you have been brought up on so much, that we do not fall heir to. That’s what love of poetry gets you, it takes you farafield, also you never had the surety of say, an Olson behind you, or any surety at all: but what then vogue/ there was no Olson, & Eliot is something we don’t read/ what might have been yr leaders say Post WW II – or during: where are they, are they still in such necessity for yr creation: say Sitwell. & even if you were
so lucky as to get Pound at his core, how many and you put him down, or Stein, how many shared this/ or Joyce, tho he was always touted. Still I doubt he is of any use to the beginning writer: or the writer looking for laws to test out against his own experience. Or able to teach you anything on how to first lay down the word. *The men who lead us NOW — lead others*

So we beginners have so much work spaded for us: that looks at the present to be of permanent wear, that we go deeper now, if we dare, & more extreme, and again, harder to accept, what things we throw up from the pit, or grab down/ more to my liking, off the bird’s tail. And that aint a Spicerbird, which does very little flying, only drags its wounded wigs along the path,

Maybe I am all wrong here on influences of our youth: but they must leave the same traces/ mould us the way our parents do, unknown to both ourselves & them. That’s all I’m trying to say in the 2nd paragraph on this page.

It is very great yrs: ‘Judgment proceeds not from pleasure… but purpose toward necessity’

Let Measure be that: providing the poets who measure with that material their “directives” insist on // *We shd go/ be convinced by that which INSISTS (Charles & Betty) her on him – the tail of the gang – but oh the back wash*

I agree on my other letter must show, that the other art/ businesses in process shd be included, esp in City, State business. The word is the State: positively, ‘the government’ the ‘republic of letters’ but the painting, cd be the City’s, the gallery, etc. unless we push it back to the caves (bison)

Webern I think great if you want to take it on. HD, also, but that cd go in FOUR. How I wd like to print her, ‘intricate song’s lost measure’ Shd I make yr banner: FOLLOW THRU THE NEW. I can see also why much of Measure’s intent has not been clear to you: for it has not been to me. It reveals itself: that it was, is a necessity (for me) I have no doubt: that I should ask any more knowledge of why for it, is silly, when if I am in process, then it too shall/will be. And my motives are not always clear: that it is joy as in my new poems, when the structure reveals, that I believe in the word, and its power, but that it can be coated over, & abused, I also believe; that it can fall into the wrong hands,

that I realized (thinking BMR gone) where else cd the men be in close ranks, appear as such under its banner (as that banner unfolds in the wing) & the young can march also — but they sneak in under process & are not actually of USE like you are to us. Olson, Creeley, Duncan & the hits as they come –

which also is of the process. A great knowledge for me: important it be made known to others: ‘all things in the Process are, primordial, unestablished in the Good’

If you want more of Measure than the 10 I sent, please say so, & I shall ship same. If you think too it wd be worth its while for you to get them quick, then I will ship them in individual envelopes by air. *(10 went out day yr letter arrived)*

City Lights have 10 – but I lose money on bookstore sales, it costing 60¢ to print one copy.

Price is $163. for 300 at 48p.
400 at 64p which is what #2 is. But for 3, it has yet to be decided as the money has not yet come. *All drawings etc. extra – but cheap – I doubt US printer can top this –* And I hate to go back to crime, being in process of dawn, spending my time on the Rooftop, watching it get red & streaked and when it rises high enough to let the creeps get out of bed: and the streets to fill up: I shall turn away

and wait again for midnight to roam: this winter, will be descent time, I am afraid.

Thank you for the Duerden bit: I am sure that for each writer (new or even you others) I have constantly stressed altho possibly not stated: that the space is open to them, that the magazine shall be (form) determined by exactly how they use it, that each issue, shall show just this: how certain ones

have put it/ themselves to work. I don’t see how Duerden did not see: tho he has my greatest hope under the correct leadings to turn up the poem. You agree? Musica #3 in M2, I leave find the most. Also I hope enough work is done by him so that he & Eigner can dominate #4. Eigner already making the Issue

‘My every effort and conviction is here.’ is enough to say
when
a man of yr stature (eyes looking to you) says that: what he has said MUST be made available to those who include him in their VISION of ‘the republic’.

So you have again my gratitude.

And respect.

love,

John

Pardon the word so loose – so many –

Gee it is certainly strange that Duerden did not feel he cd send Measure full range material: when the next to last letter I sent him was lauding him for being so faithful with mss.

It simply may be he was put off by my early rejections, but it works that way: if they are to come to bear, they do not sulk but dig until I am convinced, and the work does improve.

If he had not been sent back at first, he wd never have forced himself to that limit, where the poem is. I guess it is you that said in a letter:

at the limit, the periphery/ is the center.

_Cd you send Denise’s address._

_I asked Michael also –_

_Olson wrote “impeccable” wow’ –_

‘its handpicked’

_and Eigner excited! also Dawson – and_

_Michael & you &_

_Robin -- & Ray_

_Sonster, ob yes “Don Allen”._

_Olson_

_also be ^ thgt Spicer’s “personally authentic”_
minimum response
But somehow ~ doesn’t matter — it is always the few. But I wish the ones who put it down wd
SUBMIT their work & they, if they mistrust me, know they have Robin

Am glad Joe D. measures. God, I want him in. Tho I cant somehow discover the merit of Borregard.104
Robin w/ Try – Goodnight

Am requesting Miss Adam that we print (Diana) in III, great mixup here on that mss (Robin
had it since the night after I got yr package & we both forgot it) it was so great for Magic – !!
as the voice they might hear over their radio some night: priestess of
the city, whatever, Cassandra, etc. This wont be labeled, etc, but stand as itself.

Also I keep out Borregard for Robin, And Kostelefsky’s HUSH105 for myself, as sometimes
hits, others No, then Robin has other Helen Adam poems, so I shall send these three items
back shortly

1. All Adam poems but (Great is Diana)

2. Borregard if Robin cant show me nothing I aint seen, or not seen, whatever.

3. HUSH, if by the end of next week: I cant make up my mind.

Also photographs as soon as processing at Harvard is over, they are well taken care of, &
not harmed.

8-26
Did you get 10

Measures? -- sent regular mail

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Ed Dorn Aug 25 5:20 AM [1957]

By all means/ save cut up as after $10-15 lost – it cant be total price jump going nearly $44 – but save –
as I plan it still somewhere – Exp big one.

Dear House of the Good Shepherd:

I like The Girls in the Bank so much I will print #3, in fact what am I saying that it is
just exactly what I am looking for for THE CITY.

That if you can con

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104 Ebbe Borregaard (b. 1933), American poet who has lived in San Francisco and nearby
Bolinas since 1955. He arrived “already famous in a minor way as a poet runaway” after his
mother in Vermont used the San Francisco papers to try to find her son, “labeled ‘the
Beatnik Boy’ to his chagrin, he was triumphantly declared found, his picture appearing on
the front page of the papers” (Ellingham and Killian 82). A veteran of the Korean War,
Borregaard was a part of Jack Spicer’s “Poetry as Magic” workshop in 1957, and was
represented by two poems in the San Francisco section of The New American Poetry.

105 Josef Kostelefsky, San Francisco poet who participated in Spicer’s “Poetry as Magic”
workshop.
continue sending them like this: you will be the B Vox in #3. Remember there are were a few left quite a few to present (initially) in Measure, before I start building issues, with one or two of them in mind.

It is YR USE of the space here that matters how much space you get. That you can take yr content:form as farafield as it will lead you. I will not interfere anyway/

And I know that anything you felt hot abt, & made me see (if you had to) I wd print.

That dont worry abt me; you must find the thing Measure is: ‘working ground for all yr own process’ (Duncan)

Olson’s;: a question of reality & language ‘Use of them’

That in these two poems alone: we find an exact care of language (the word: along with what I consider not: incorrect Englishes, but inexactitudes.

Is it today you think you met first misanthropic? Or is his misanthropicness what you think abt?

The way yr punctuation is, I dont know

Also I spurted abt well-believers? If the stanza reads:

in a streetfull
of believers
and faint-smilers.

at least better for me. Cuz what is second adj: modifier in yr stanza (thus of a diminishment, loss of force etc) is the FIRST one in my version: not mine really but R Blaser’s who was here then: that the ‘image’ of that little mouth with the fangs behind, showing just a bit, or those frightened little quirks of the mouth, people say goodmorning with (NOT IN MY WORLD ANYMORE) is of very great power. No let down at end – But it will go as U wish it –

GOOD POEMS, ed and I am pleased to have them, that issue 3 wd be lesser without them: there is still plenty of room & sending them that way on postcard as they come is SWELL & ENOUGH, if you get rushed.

Also Venetian is spelt (sic) but you probably did that on purpose to bug me. Then you might have a real reason: but I will print it that way [arrow to “Venetian”].

Oh such a lovely poem, it was lying on a phonograph this AM, and a fellow (Jonas #1) picked it up & I heard him gasp! (No shit.) also Robin back from SF where they did not dig M#1 AT FIRST, sd all SF was pleased & enthusiastic over Rick. I thgt it important to HEALTH of #1, others of that space were either

‘PSYCHO’
QUEER
TURNED IN

not on/ wards so they drop shit in their own faces, pile up their own rooms, with this violence, filth etc. (oh Boston

HATE. But II’s most violent & extreme & only mention of the boys, is simply yr Notes from the Fields, & Jonas again (a bit)
irony huh, as they taught us. you the only straightone, besides O in I. Tho Eigner is, but he cant stop long enuf to think abt it. \textit{(sex at all anyway then there’s good old Julius Caesar Dawson on every woman’s etc./ every man’s)}

I think this one of the charges out west: queer only \textit{but} it aint so, that there was no thgt even, (maybe uncon) of who the fuck they were except the big ones: O & D.

I had to reject the 1st Jonathan, pick Eigner’s out of 500, cut the Marshall ends, also place it on the page, LINE-WISE, also with Jonas: reject tons that they’re so \textit{up} abt. \textit{O’Hara another load} Then also the matter of sifting the almosts,

Eve Triem, Helen Adam, who will come later,

but II goes this way: (have I told you? RUm: Use of uncon. in writing Blaser: Hunger of sound \textit{8p} Eigner: Poem Creeley: Juggler’s thot Muchael Rumaker: 7 dreams \textit{prose} Kerouac: 5 choruses –

Olson: She who hits at will (1 page, that’s all, after telling me ‘depend on more than you can handle this coming year will be one in which I really do turn them out’ well he called here, last night: what a thing to pick it up & have it say: Hello John? Yah

This is Charles – I’m back – Yah where’s my 67th Maximus Poem, and the followup promised of The Structure of Spheres, & yah, & you forgot, the review of Spengler. But he’s flushed and ‘tubercular’ & off to Maine for a week the here so I will spend time in MAXIMUSLAND. \textit{– Gloucester until middle of Sept—}

Contents (cont of 2) R. Creeley: They Say & she went to stay (2 short ones) Dorn: Notes Duncan: The dance \textit{(good company baby)} Perkoff: 6-8 page poem which might have a misunderstood queer \textit{thing} in it, tho he dont mean it. \textit{very unlikely any change of same} \textit{→ WHO CARES} V R LANG: 1 poem, the recidivists, \textit{(1 page)} dead Boston poe\textit{tress. – 1 page} Mike McClure: One Two \textit{(he objector to one, who} I think personally put Duncan off, until Duncan could get things alone below the easy identifiable surfaces. \& \textit{THEN CAME GREAT LETTER OF DUNCAN, THAT ‘THE POEM’ HIS WORD POETRY, I CANT REPEAT: (like wcw) IS A MATTER OF CONVICTION, THAT WHAT WE LIKE DONT MATTER,} \textsuperscript{106} so great I shall publish it in STATE ISSUE #4.

\textsuperscript{106} See Robert Duncan’s letter of August 18, 1957, (Appendix B), in which he hopes that \textit{Measure} will serve as a “working ground” for new work: “if the new writers USE the magazine to work out their part of the process, if it is a working ground,” he writes, “then the maximum use for us all will be there.”
Which is the individual state: not politic, the ‘government of words: republic of letters,’ the poet as prime citizen YAH, let's dig out those ESTABLISHMENT poems, while 3 is ‘polis’ does O dig that?! he is riding on it: but also going over to GROVE PRESS where the $$$ are: or the push, still I told him over wireless that he was prime stimulus behind M, when he said he hoped he was not too late for II, this, after he had seen MARSHALL in I, & felt he had to keep pace w/ someone: Olson is cool, playing it, to see how that wheel of fortune spins, how MEASURE opens, as it is.

#3: Allen Ginsberg – new stuff, not much as I cdnt find much, so… but excit
Gary Snyder, only liked two little ones. Yab in 3.
Gregory Corso: 80 lines YAAAH’s speech.
Louis Ginsberg (his idea) if I can find ONE of 300 maybe I’ll
I’ll need, but I dig them appearing together.
Have contacted for city reasons, thinking them Letters to
be of good USE to it, material wise Mary Hayworth,
column: somehow I feel I have sd all this before to you?

these: Marianne Moore, (her pitch, I asked for,) not necessarily her poem, but a statement, a walk home from grocery store library ANYTHING abt Brooklyn, that’s all I want. No exploitation, I promised her, just name under her city, like the others.
(These are the priestess for 3: Denise (I wait for her address, also, think she’s still In Mexico? Helen Adam, Madeline Gleason, M C Richards, Statement by Jennifer, stripper at Casino, YES, she’s doing, same, for this
Robin & I wrote up a 1000 word squib for her pictures to go in Cabaret: So. Also, a movie-review by Pauline Kail? A word by Billie Holliday, I’ll write anyway, wd like the black in it, skin that is. all UNDEFINITE, ONLY APPROACHED
Then others: J Wms (prose) ‘yes’
James Broughton (the film)
Jess Collins (Dick Tracy Collage)
STATEMENT BY FAGIN
2 pages of original jazz score.
A tape-recorded 500-1000 words by alto-sax junky.
GREAT, he the one who dug RICK most. William Wellington, was taught by Lester Young, etc. (white) but what junky is ever white? this kind of thing I want in 3, what I just said.
NY School for dist. –dorn (yes)
Misanthropos
Bankbabes.
Marshall – good poems, nothing sensational but enuf.
Dawson : Dike in Square (prose
Noel Stock: 2 little horrible ones I prob wont print: editor of Edge.
An Australian mag:
$10 a yr, 12 issues, 5 out so far #1, contains 5
Rimbaud translations by POUND. So I gave them ½ page ad in Measure 2 in exchange for sub!
Eigner – short not hot poems (I SAVE HIS BIG BLAST FOR 4, where surprising it is: the attack on America, of all things, not god, etc, IS GREAT, HIS BEST.
Kerouac: Junk short poems/ choruses, from San Francisco, Mexico City Blues. I got FEELERS OUT on more Corso, tho I read a great deal of his I puked on.

Then a NYer (Kenneth koch) member (straight) of Frank O’Hara pansy set, who I loved at one time, I thgt he survived what he was caught on, but now I doubt it.

You do more work than he *does* having a book out Grove this fall (BAH) still got a movie star, poem, I like, & wd use in 3.

Ray Souster (Toronto) Turnbull (London) Corso (Paris) Ginsberg (Venice) Edwin Denby (the remaining Mediterranean cities,

*Chicago, Seattle*

BUT I NEED BOSTON, & is New Orleans worth it (ALSO BURLINGTON IF IT HITS RIGHT: there is plenty of room in 3 as it now stands, if you do do it, I wd like nothing more.

then there’s Kyoto, fairbanks, Boston, san francisco

Duncan (YES) on Webern for III

also I am looking for the BUILDING that is THE central one in the mind’s ye of *some each* particular city, there can be repetitions here.

Empire (NY)
Eiffel (paris)

HANCOCK (Boston)

What SF but *(the GOLDEN GATE*

to the piss house.

Seattle yes I got one *from* there: Ginsberg.
And Fee handles *some NY*, tho only his area. I NEED CITY scrub ladies, *(enuf whores)*
executives, cripples, *(tho I think maybe we got enuf there too)*

ALSO THERE IS A WILD ‘FRAGMENT OF A BLUE MOVIE’ that is abt sodomy but done in all this movie-shot camera bit, when Lana & Guy lie down to it, we see the eagle over the bed, or the OAK outside the windows, beat its stiff branches on the glass : so this guy who has to write under pseudonym: WILLIAM LEE, has done this,

LUSH prose, maybe 4-5 printed pages. *& JUNK – old junkies all thru Fragment*

Plus there are unknowns to you, I wont yap abt. I wd like Joe Dunn.
But, he aint wrking, I dont think, I also wd like something from

Father Feeney, the hatepriest here, also the one: poet, too.

I need the officebunch of girls, also anything that has to move on schedule, I need maybe clothes & MOST OF ALL I NEED, THE UNDERLYING BLUEPRINT OF THIS CITY, IF I INCLUDE ONLY WHAT I LIST IT WD BE ANTI-POLIS, & OLSON IS ANTI-CITY, & I HOPE HE GETS MAD & WRITES AN ANTI-CITY STATEMENT
Then I will get after Creeley, but he must take the lead, I am taking offers, & tired of pushing, the ones in cement.
New McClure poem (one so far) will go in 4. Then there A
RON LOEWINSON,107 19, from SF, which pleases, then thes PHILLIP WHALEN man, did we hit it off,
I was out to get busted, & he was there dialing the phone anyway, I think it’s real
DEAD now (all in the space of a week, 3000 miles, apartm we met, got excited, then an
insult, over the choice of word, AGAIN, & the duel was set, 3 letters I think in all, total
between US,
yet, death shall not triumph, I think esp his hate of me.
Well, I dont know any of that scene & do not
want to participate, in fact am perpetuating same.
So
To FINISH OFF TWO: MAGICK
‘But loudly as we may cry for magic again’
it shall be in Artaud’s French
‘Mais si fort que nous reclamions pour la magie’
(or something like, its exact there on inside
front cover: there’s not much around.

#2 Two ends up with: James Schuyler (2 pages, another NY prose writer, but who O digs
the most, & shows potentiality, etc.
Robert Creeley: The tunnel,
Just Friends

Stephen Jonas: much diff. piece in some ways than #1. but Books III & IV ‘from a long
poem for jack spicer because he needs it’

Then there a RICHARD DUIDEDDEN, who I am trying to pry open for FOUR.
that maybe you know – & shall be/put USE to in 57 –
and YOU, definitely shd be THE VOICE in 3 if I had told you earlier, but now if you can do
it. Tell me how much space to hold open of 64 – (fiction to minimum
The city is always so clear from where I imagine you live.
Claritas, yes – (inhead) YAH, you misunderstood, the redpackard, etc. but put THE
BUG there, so that I will hitch up or whatever, maybe a 10 days or so, after I arrive in SF:
So here are DATES: Sept 15-16 leave Boston, 2-3 days in NY, then
SOUTH, to Richmond, then to BM, where O will be back, settling, the week of the 20th, &
we’ll hit things there again late Sept Then across country: Taos, YES, my end; his the civil
war crap. Then to SF, which means 3 weeks. then a week maybe two, finding place:
all mail after 15th of Sept will be forwarded to c/o Rumaker, 1430
Sacramento, SF 9 (I have this UNDER HARVEY, but wonder if still legitimate.
905 Columbus Avenue Apt 59
San F.

107 Ron Loewinson (b. 1937), American poet and publisher associated with the San Francisco
poetry community since the late 50s, his work was included in Don Allen’s 1960 New
American Poetry. Born in the Philippines, he worked at a variety of printing presses before
beginning an instructorship at the San Francisco Poetry Center in 1960. He later taught for
many years at Berkeley.
Now Durkee said, no he wdnt come, as he didn’t have any more fireman’s outfit, etc, & was
gonna work for an Xpress Company if he could, etc. So I wear 120, no buster, got hollow
cheeks, rice krispies, etc. he has worked in his home town all summer & I NEVER WROTE
AS GODAMM WELL, tho Whalen hangs me Up, as he wont return the letter I wrote to
him, I which the whole series of 10 horn poems? the whole season here was revealed to me.
as simply me making it
towards
that AM sun.

before creeps get out of bed.
And I said great things, in letter, he cd not see, thru own ego, Man, in this
business of YOu (E.D.) & ME (J.W.) I abolish ego. IF WE ARE TO BE OF USE TO
EACH OTHER, APART FROM MAG.

Now when I first read Helene’s word on back on envelope, I cd not remember the
dedication, I thgt: like a book? Oh I know,
  This Issue Is Dedicated to Helene Dorn
I’ll simply say in M: that (she) says if I dont dedicate #3, then
she shall
lose faith in me & my measure.

But then I opend yr beautiful thing ( notice length of this to even match what I felt you gave
me)

that I remembered.

The money for Measure comes etc.

WELL, IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THEN

that if it (dedication) is to be On Three’s inside front cover, YOU SEND IT:
word for word, back here, as soon as… (exactly – no additions??
cuz I cannot remember, & I agree, I think IT
SHD BE DONE, AS truly, some of the
people who take pride ( great plans for it) are those, who have to shoot 10cc a day, or take
off their clothes for a living,

or pick up junk every TUESDAY, THURSDAY, FRIDAY, nights & take it home & make a
pad, lined from wall to wall, with XMas bulbs, this is what my Hornblower set, is abt.
These junk-men, literally & the others. The stripper,
& hers, for she is among this all. w/ us – great to say us – like not since BM – physically i.e. a group

SO SEND THE WORD SD TO YOU, as: it is my way to thank them, for

man/believing in the poet, as the man who came comes on straight, who was there to put a
fire in the dark, ohyah, so dark they dont , some of us, dare go out at night, only 120 pds.

And losing, but I will be rested by end of trip & say a
week there, or 2 days (depending on you) or a day will help also. I can’t find Burlington on map
YOU MUST HAVE MEASURE #1 now, & it is most unfortunate that they put the last four lines of you, over onto the next page, when there was no reason, so I guess, I apologized for it before, but Please, Know you have them/ again. Also

Big Helene: just copy that onto postcd (I am most itchy to see) *It wont happen again*

Also, whether MEASURE #1, whether there or not. If not, I will airmail one immediately, but I wait for your word.

As you probably are trying to con me out of another one, there are only 75 left,

88.

Of course, I sd II 64 p. and 100 more printing over orig. 300.

Ah, half this fucking letter, I think I wrote you before.

6:50. Huh?

*love to all*

*the community (the house’s)*

*(500 – only –)*

*If you write Denise / ask her to submit here for #3 (she must have avenue poems. Whatever/ she is last gash to bind w/my words)*

---

**Charles Olson**

**Tuesday Aug 27 [1957]**

[Boston]

Dear Charles:

I meant to write yesterday (Kateday / but 5-10 mins after leaving you, I was in Criminal Court, waiting to make perjury for a friend who got tossed into a pit, etc. by thugs & I was ‘eyewitness’ supposedly.

Then came home & there was a letter from Marianne Moore: & I quote from it for you.

“I really benefit by:

I have no longer any excuse (Charles Olson) for envy. My life has been given its orders; the seasons seize

the soul and the body and make mock of any dispersed effort.

also: Spring: we salute you season of no bungling* (without capitals at the first of the line.”

*(she goes on)*
“A (moral) sea-roll in the gait is better for seamen than for poets but I like: ‘Put crumbs on the outside of the window
              Let them
(Jack Spicer) come outside.”

In any case, I enclose a dollar for a copy of the next issue.”

etc

(Then Ps)

“I think (I think
spring bungles more than any other season; but the concept is sound.)

So all reports on Variations sound success: no negative ones/ yet all have dissonant voices
on other contents. Where one praises/another damns.

After the letters; I wrote some; then mailed them and then spent four hours at library:
tracing Amphetamine sulphate & dextroamphetamine sulphate:
Benzedrine & Dexedrine which I hope I can make a poem out of.
Also Wallace Gould’s109 APHRODITE which I got from A Rexroth Review on the micro-
film while tracing Benzedrine in the NY Times. He said only WCWms & himself
remembered who Gould was. GOULD writes a long prose line (BUT not
cumbersome or syntactically particular, retelling the whole herstory of Aphrodite in the 1st
PERSON

‘I raised my hands to my hair to pull it. I drew
all my heat to my eyes.
I glared, glared at the very godhead.
‘Lowering my head, lowering it lazily, I met his glance. I peered
out through my hair, which, disheveled,
hung to the floor and lay there, curling, lazily even, or fancifully thus,
much like many a golden serpent, gorged. The eyes of the godhead glittered.’
Also amphetamine has one of its roots named after the Temple of Ammon: Jupiter’s.
Then I came home, much un-Zeus-or Jupiter like & fell asleep until noon
today.

But your thoughts/words on the practice have been beating in my head these two days. And
I grope, for you shall see from these poems enclosed, what I attempt I make at the line, & it
springs directly from PV: from yr practice, which [hw: arrow from “which” to “PV”] even
two years ago you had doubt on:

108 The “season of no bungling” references are to the last line of Olson’s poem “Variations” in
109 Wallace Gould (1882-1940), American poet whose Aphrodite was published in 1928 and
praised in The Dial by William Carlos Williams. In 1917 he wrote Children of the Sun: Rhapsodies
and Poems, a volume dedicated to the work of American artist and poet Marsden Hartley
(1877-1943), painter of (among other places) Gloucester’s Dogtown, memorialized in
Olson’s “Letter 7” of Maximus, to Gloucester. Hartley responded with a glowing essay calling
Gould “The Poet of Maine.”
After the Post-Virginal. When you said backyard of Mt Stream (Spring ’55) that you wondered abt PV. But it becomes a bore only in the hands of those who ill-use/ abuse it, that anything does!

a dress, a song or a way of wearing the hair, once it falls into the hands of anyone but him who first made it. Others may learn from it, but they have to make their own way / whale’s width.

The derivators, imitators do that/not at all: what Pd calls: diluters.

After the “1) Inventors (they found a new process” in the 5 & 10¢ store

‘found’ in the sense of country, nation?

“2) The masters (who combined a no. of such processes)” & governed.

Let Measure stick here/ be glued in this NE where it all began, we think. I gonna put #3 back at 48 pages just to be sure.

I’d rather have his Number 4: “Goodwriters without salient qualities… Ie men who wrote sonnets in Dante’s time, men who wrote short lyrics in Shake’s time.”

than have it stuffed with ‘men who came/ (come) after the 1st two kinds of writer, and cldn’t do the job quite as well’. What we got now: both country & poem.

Well, enough quote job. Let me just apologize if I have put too much pressure on you, (that I was taught quantity) & the letters some day after daying, Olson prose like in Origin! etc. Olson this, weight they want. & from what other hands?

But this kind of talk is added pressure, simply that ‘you dont know until the involvement of writing it’. And this enuf reason for any man to hold off: until he is sure he can swoop in & smack that whale tail into the surface.

Somehow I guess initial point of this was: dont allow yrself to go dry in the face of what ‘diluters’ have done to yr practice. That since it is yours, it does not bore us. (That PV is not a bore, nor Maximus,) that Eigner is not, nor Dorn: who have learned from it.

That since we possess ourselves, there is no problem, but the one of being involved in writing it. And the hangup at BM holds you from this, & not a very perceptive pressure at this end does not let down the channelgate.

Out to see again! So for my own mind, let me remove obligation commitment here until YOU are free/out to make same.

Tho when I have been most committed against my will (I thgt at the time) it has been fruitful.

Well, I enclose my own. I shd wait until I can read them aloud & if you’d rather do that, we can. Form-wise they will bore: but if you do read them: plow thru abt ¾ & I think they get better: maybe beginning with the Rimbaud one.
I remember they disconnect the phone here Sept 3, but not me until Sept. 15. So if you pick the day (anyday) then I can come there, or you here, & if you have a big breakfast, I will- or may I- take you to lunch?

Copley Square’s the only place left, or Roxbury Crossing.

Love

Love, & you looked a lot better than I did. Being so close, makes me want to write more. Also that I am so tonguetwisted in person, makes it a necessity. But you aint (tt) so as long as one can move it arnd;

we learn.

PS: Thursday
Terribly sorry Charles about that ‘clock’. It is so important, I just thgt reading her quotes:

that maybe if they are wise, they will see. I dont particularly approve of ERRATA’s in the next issue, referring back to what noone remembers.

(p 11, 1-6 read etc)

who knows, who cares then. But if you think it shd be done, I will. There were abt 3 other mistakes, 2 to Duncan, 1 to Jonas, & Blaser’s name off p 11. But I dont think, damn, that it’s errata’s what cures it.

I think yr ‘impeccable’ re edittoring a little wide for me to wear.

Oh Duncan too is hot on Marshall: One/ has sent 4 typewritten single spaced pages:

THREE POEMS IN MEASURE ONE: AN OPEN LETTER

Marshall: One
Eigner: Brink
Dorn: The rick of green wood.

he’s most favorable tho at times inaccurate re Marshall

9 copies he made, & the man’s sending them arnd the country, to who I dont know, as the copy sent here was to do for : Blaser, then Marshall, then Jonas. It’s to the good, I guess.

Enuf yatter. Marshall just called this minute from NY, he’s coming in again this weekend.

There is none of him in Two, I wanted to save the little (& not new stuff either) until Three & Four, in the hopes he cd supplement with that ‘saison’ I say is his.

“It’s good to say seeya soon –

John”

8-31

I just finished & since I have sent other copy of this stuff off to Mike, could you keep this out & I’ll read those ones you want to hear?

OK

*I cldnt find anything to prize you with/ maybe the poster made for
Sat. Sept11, 1954 – HH, I’ll bring up or out,
& the silver bowl’s the only other thing,
Thank you for the photos.  
I’ve had one w/o interior enlarged doublelike  
life

---

Paul Blackburn [Mallorca]  
August 28, 1957  
[Boston]

Dear Paul Blackburn:

Now that MEASURE has somewhat established itself on grounds not already dug by the BMR & Origin, I wonder if you would be at all interested in sending me a sizeable (rhetoric?) group of yr poems that I could print. I could offer no financial return for same, but can promise that I will keep the magazines at a level you will find USE & that I will try & provide a source for you to be used by others. I am sending Measure #1 under separate cover, but it will take so long, I write here who appears: Olson, 3 variations. Edward Marshall: One and Two (poems 5p). Robin Blaser: 3 poems. Edward Dorn: The Rick of Green Wood (1p). Larry Eigner: Brink & Millionen (2poems). Michael Rumaker: Father (3p poem). Jack Spicer: (5p poem) J Williams: 2 poems to Walt W., the husbandman, Robert Duncan: The propositions (8p poem). Fee Dawson (2 drawings). Then there is TWO, being printed now: Michael Rumaker: The Use of the unconscious in writing (2p art) R Blaser (The Hunger of Sound 8 p poem), Robert Creeley (5 poems) Jack Kerouac (6 choruses). M Rumaker (Seven dreams: prose). Robert Duncan The maiden (2p) & The Dance (3p). Edward Dorn: Notes from the fields (3p prose). Stuart Z Perkoff (6p poem). Michael McClure (2p poems) Charles Olson: She who hits at will (1page poem) etc. etc. unknowns, Stephen Jonas (10 p poem).

And so it goes on: For THREE, which I hope you can be part of, is A CITY ISSUE: that I plan a city survey: Poems from Kyoto, Fairbanks, Alaska, NY, SF, Mexico City, Seattle, Toronto? Paris? London? Boston. That do you think you have anything that fits here? Any act that has the City-fixed in it, that has a city eye, city gallery (filled with lowlife types already) namely the junkys, pimps, whores, cripples, perverts,--but featuring a STATEMENT by Jennifer, stripper at the Casino, 2 pages of original jazz score, Statement by Fagin, with a comic-strip (Dick Tracy) collage. That there shd be more of a city-objects in it. The park, the moviehouse, the fountain, the building, what in the mind’s eye, holds the whole thing together (London Tower) Paris (Eiffel) NY (Empire State) Boston (Hancock) etc. That I offer you here, any kind of freedom or space that you require, that I leave restrictions up to you: Also that Providence is of interest – has its cities, great ones, & shd be included. Altho FOUR is THE STATE, so maybe it shd be saved for that. I just want you to know it wd please me if you became a regular contributor here, that you become part of the Process, enter into/on the working ground. What pleases you abt The city shd be said/also that which destroys same for you. That now, I feel all the space you can put to use, will present you fresh & not as left over from any other magazine. (Altho I hope BMR is still in existence.) Olson is now in Gloucester, & he says, it still goes. But money still tied up in BM. I was student there Spring 1955 & SUMMER 1956. Dissolving Fabric (maybe to clarify this) has: these that I wd call definitely CITY POEMS: The Sudden Fear. Committee. After Dinner (even) becuz of language. THE ASSISTANCE, The MIRROR, THE RETURN & The Search. & of course, the translations, if you want to. I just the thing up to you, how far
you want to commit yourself, & there are some eyes on us. I have been going since last night & it is now noon. so please forgive chaos of this. I will answer questions; on whatever.

Some business facts:

Villiers the Printer, 300 copies of

one 48 p.

four 64 p. & hope to keep it there. Subscriptions from Time, New Directions, Art News, Grove Press, oh does this matter? I dont think so to you / it's just this morning I got a check from Time & that felt good, to take off them –

Also please don't feel I am putting obligations on you. Sometimes I rush ahead too fast, so rein it in, if necessary. Best to you, John Wieners

I am moving to San Francisco, on Sept 15 but will take a month to get across country:

so mail after above date should be addressed

c/o RUMAKER
1430 Sacramento
San Francisco 9, California.

& then, I shall send new address.
However, if I cd hear some how just what you were interested in for MEASURE before Sept 15th, it wd be most appreciated.

---

**Don Allen**

**August 28 [1957]**

[Boston]

Let me say too Evergreen II of still lasting interest for me, that it has helped Measure, also. That it was boost to so many, that they must be grateful, & it is good you are following them up, that it be shown the few 1000 who do care, that it is not just a spark in the night: but a going process, in which the best minds of US (the antennae are in resistance to what surrounds us/ invades/ & destroys, if we let it.\(^{110}\)

Dear Don:

I enclose a revised a copy of The Big Man, which aint very good, but is no worse than the original. Ya you’re right to end it where you do, I take it, after

---

\(^{110}\) The *Evergreen Review’s* landmark second issue in 1957, “The San Francisco Scene,” presented Beat poets together for the first time, including Rexroth, Snyder, McClure, Ginsberg, and a pre-*On the Road* Jack Kerouac, alongside Berkeley Renaissance poets (and now “old guard” poets) Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer.
‘smelling of violets’ at least in the version here, (which had only 2 parts) it sounds better. Also the revision.

Tho if you do use it, I dont want any dedication to Charles on it, as it really has nothing of him in it, simply my own manual. NOT HIS. So it wd not be fair.

I dont dig dedications very much anyway. Tho I have to

print them —
The other one you mention I have no copy of.

The idea of an issue to Olson, or part of one, with dedication, is hard to make up my mind on. It depends on exactly what kind of material there is at hand, also that everyone then does get connected as group, which actually no one is, that we are free-wheelers belting each other in the process. I have no idea how Charles wd go for same: maybe it wd be better to put in notice that you had planned this section to be Homage to Charles Olson, featuring dedicatory work by etc. etc./ but found that so much of his work was unpublished & of the utmost importance, that you use the space to make some available.

But it is good act on yr part, before the man is dead. Still it is his work that matters, not our poems to him.

He is now in Maine for a week, but he returns 1st of month; although I wont broach him re same, until you ask me to. Possibly he knows already. Anyway this very busy time, still involved with business of BM, & settling on the North Shore, Gloucester, yes, Maximus walks his own ground.

I am glad you like Measure, that many now seem to see below surface of same & the voices raised sound good. Got a letter from a Miss Marianne Moore, 2 ms ago, with a buck for next issue, & some kind words, so there are eyes. And TWO I think is an improvement, altho it is too bad it is so late.

I am not sending the Ginsberg, simply that it wd spoil the surprise & It is not a document, & possibly Robin exaggerated? Anyway, you got enough, & it is not a good editorial policy, would you say, to show subscribers, what might keep them talking abt Mag. until they had point of interest in their craw.

Fee Dawson sent an exciting & offbeat prose (53 p) which I returned to him, as you are asking on same. I am printing two of his shorter prose things in MEASURE III. The Dike in the Square & the Woman in the Black Sheath Dress: but I dont know prose very well, so I try to stay clear of it, except Michael’s or any stuff about poets. OK hope I hear from you more often & that we meet in NY. Dawson’s is called: THE OPEN ROAD. & is there any news there of BMR #7? I look for it with interest, for it’s the daddy. see above

Best, John Wieners

Michael Rumaker  
August 28 [1957]  
[Boston]

Drest Michael:
How long has it been, & now they’re done, 1hr ago I decided to go & have sex to celebrate but I didnt know & now I’m back: 6 AM

With a beautiful Boston AM, one of the few left, I thgt at least there wd be something on the strts. But all I got is Fats Waller
Godarn gal: yr socks dont match/
baby what happens, yr socks etc.

So Charles is here:
26 Fort Square, Gloucester. Please keep this address quite to yrself, as I’m not sure
I’m even supposed to give it out, but I know he wldnt mind to you. He now is in Maine for
a week with Kate & I also have you to thank for setting me into Connie, she is such a
delight, altho wont see Charles; so I was runner last Monday morning of Kate from her at
South Sts. to him at North Sta. Kate is beautiful, blond streaked hair & skin like
toffeecream, etc. One front tooth out. Connie’s face is a little looser, but her mouth & eyes
& hair are lovely, that open face is still upto yrs: also there seems a more relaxed way abt
her, at least I am more so with her.

If you ever get drunk & want to call, her number is

North Scituate 2162 W – telephone
Bull Rush Farm
No, Scituate, Mass.

Again: Gloucester is on the North Shore, & Scituate is on the
South.

I am sorry abt the poems: there is no pleasure left in
them for me at all, only a lot of wasted labor as I see it now. Still they get better as they
progress. They are a series: something like a HORN SET IN BOSTON, or

It’s parttime, kiss off Boston, etc. I dont want to go, but before I go behind bars, etc. I
better.

Also Robert seems most interested in the
measure of line. SO DO SHOW HIM THESEX but may I have them back by say end: of
first week in September. I think best are:

(The Rimbaud: ) The Bridge Word
&
From the pot.

Anyway, they’re true,

& it is the form that interferes, that cramps, that makes awkward. Any word on this
difficulty, wd be appreciated. Also I’ll write again, & I suppose you can expect mail from
Sept 17, onwards.

My love,

John

PPS: YES MIKE, I feel it IMPERATIVE that Robt, to carry out my thgts in letters to him,
SHD SEE THE ENCLOSED Just the poems, tho – And I’ve begun another/ but it might be
re-hash. Damn damn / it’s the form, that we cant just be projective- versifiers. Say
September 6 or 7 deadline. And love.

PS:

I re-read the whole batch: pity you plowing thru it. I give you news of Charles:
debug Marshall ONE the most, called it ‘a real Illumination’

Also the Spicer he said: ‘personally authentic, witty, delicate.’ All makes me think Charles
gives little care to ‘form’ tho that doesnt hold as he is hung up now: that the diluters of
PVerse have made his practice a bore. That only the formal interests him or the wide long line, as ‘wide as a whale’s tail’

But this has been building in him a long time: I can remember him expressing dissatisfaction with PV Spring 1955. Then too, he has always been partial to long line. Wldnt you say. The Causes?

Maximus loaded, with them.

It is his breath. But I too think when D Allen begins using broken lines, it’s time to stop. That the diluters, bore, because they mis-use, abuse, like somebody who sings a song meant for Gert. Lawrence, that only she cd. do, they cant, they bore us.

Thus the same in craft. And why the maker’s use of it is of matter.

As you can see re enclosed, I am still a diluter, trying to break out. But at odds, just where.

And O says you dont know until you get involved in writing. He’s gone to Hellman’s but he plans to have me up when he gets back, I hope it works out,

tho I feel very uncomfortable at No Sta, at a loss for the 1st time, but it is Measure maybe stands between, that I cant take his non-submission of material, very graciously. That I will try, & let him work it out, OK, when you think how little were in the 1st 2 BMR’s even. BUT CHRIST, HE’S THE ONE WHO TAUGHT US QUANTITY.

That goddam BM business stands in way too, & he has to go back Sept 15-21 but we’ll go too; I am getting to be a shrew, & I wonder how close I am to insanity.

And Marianne wrote nice comments abt O & small little remarks. But also $1.00 for second issue, so I am very pleased, there. & Duncan is much involved, and McClure, has changed his mind, I hear, & we plow on.

When I see you, all this crap will have gone out of my system/ purged by trip across. USA. And I will come clean, onto those glasshills. Thanks for so much, that I feel you are a force behind, & positive thrust for Measure, for Wieners, and photograph enclosed. I had copy made, but will have to wait until later, for loot, & time to do it.

No loss, I dont feel.

Jess

September 5, 1957
[Boston]

PS: Yes, I shall follow Robt’s instructions, that they will not be sent to printer, but all processing of same shall be done under supervision. They shall be returned in mint condition. I dont see why not, there cannot be another strip, or say two more pages. We do want to avoid the Comic-Book-Look, tho. I shall nonetheless mark these two for yr use, whatever. (*of Tricky Cad.

Can we keep inclusion of strips a secret! There shd be some surprise for the few who do.
Dear Jess Collins:

Just a hurried word to thank you for your gracious letter of the 25th, and also to say that TRICKY CAD (four pages) shall be in THE CITY ISSUE. It was silly of me to suggest a story line, when it is so delightful as is. That the question now is, where to place same. We should have a heavy female Fagin, well, maybe I can scout one out.

To print the collages, would take more money than I have, or really want to spend on other than the word. To quote. But they are the first prize I have received re Measure, in fact the only one. Besides the bookshop at the top of the street, which is closed until September 16th, but which has two copies (1 back 1 front) of Measure in its window. If you do like One, I can hardly wait then for Two to shower on you. Please feel free to submit any idea, or materialization of same to The City Issue, there is a great deal of space open, nearly ½, and a word on the painters, yourself as one, would be fine here: it’s just that I hesitate to ask a painter this. & not be able to give space to this work. & again, I don’t think I want what Evergreen had. In retrospect, I don’t blame you for not knowing exactly what I wanted from Tricky Cad. Let me just say that I received more, in pleasure. The lack of color is not one, I don’t feel If you do strike on something, please don’t hesitate to send. My best to you & my thanks again.

John Wieners

Charles Olson

Sept 22 & 23 1957
[New York City]

Dear Charles:

Just back from 8 hrs with near every book S Noah-Kramer ever wrote, at NY PLib. Except he aint no noah. I cant understand why the Sumerians did so little for him,
that he can impose on them: find as fault their lack of ‘epistemology’ cause & effect, ‘logic’. Of course, this is mainly From the Tablets of Sumer (Falcon’s Wing Press 1956) & it is a write down. The one done 12 yrs earlier, which I hope I’ll get tomorrow, for the texts (translations alone), better, that’s the only value of his labor, what he makes available. Not one phrase from the man himself. Which is harsh, but 8 solid hours, is too long to be kept waiting. When I should have looked only for their words.

I remember some of the loveliest poems being told by you before. When Inanna lost it in the garden.

The main purpose of this is to serve as cover for the enclosed, which is the prize. They told you wouldn’t have reproductions in the house, but I want you to see this anyway. So lucky to have it at all. The original is possibly a 1/5th larger. Beside it/ the only other of his I could find: THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE. Would you say that is a capella in the upper left corner of PARADISE?

I spent last night again on da capo & it is much better. But still want to wait a few days before sending. I want you to know how much I feel you laid on me (out for me) last Tuesday & Wednesday. The Rimbaud of mine is not improved turning into paragraphs, form like Illum, but da capo has come full swerve from this that’s it’s more packed/ but no immediate hooks for any reader, I fear.

I have thgt. too along the way, that Orion: O’Ryan is of the secret of secrets. I want you to know this, that whatever I might stumble on shall not be revealed. I agree, you pass it through the work, until someone else makes breaks its surface or / thru their work // then no one [arrow from “thru their work” to] into the source. else shall be turned on the stars [arrow down to bottom of page, where he’s handwritten: until then no one else shall be turned your stars (i.e. per me)]. I can find nothing encouraging out about Capricorn, & wonder how I should have adopted him, so strong. Only the horn, and the Blood that breaks thru. Like Dionysius’. No ATTENTION AT ALL TO RITE IN Kramer! Which is what I want. Dates, and objects, and how often and many. Like we have it so clear from the Indians, the little I know. Orion can lead you. (I only read #2); leads you into as much field... “Capricorn is part of the earthly triad; it is the place of the creation of Saturn (with Aquarius); it governs the thighs and knees.” I wd rather be under Aries’ horn,
(OH YES: it is covered wagon:) Perseus and mother put into chest and thrown into the sea, the children (Zeus, etc) of Uranus imprisoned in the body of their mother, the earth. That is an actual reverse-apocatastasis\(^{115}\) fact (happening).

Or am I taking it wrong. That being locked up with them, does not prove they are carried in us. Except we know they are. I wrote something long time ago, (12 mos.) about the way I hold my cigarette like She does. \textit{exxx to Page II}

And I will send that. Once I can get a corner \textit{out} there. Also on the Boston train from Gloucester, I wrote like crazy, which I'll send. Maybe the cigarette one tonight. Just throw it away afterwards.

Did you know this? I dont see how so confidently now but it does bring Pharmakos: Fool together, a little.

“Hebrews knew him as Kesil, the Foolish or Self-Confident, or as Gibbor, the Giant, identified with Nimrod and tied to the heavens for impiety.”

And “Peruvians believe a criminal held in by two condors”\(^{116}\)

This morning with the dawn I went out and begin walking up Fifth Avenue from Washington Square, where they yelled at me: “Oh Ham-let! Oh phelia”

but I went on from one window to the next, passed along. Until I came to Tiffany’s #727, and they have a relatively small window for jewels, etc. Only each one had every detail like an undeveloped negative drops OF THE ZODIAC. It filled six windows. It is simply that, I think. A process used on some original MAP, but I am going back tomorrow, Monday. And try to talk me into one, which I will send to you. It was as laid / more than eye wants / out like Roxbury-Malden in Earth’s orbit, ecliptica, and precise drawings of every constellation, the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) and 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) magnitudes carried jewels (well, the first one of any sort of the sky I have ever seen.) That the face on the prow of ARGOS is you! The mouth no, not as much.\(^{117}\)

\(^{115}\) \textit{Apocatastasis}, the Greek concept of restoration or restitution, as in the reappearance of the sun and moon after an eclipse (in Plato’s \textit{Dialogues}) or the reconstitution of the body after death. Olson will refer back to apocatastasis in a “birthday poem” for Wieners in his January 15, 1958, letter (“the sea under the house” v.2, 6).

\(^{116}\) Wieners is quoting from a 1953 book on UFOs by George Hunt Williamson, \textit{Other Tongues – Other Flesh}. In it, Williamson writes that the giant Orion, also called Kesil, was envisioned by ancient Peruvians as “a criminal held in the heavens by two condors” (382).

\(^{117}\) The prow of the \textit{Argo}, Jason’s ship in Greek mythology, was crafted from the magical wood of the forest Dodona, and was capable of speaking and prophesying. After its mission, the ship became the constellation \textit{Argo Navis}. 

170
The sun does enter the world again under our sign, but Aries it says ‘early mythologies identify the Ram with Zeus, with AMMON, the ram god of Egypt.’

And look, why RA died. But you told us that before. I have my parents, both kinds. It’s the Grand ones I’m looking for, that it is the time now for them to begin to hide or as Miss Stein:

“When I grow up, you can be the old Grandfather and come live with us!”

This is all there is on alan as I first got it. But I find now: the Hebrew means (tho out of use): small-eared dog.

“alan Tinguian (Philippine Islands)”

“Spirits, half-human, half-bird with toes and fingers reversed. They are sometimes mischievous or hostile, but are usually friendly. (?) They are described as hanging, bat-like from trees and as living in forests. In Tinguian mythology and folk tales they appear as foster-mothers of the leading characters and are pictured frequently as living in houses of gold.”

Also now that I think of it, that our goat must come in with some blood on his hoof or horn from the sacrifice of the king \( \rightarrow \) of Saturn the very day same day \( \rightarrow \) or one before. Again, tho, I mix the movement of the stars, with myths surrounding them. That the bird alan might have something hidden in the salaman-der “sometimes a bird, living in fire”

And Rigel (you again must know) sometimes is The Foot in the Mud also known as The Double Axe. That I just see this: “In astrology, Capricorn \{ \rightarrow I somehow see him (Le Fou) as unable to fall — unless he cuts his own foot off \} is a feminine nocturnal sign, movable, cardinal, and melancholy, and in nature, cold, dry and earthy. The mansion of Saturn and the exaltation of Mars” (All those adjectives, I mistrust it.) Plus I don’t like “her” clothes. But there are leads.

I will keep you posted. When they reach a completion. And wonder if you know of drop that shall drop thgt: abt SHE WHO ITS AT WILL, \( \rightarrow \) with its drop = there will be only yr handwriting = which is not fair to you and there will be nothing of you in Measure #2, which is not fair to you as much.

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118 In the first book of H.D.’s magisterial “War Trilogy,” after repeated prayerful amens, she plays with the associations of that word by invoking “Amen-Ra, / Amen, Aries, the Ram; // time, time for you to begin a new spiral.” After reminding readers of H.D.’s abiding fascination with astrology, the readers’ notes of the first New Directions edition add that “Aries, which in Latin means ‘the ram,’ is a constellation containing the stars of the spring equinox, and is the first sign of the Zodiac. Early mythologies identify the Ram with Zeus and with Amon, Ammon, the ram God of Egypt” (30).

119 The Alan is a monstrous spirit from the mythology of the Tinguian tribe of the Philippines.

120 Another reference to Other Tongues – Other Flesh, which says that “in North Africa, the stars in Orion emerge from a muddy well, and Rigel, the last star to rise above the horizon, is the foot in the mud. To the Greeks, in addition to being the Mighty Hunter, Orion was called the Giant, the Warrior, the Cock's Foot, and the Double Ax” (382).

121 “Capricorn is the mansion of Saturn, and the exaltation of Mars” is a quote from Boston editor Arthur Gilman’s essay “Astrological Terms and Divisions of Time” accompanying the 1879 Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Vol. 1 (cviii).
Is there any doing that could strengthen Decentus Spiritus 1? That lost business on Capricorn might — — turn/up? but you probably think I’m trying to angle in on that, yr friends So don’t feel you needs answer.

I have wondered often if I revealed a different Jaw

[arrow down from “yr friends” to:] I never will // altho there is great joy when I feel [come?] to the same “(wisdoms)”: I.e. alone

The “dead” hits

PS to Measure, to them. Possibly you back (up the Spiritus to #2. Length I don’t feel matters.

Either end.

Please pardon the mess — it is such a displeasure to read. But I am in PO across from Penn Sta. On the way out.

Last night the living nightmare, so today trembles.

from Union Square, the rain on the newspaper stand

we sat in it.

There was a stakeout to bag junkys. And, I amble in after typing this, Alan’s red shirt was my banner. I joined the confederates again. No one was busted. // Much love
THE LETTERS OF JOHN WIENERS

Chapter Three: “glassunicorntown”
September 1957-December 1959

In the Fall of 1957, Wieners finally made the journey west, joining his friends from Black Mountain and Boston who had already moved, or returned, to San Francisco, that “glassunicorntown,” as he derided it even as he moved and creatively thrived there. With Dana he first stayed with Michael Rumaker, then moved around among his new circle of friends, most notably for stretches with Joanne Kyger at 707 Scott Street and Robert Lavigne at the Hotel Wentley, two of his most formative addresses.

In this section he writes to Ed Dorn, “We are desperate men, and the rest bore.” But even among the desperate poets Anne Waldman would call the “Outriders” Wieners was always one of the farthest out – Dorn and Creeley held various teaching positions throughout their careers, Olson taught and, although always poor, still received grants and accolades from time to time – but except for his four years in Buffalo, working as a grad student/teacher in Olson’s poetics program, Wieners had no affiliations, no means of support but for family and the friends he made along the way. As Wieners’ quest for derangement of the senses, and general love of the underground, led him into harder drugs and rougher living situations, the letters of this chapter become more bleak. As he tells Rumaker in one, “It’s a fuckin fun city and I hate it,” and indeed, as he moved from the relatively innocent marijuana, Benzedrine, and Valo (inhaled off the amphetamine-soaked cotton balls inside a decongestant spray) to cocaine and heroin, Wieners became more desperate and fractured, even as he produced the work that would establish his reputation. These next few letters, written on the road to Robin Blaser, retell the speed-based events of his last letter to Olson, except now the tale is more overtly paranoid, Wieners’ followers and spies stepping out of their shadows.

* * * *

Robin Blaser
Sept 26 [1957]
[On the Road]

Dearest Robin:

Please excuse handwriting as we are batting along on Highway 64 into Memphis –

From NYC last weekend I tried to call you 6-7 times as I left my only suit hanging on back of Balas’ living room door. Along with Khaki jacket. It is navy blue with thin pinstripe.

Amidst the welter of your days, would it be too much for you to box this and ship c/o Rumaker. I wouldn’t ask but there is no one else. As it is I fear it already sold in the hunger of their days. Tom will remember once you mention it. If you cant reach him home – try Alan – R1 -2 – 1960. You see if he is evicted the clothes may get lost.
New York is desolate. With non-commitment (?) the virtue. The movies requiring or worth more of a man’s attentions. Thus I missed the intensity of you and me. Also I ran into the police & narcotics squad and I was followed for one day and ½ by a force of them until I left town. So if there are questions there from strangers about any of us, be wary.

The story: I spent the dawn one morning walking up Fifth Ave window shopping / writing down addresses of shops I wd come back to Monday. Monday from 4 to 6 AM I spent in Union Square but noticed the same cabdrivers circling wherever I was. Eighth Street, Sheridan Square, Washington Square – the same faces. I didnt worry. But early dawn Monday (having waited out a rain-storm in a newspaper kiosk, I looked across and saw 2 figures make some panicky shadows in the shadows of the Union Square Savings Bank. Well one of them after a while crossed over directly to me while the other slid down the shadows & disappeared. The one coming to me a Kerouac-type with a pipe in his mouth. He didnt say anything but walked by me into park. I did not turn around. After a while I walked down towards a restaurant, had a cup of coffee, & walked back in front of bank. It was daylight now and I kept walking uptown. But changed my mind & walked into the street heading back where I came from. And I saw this car which had been turning the corner – stop. I walked in diagonal, a car came on. I went very fast until I came to a monument & then turned back quick – again catching the car following me. I ran into the park, the car pulling up into parking space.

Then I realized I had done nothing but perhaps witness a score, or just attracted some attention by the red jersey, or benny state I was in.

In the park, a man was doing these frantic exercises, supposedly, as I approached. Morning sit-ups etc. But thinking back, I think he too was a cop. For I decided I wd find out what was going on. Also I did not want to lead them back to O’Hara’s. For one hour, like a sucker, I played cops & robbers up & down NY streets. Certainly making them think I was some sort of connection // but also I began to see some of the methods. They all dressed as middle class workmen. Lunch bags, soft hats & zipper jackets. They also all carried newspapers. And would not meet my eyes which taunted = I dare you. Finally I got so tired and I took a couple more turns and came home. O’Hara & Joe LeSeur went to work, I packed my bags and, having talked it over with Frank, was convinced it was only my own paranoia, that simply to go about your own business, was the best way. And this seemed right for the next two hours I saw

Robin Blaser

9.27 [1957]
[Postmarked Yukon, Oklahoma]

Dear Robin

Surrounded by pumping oil wells and pink motels – we hope to be with Lawrence tomorrow. It is too bad that this Southwest possesses him. I have a long letter re my NY experience ½ written to you – but this moving car prohibits legible penmanship. Whatever, my only suit & jacket hang on the back of Tom’s Door (living room). Could you, in the welter of yr. days, package & ship same c/o Rumaker? I called 5-7 times last weekend but
you were away, I assume, ahunting images. Do visit Alan’s junkshop. He gave me the loveliest gold emblem. Dana sends love w/me to you & Jim

Robin Blaser

Sept 27, 1957 –
[On the Road]

Returning to life after “kicking benzedrine (none for 4 days) and coming down a hill to “rolling” green plains of OKlahoma.

Left in the river only drying stones stuck – cohere in the sun. America despite your nostrils and outhouses with the picture window. I am exhilarated by the wind tillers and the fields of sun flowers / daisies. The day’s eye falls and we speed on Route 66 to reach where it’s setting. New York we leave behind. Its movie house poets and its Federal men who follow us on the streets, all the streets and avenues, pursued by G-men who would pin me down behind bars, take America out of my eye, take this open car and imprison us all.

They have set snares for me and I escaped. They set men on me at corners. Who unwrapped in his hands round boxes to trap me. Or passed me and tapped on my wrist. Circled my nights in taxis, an eye on me in Alan’s red shirt. I have escaped. I race across country, all roads west. My driver is blond. The country flat. They called me by my first name, they sounded their horns. For the time being, they are outsped. New vistas open. New plains. Ugly in their flatness. But there white cottonballs line the highway & the sun has hardened my skin. My eye cleared of soot. America’s cities. America’s laws. We pass yr diesel engines. Leave soot for the slow runner’s eyes

The flunky with his wounds and scarface did not stop me. The spy they dressed up like my mother did not hold me. The man stalling for time in Liggetts did not trick me. The beautiful boy his suitcase empty (he shook it as so the stolen goods rattled) did not make me follow up 5th Avenue. I hopped a bus on 22nd Street and a girl kept rubbing her knee on mine. Her handbag was open. I saw the same faces circle me all day. My last day east.

So by evening at Penn Station they had all re-assembled and some made quiet obscene noises as I walked thru them. One asked me how when was the train I’m supposed to go to Newark. Even a 16 yr old they are had bought red shirts like the one I wore the night before in Union Square. And he had a pastie on his the needlemark in his main line. And his eyes whimpered for my mercy. I went by. I sang: I know that you know. But I know you too. All n Every store I went in, if I stayed more than 2 minutes, one of them came in and slipped the clerk a note.

The man you are waiting on is a suspect
Do nothing to arouse his suspicions but
please watch his movements.

I wanted to scream in a [illeg - Marbora?] book store.
It got so bad I thought they were taking pictures. I couldn’t laugh anymore when I passed them on street corners. I was biting my lip. They almost had me. They had changed shifts. If only I could make a train out.

1 Jim Felts, Robin Blaser’s lover for seventeen years, from their time together at Berkeley through the early 1960s, when Blaser began a relationship with Stan Persky.
Now nothing but this fabulous 6 foot wide highway – from Oklahoma City to the sea to the ashes of Lawrence. We follow the natural run of the river, we follow the railroad, follow the sun, Dana said the driver says.

It is sunset, and spreading thru plains where we cannot be followed. It is open westward, ho

Cid Corman

Sept 28, 1957

[On the Road]

Dear Cid:

I am riding right now thru the Comanche plains of New Mexico. On my way to San Francisco. Which 'politically' what worse action could Measure take. Whatever – the move was decided long before I even know what renaissance meant so to be straight, I go. Tho with Olson in Gloucester & very hot right now, I wd. rather stay. The main purpose of this is to acknowledge yours of the 13th – which has a validity for me (that the poem is more important – because it is language – than the welter of talk, human beings, cities, magazines – it is surrounded by & found in/on. Yr letter 1st affirmation of this besides my own ungrasped beliefs or unrealized words of Olson.2

Yr letter also because it steps off into mid-air where there are no supports, no hooks to hang // save the neck – is one that demands my “acknowledgment.” I know already the constant misunderstanding we (I too enjoy mid-air) gather in. It does not matter. I will not explain. You do not have to, no matter the “peril”, to this end ever. Measure II which was air-mailed August 1st to Sankey (3.50 postage) has been lost – none of it irreplaceable – but at the time of James B. May’s notification (Sept 10th or so) none of it was duplicated.

Within one week or less, how the entire mss. (64 pages) had been remailed to me again. From Creeley to McClure, which fact, like these plains, does take my breath away. Also a humility. I find the reward so far of the magazine very great. It is only Wieners I must spur on. That – and the knowledge the thing is near defeated before begun (what with Evergreen Review wanting & utilizing the same sources)3 – I can believe however the IMMEDIACY of Measure its – or one of its capital values, also its space against the fences something like Evergreen is bounded by.

So on the strength of my reading you wherever I found you – and that means probably all that has been published – would you submit poems -- #THREE is the THE CITY – also review whichever one of these books you would care to. If you dont have them, I will send same –

Stuart Perkoff - The Suicide Room
W.C. Wms - The Letters of

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2 See Corman’s letter in the appendix, dated September 13, 1957, for Corman’s characteristically candid take on Measure and its contributors; he is unenthused at the prospect of a “magick” theme, writing that “the only thing magical about MAGICK is the word itself. The rest is a verbal lump of shit.”

3 The Evergreen Review’s first issue in 1957 featured many now-legendary international writers like Samuel Beckett and Jean-Paul Sartre; with its second issue in the fall of that year (its landmark “San Francisco Scene” issue) Evergreen, under the editorship of Barney Rosset, began publishing many of the same writers Wieners was printing in Measure, including an excerpt from Naked Lunch, a selection from which also appeared in Measure #2.
or none of these – as I ask for them back again. Which is cheap but, I figure you understand. You name whatever or _any_ thing on yr. mind you see a direction in. I do not feel I want any words on the craft. That enough for the time being has been explored here. I would rather give the space over to the _uses_ of the explorations.

I am parked now in Cline’s Corner, N.M. 110° but no sweat.

I thank you again, for your letter and shall expect same whenever you find _any_ occasion (?) for it.

My best to you,

John Wieners

Philip Whalen          Oct 3, 1957
[San Francisco]

Dear Phillip: YES. (You dont have to go further.)

Arrived 4 hours ago – and yours/her. Like a _city_. Entire unto itself. Know that _first_ off that _Take #4 on 12: VIII: 57_ goes into #5 _THE DOMESTIC_ (scene). OK OK – but the poem demands we wait. You are carried here in all yr. flesh. // And now in all honesty, the humility you open in me from _Harangue:_ (two “r”s?): its alright w/me if there’s 3. That _one_ what can anyone say in the face of that poem. I wish Measure could come out tomorrow so that those words, strain, the man breaking thru might be “issued abroad” – the hilltops etc. And this not because it is to JW but that. Across the kitchen table: Tom Field says “God they’re both beautiful. I’m gonna write Whalen too” and Ebbe B. says: “I cant say anything, it’s that there for me.” Not that

44 Whalen’s poem “Harangue From Newport, to John Wieners, 21:IX:57” is epistolary, as the name would suggest, an extension of their _Measure_ conversations. Describing the ordinary ugliness (a landlord with a growth on his nose) and beauty (“chunks of agate-jasper on the beach”) of his life, he writes, “I should write you something that would / Scare you, make you laugh, / or generally turn you on. / _WHAT_ / I’m doing now: Trying hard to be visible, to be / _Totally conscious of this time and place, / of you_ / And every sentient being.” He closes sweetly, by exclaiming that “you not only see me clearly, // (A MIRACLE! // You understand everything I say” (86).
I have to write you — looking at G de Paolo’s (Paradise \(^5\)) — that I did not know these last 2 nights why I liked it (was drawn to it so.

And The Pentagon officers have let me know since x — xxii (during that AM why) to so many scents on my part and the structure of the diamond held up to the light during these nights tell me. Tell-us they signed things.

I want to write more often. But no time and all is scattered so but Giovanni made me I have long scroll poems I hope to send shortly.

Just want you to know it is very close I am to you. The alphabet, the cards, and my mother.

I didn’t like the address here but 16 & 16 are 32.

and a Leaven-worth what causes us to rise, the bars on the jail ourself. You in the square fort.

Please keep clipping.

No-names. just to practice rites, take a ½ tube-stick to your hip & move towards your brother. Tomorrow I pick up a book: The religions of Near East. Sumerian, AKKadian

texts ca. by Isaac Mendelsohn. The Library of Religion Series #4 sohn.

The Liberal Arts Press — 153 W. 72 NY 23, NY

The beautiful \(\rightarrow\) green knob of the hill. they find each other our

I had to open this, because I find out I don’t live at 1632 Leavenworth, but 1362, which is another matter, indeed.

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\(^5\) Giovanni de Paolo (1398-1482), Italian painter whose *Paradise* (c. 1445) was part of an altarpiece with *Expulsion From Paradise*; both Dante-inspired paintings hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Well, it is a nearly unbearable town, and they can flutter their wings all they want to, they can't wipe that away. If it weren't for Mr. Rumaker, I don't know, and he hopes to get out by January 1.

Don't believe a word you read, if you read them. And it ain't only my jaded Eastern eyesight. I suppose if we lived in North Beach? But the place, they are all under siege, suspicion and punctured vanity (s) fill the air with a very unpleasant sound.

Anyway you hold the fort, as I do Boston, and I wish I could put down some notes on City (is there one?) for you so you would say something for M- but I am barely able to write to my mother.

This isn't even a Renegade town, anymore. And the International Settlement is closed down. Well, we'll go to the Black Cat on Halloween.

Love,
yours,
John

I've often wished I answered you that beautiful night you asked me
—who can you trust—
I meant to.

---

Charles Olson

November 1, 1957
[San Francisco]

Dear Subscriber:

On August 1st the contents of Measure II were emailed to the Villiers Press in London for the Fall printing. On September 13th, the editor was notified by James Boyer May (US representative of the press) that the manuscripts had never been received in the London office. Despite a tracer, the Post Office has never explained or accounted for their loss.

By September 19th the entire issue, except for one irreplaceable item, had been reassembled at the labor of each individual contributor. The long delay in a Fall issue is mainly editorial. But II is being printed now and will be distributed to you in the early Winter (December-January).

It contains:

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6 The Place, North Beach bar popular with Jack Spicer and his circle of poets. Opened by a Black Mountain alum in 1953, The Place “encouraged the use of marijuana, exploring ways to break traditional sex roles, ‘a greater candor about homosexuality, a greater interest in experiment in homosexual relations,’ – including the encouragement of women to ‘use swear words’ – and generally frank conversations on all subjects” (PBLG 55).

7 The International Settlement, red-light district in San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s.

8 The Black Cat, bar in San Francisco that evolved from Bohemian hangout to what Allen Ginsberg called “the best gay bar in America” in the 1950s.

9 This letter was sent out to most of Wieners’ correspondents.
A book of dreams and an article on the use of the unconscious by Michael Rumaker.
5 choruses from Mexico City by Jack Kerouac.
2 by Duncan.
5 by Creeley, and Notes from Skagit Valley by Edward Dorn.

III to (The City) is also ready and will be printed in the early Spring.

It contains:

A survey of 16 cities from Boston to Venice. Helen Adam to Philip Whalen
Kyoto to Fairbanks
5 to James Dean by Frank O’Hara
10 Hymns to Geryon by Michael McClure. Poems by Louis and Allen Ginsberg
Fragment of a blue movie by William Burroughs. Also burlesque photographs and strip
collages. Reviews: of Catullus by Jonathan Williams and CityLights by Larry Eigner

So you are asked to be patient, that this attempts to assure you the wait is worth it.
And that future numbers will keep pace with the seasons.

Faithfully,
The Editor

Robin Blaser

Dearest Robin:
You must know how much I have wanted to write, and just been forced, either by the weight of M II not being a fact, and the taking in of this new PLACE, such a cone (egg) I have not been able to break out of. Except just this hurried fingers.

OK, Measure went out yesterday. Yr. original copy as given by you. It looks beautiful.

With the inclusion of James B. and Gregory Corso’s YAAAAAH; B’s being Feathers or Lead.

Louis Ginsberg (1885-1976), American poet and teacher, father of Allen Ginsberg. In June of 1957 Allen had written him, “Please subscribe to John Wieners' magazine Measure - it should be a very good avant garde magazines and he needs about 47 more subscriptions to make it - also I’d like to have a complete set of them at home, they'll be valuable perhaps... A good cause. Wieners is going to try rounding up all the threads we've been gathering” (Family Business 60). Not only did Louis subscribe; he also submitted his poem “Still Life,” which he told Allen was “about the atmosphere at 324 Hamilton Ave. when you were in college, Eugene was in the army, and I was surrounded by ghosts” (124). Two years later, after Measure had published both father and son, Allen reported back that “We are doing a benefit reading to finance Measure mag here for another issue. Wieners is a good kid, but no money and not a businessman” (118).
Much-section-separation, the MAGICK OF PLACE, 
of THE OTHER, of DREAMS, THE MAGICK OF OBJECT, of WOMEN, etc all titled, 
& of course, most-times, the titles better than total contents, OK, but at least the seed, the 
fig-wasp is there for birth.

SF, we did not dig at all, at first, but it seems certain now, Dana to work with Matson 
Steamship, and we have the pad.

4 rooms, $100, sandstone fire-place, one block behind 
Jones, at the Top of the Knob. With the old red drapes in the window, & accumulation of 
the trip west, on display. Much room.

A large Ginny, Mahogany, table, on which I write in the corner, and over my left 
head,

a collage of Poets, I made from photos, and you stand looking into 
Maxwell Bodenheim’s room, the good bird over the shoulder of the Sailor, played by Dana, 
lifting his glass to all of Me.

Much study, for me.
All night now gone by with Jane E H’s Prolongomena, and dont fear, I am out of B’s, have 
been for 2 weeks,

and still maintaining somehow, the interest. I need you to make 
McAllister street with me.
That I think of you often, and how we could share things,

Possibly you might dig the enclosed, as I think you can see through Miss Frances Keene, 

enough, and the story (s) seem to be in this little girl’s mouth, as they are in yours, 

so I send it. As I hope you will send me, yours, as you do 
them.

Anyway, the poem, you were finishing when I left, 

that you ended Duncan says, with ‘a green thumb.’ Which could not be better.

Dana got arrested once, 10 days after we arrived for ‘drunkeness’ and he 

wanted to come back ‘home’ but NO, we hung on, at Tom Field’s 509 Buchanan St (The 
Nigger District) and I was having visions of detectives, etc. Or maybe they weren’t visions. 
Whatever, I will be able I hope to send long poems, about it all. So much has been written 
by me, & so little in a shape to be made available to you & the few other ears.

That I leave all this white space for you to fill in, and mail back, I will come home Christmas 
Week, and there will be much rejoicing in my heart. Altho, we both now have taken, or are 
in process of same, SF to our hearts. I needs must work too, but only to get that fare home,

1) Is all (Tom, Alan, Steve) out of jail? I mean this most seriously that it would do me good 
to know.

2) Marshall wrote from NY, and I hope to write soon, and urge him here. Dont be a dish-
washer, lack of loot is killing.

3) Spicer is al-right. And his book, to be published by the WHITE RABBIT PRESS (J 
Dunn) is the best he has done. But still, I feel, an ignorance on his part, as to just what can 
be, or should be done, with the poem. That it aint personal spears for your enemies, or 
lovers, or ones you want to be either, (prose is that) that it partakes (yes RD,) of a more 
abiding, like religion, ignorance, & fear, takes part of it too.
A deeper,
  black (only because so much light is there,
place.

‘Chilly gloom’ our daddies told us.

Tell us they signed the stone with. And

Pardon my haste, here, also I won’t re-read, etc. That I wish and will in regular letters, back, give you more dope on the place. Also all the poems you want, Do write, here, too. Damn you. I don’t think there is more ‘culture’ here, but at least, a more gracious, & convenient, casual, easier way of life, but at least, a more gracious, & convenient, casual, easier way of life, but all those are adjectives, & whether ‘life’ is East, I don’t know, but I think so. My blood says yes.

If you hesitate of Beau Clown, I intend to read, so will let you know.

Tell ma was also on the stone.

love from us both,
  John

Would you send your birth date

---

**Charles Olson**

11.24.57

[San Francisco]

Dear Charles:

Just to put down the random event instead of taking a cable car. How often
in fact, night before last when
you woke me up in the AM, and went to the left side of the bed
in the old bedroom on Churchill Street,
she kept yelling up the stairs
for me to come down and clean house or something before Alvene arrived, and
I would not, she kept insisting,
and despite embarrassment with you, a guest in the house –
I threw a shoe
at her down the stairs on Eliot Street. It went
over her left shoulder, she shivered, like alittle madonna
ringlets shaking, hands folded to her breast
she cried, but I came back in the bedroom
to talk to you said something, these things have to happen,

---

11 This letter and poem were published as a broadside in 1968 by Sam and Ann Charters’ Portents Press in New York, printed on cream-colored paper with a red ribbon seal.
neither of us minded, you pay no...

And Alvene arrived, and
her sister, lighter one of the two Negresses.

And off we went
the four of us
to a narrow house on a hill.

We climbed
the wood steps, in
After of course, I introduced you to them.

a house I never saw before.

Enuf.

1.

November 11, the holiday, I wake Rumaker, up,
we have breakfast, then walk over the back side of Nob Hill,
babbling, etc. We catch the 2 Clement Bus out Sutter Street
for Michael’s taking me touring to Sutros. To the Cliff House,
Robin elaborated so on.  

A crispe day.

After all the fooling around, the lunch and beer, our pictures
taken for a quarter, we cross to the beach
this Pacific, its sense to me of no place, no interference from
land, coming off no shore but one

I have never nor will not

see such a girl in the surf
with a black jacket
and toreador trousers

on skin tight,
around her head a bright red scarf
4 feet long
so the wind takes it and is
the force what seems to bend her, turning on waves
like a danse-er
except not,
I only remember her with her arms
out, and her toe raised,
foot rather, standing on one,

while this green Pacific longs

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12 The Cliff House, legendary restaurant near San Francisco, built and rebuilt five times since first opening in 1858. Millionaire Adolph Sutro bought it in 1883, turned it into a grand Victorian mansion, and built the Sutro Baths, a magnificent complex of six large indoor swimming pools in addition to a museum and other attractions. It survived the Great Earthquake of 1906, but burned down a year later, leaving picturesque ruins that have been a major tourist attraction ever since.
2 boys with her.

One on his elbow and the other
full length the wet land
in blue
dungarees, rolled to his
calf, by her
in the water.

She comes out
behind the land13 one’s back, bends over
his face in her hands and the wind her red veil
up her sweater so
I see her arched white back,
not like a cat’s at all, back in the water
she wades as we walk by.

I have to sit down and watch.
I spread an old newspaper for Mike,
I found on the bus,
and I sit on Rimbaud.

And he looks at us once, so I have to look away.
Notions, some motion I can’t set down his
head back to the street, out of the sea
the young one the blonde
and her,
they follow him
up to the seawall, she carries their clothes.

I tell Mike I can’t go away I’ve got to
follow them, I’ll meet you up the street, wait.
And we split.
By the time I get half-way near
the 2 boys have rolled up their pants
again and are running down to the water.
The girl looks fatter
and/
it’s not even them.
I look at Mike smiling on the seawall. I yell
they’ve gone,
they’ve disappeared.

And he says, Do you want me to tell you where –
loud in the wind,
I say No.

I want to cross back to Playland.14
But they’re probably in one of the cars.

---

13 It is possible that the “l” in “land” is crossed out.

14 Playland-at-the-Beach (1928-1972), seaside amusement park near Sutros Baths, along the
Great Highway, owned by the same man who owned the Cliff House, George Whitney.
After his death in 1958, the park began a decline that ended with its closure in 1972.
Did you see them go?

No, do you really want to look?

We pass empty parked cars.

They went away but all the way home, when I think of them, of her

turning on waves,

I cannot talk of how it is like

Boston and Alan,

what it would be like

if I lived

that kind of life

making

my devotions to

what sends it all in across the water?

Giving

the rest up, four walls, for temple walls,

only I know it’s not like that

on the beach, on the road,

there is no mystery, nor God

following

what we have known the nights, Alan and I. Balas and I

watched the sunrise. I have sat through the night, the 3

of them slept around me, wrote poems about it, their breathing. It was enough. Balas in the sideroom, Jan in the back-

room, Alan on the chair beside the box where I play records,

tiptoe across, fainting I will make too much noise, break the

needle, writing in the chair across the room, the sky lights

way above Boston, needing a fix, pot to sail the ship, like

those babies, if I followed them, instead of trudging up

Sutros, to the icerink, and the museum, Tom Thumb under glass

with the night shut out

the gas burner sucks up the air

where they are, will I

see them.

Like it is (what time is it) just 5 minutes years to the minute

I get into the Studebaker with Dana and rode off into the back-

woods of Milton, never quite come out since

PS: a poem

to put fire in the grate, seawood

burn up the chimney for its night

ashes I will be rather than

settling down to just so much dust

in the air I cannot breathe,

look then to sea at Land’s End

those roots that live on rocks, ride

\[\text{15 “to put fire in the grate, seawood...”}\]
with each surf, turning on waves.

John W

---

Robert Greene  
12.19.57  
[San Francisco]

Forgive all this

Dear Robert:

Dear Robert, this is going to be quicker than I want, maybe longer, but I at least want to write this, to say I am alive, and coming out of a long slump. Because, this town, lovely as it is, is too distracting for work. It is Fun City, and I carry around with me the ghost of Paris in 20’s. Yah, I cant help it, it is so active with poets, with an audience of wild men, and the 2 or 3 bars where they meet (unlike the 7’s) but ruled over by a kind of madness of wonder, etc. Anyway, both Dana & I aint been well, and thus together things arent close. No money for a long time, no jobs, in our little US depression, and a $100 a month apt. Plus the ever-increasing work of this fucking magazine. I got a flyer for it in Poetry*Chicago (November) and it has brought on another cascade of crap. So I have let the real matters pile up. I guess you could say in some ways, ‘I have arrived’. Partisan Review, Chicago Review both have asked to print poems, for their San Francisco Issues. But I hesitate and draw back, for in this flush time, one can easily go down the drain. And I am so far removed from desire to see my own name in print, because the poem itself is removed from me. It’s like living off the canned preserves of another season, and I dont think I shall do same, altho Chic Review has kept two poems, from long ago, which (one of) (a bad one) they will drop in the welter. Who cares. All that matters is touch, love, desire, need, lust, satisfaction. I dont have what I want, and we do have the right to have those things. So I go back to Boston (Fly Back) Christmas Eve, and land Christmas Morn, and see what happens. I have often stood outside the windows at 28 Lime Street, and thought of those pain-full days.

I have gone thru a lot, I guess, if I thought of same, and it is only a year since you pulled down our lintel, and yet a different world has opened up to me. The world of the thieves, etc. Dope-addicts, etc. all the terror of the near-mad, and I know this smacks of the dramatic, but I chose this, this area of life. I could be teaching school in Canton.

Instead, I have Georgia O’Keefe’s Sunflower, burning in front of my eyes, and a thousand little packs placed on me back, which dont bend it at all, but this is a weary city, where Boston was/ has the charm (soothing weight of age) ah shit, that’s literary. Old hands weigh lightly.

---

16 The Sevens, mixed gay and straight bar on the Bohemian north side of Boston’s Beacon Hill, one of a handful of bars in the neighborhood near Scollay Square that offered haven to gay and lesbian Bostonians.

17 The Partisan Review (1934-2003), American cultural, literary, and political journal, known for what Irving Howe called a “mixture of polemical combativeness and intellectual rapidity,” publishing Mary McCarthy, Delmore Schwartz, George Orwell, a rambunctious site of argument over Stalinism, Fascism, and the avant-garde.
Your picture, one hand on a banister in Louisburg Square, with two dowagers in the background, is pasted to the wall with others, just within fingertouch of my arm, in fact, I did just that, touch your puss. You see, despite it all, the new ones, habits as well as friends, there cannot be touched, those pictures pasted on me wall, us, you.

You remain close, while Dana becomes a ghost, sliding out of my touch, day after day, so writing this, I become afraid, and would run into the bedroom, and talk to him, but it is 3 AM, and he is drunk, and the sliding door would make too much noise. Yah, it is somewhat night-marish, all of us, wandering in it. But I go back soon, to that old root, the old street, and see what happens,

and I will write about it. Do write if you can, all your news does me heart good, and forget the haste, and the remark you made about my poetry still fills my heart with joy, I do want to be that expansive, and the day will come, when I write, as I know, it has to be written.

I have no fare back here to San Francisco, but I will move slow, leaving Milton sometime in Mid-January.

Your life too seems full of knowledges. I wonder if Veronique can forgive me for not thanking, writing her, she too, who comes into my head so often. Ah, enough.

*I have so much to write you – it defeats me. I wont re-read this so –  
but do buy The Evergreen Review  
795 Broadway  
NYC 3, NY

$1.00
for the San Francisco Scene – an issue devoted to the “renaissance” on the West Coast, which of course does not exist.

Corrected Proofs of Measure 2 go in same mail as this letter.

My love to you  
& Veronique.

1362 Leavenworth  
San Francisco 9. 

John

---

Ed Dorn  
Dec, 1957  
[San Francisco]

Dearest Ed:

I was in bed, and read your letter, and now I am both that & up. So very tight, I cannot open up my arms, it is not of the body. There is never finis, I dont know how you can think of it, but fear of same is what has got me up. We have had it very tough here, with eyes peeping over the top of the table, & it is not over yet.

I had flown high on other wings all summer, and after being here 3 weeks, there was no more.

Money, peace, place, food, shit, & yet tonight, I had pinned a sunflower, up on my wall, so daddy, this is the first letter, I got writ, since I been here, Oct 1.

Whadda do? right back to Boston and say send 500 benzedrine.

187
It’s a fuckin fun city and I hate it. Using up my time on fun. Also today, proofs of M II back, & may I quote: Olson: WOW. It is pretty good. I am excited. I itch the back of my neck. I aint a manic-depressive, the girl in Mike’s Place said, it’s just that I been drinking seven days, and they wont let me sleep.

Well, I work at Books, Inc. and can get any thing in both stores, 20% off, so if I can do you a turn, a miracle in exchange, let me. I.E. before Christmas, when they lay me.

Also Fire-man in next room, no split there, only so-so, stuck in a $100 a month apt. because there is WELL, WE’RE FUCKING HUNG. And the inhabitants likewise.

Tom Field, drinks, my dear, all the time, and Michael Rumaker aint written since the desert. Returns east in April. Send your poems to

PATRICIA GUEST
Partisan Review
22 E 17th

and say Johnnie Wieners told you to. She is the new Poetry Editor, & co-respondent here, not that you care probably. But Paul Carroll also, Chicago Review,18

Reynolds Club, Univ. of Chicago, Chicago 37. They are also after me (yah*) for (you know what) you ones. New ones.

Oh Fuck, fuck fuck fuck fuck clslslslsllslallalalalalalalalalm

I cannot make it. That beside my dear old mother, and sister, who’s becoming a nun, I aint written nobody, cause, there is so many to write. I am paralyzed. I got one hundred letters, to answer. And what could I say to you, when I had to say, I have no money to get there, no place to leave behind, no ROCK, I am the kind that needs one, or I would be washed out to sea. It is the only place I can operate from. Olson called Dana a rock, and he is literally that to me.

Also I need to know somebody can pay the rent. ETC.

SHIT, SUCKLW S, DNSJWOWLSKSJ.

And he is too unable to work, also, because no one will hire him. For various reasons.

IT IS A depression, I guess, or something,

with all the fur-coated ones still fucking in the lobby of the St Francis, without knowing it.

Well, I will not say it this time, that I can see you,

But do write

who you heard from, etc. The scene. I am healthy, back to 135 pounds. Not on anything.

And Dana received $50 yesterday from an old nurse he used to fuck on our street,

18 Paul Carroll (1926-1996), American poet and teacher who founded the Poetry Center of Chicago. As a college student (1958-59), Carroll co-edited the Chicago Review and then Big Table with Irving Rosenthal.

19 Red circle around “But” with line down to “how cold is it”
so we’re OK.
And he began work today also, at City of Paris, selling cashmere sweaters for $35, fitted to your body,
how I would love to hold yours and your wife to either arm.
My love always,
John

how cold is it
PS –
What else do any of us have to offer but the “pre-occupation w/details”
you cannot bore.

Charles Olson

February 19, 1958
[San Francisco]

Dear Charles:

Under separate cover I have mailed you Atlantic Monthly, or rather the Jung section from it, and the Scientific American with the Sumerian article by Kramer. At least there are pictures.

Measure II arrived yesterday, finished. The bulk follow by ship, and I will airmail you a copy as soon as received, which should be three weeks. I think you know the contents, but I will list them again, because I am pleased, in fact elated over the whole issue. Despite the labor of only one at it, the joy also is magnificent. That it is me hand.

  Michael Rumaker: the use of the unconscious
  Blaser The hunger of sound
  Creeley Juggler’s Thot
  Rumaker: 8 dreams
  Kerouac: 4 choruses
  Olson: Descensus spiritus #1
  Duncan: The maiden
  Creeley They say
    She went to stay
  Dorn: Notes from the fields (Skagit valley
  Duncan: The dance
  Perkoff: Feasts of death, feasts of love
  (dead Boston poetess)
  V R Lang : The recidivists
  Corso: Yaaaah
  Broughton: Feathers or lead
  McClure: The magazine cover
    One & Two
  Creeley: The tunnel
    Just friends
  Duerden: musica #3
  Jonas: Books 3 & 4 from A long poem for
jack spicer because he needs it.

All of these works split into “books” —

of DREAMS

of WOMEN

The Magick of Place

of THE OTHER

The Magick of Object

with two short poems thrown in, by UNKNOWNS of the 20th century. And a letter (1st of a series — by Duncan. Plus your graphiti, which looks beautiful, on the page opposite from your poem. The last page (64 in all) listing persons and shops where Measure may be obtained.

And an adv. from Edge in Australia.20

For the coming III, which I would like to send off at the end of next week, the issue as a whole looks too much like a display case, with short poems by persons who will never appear again, like Souster and Helen Adam, Louis Ginsberg and William Burroughs. Though they might,

it is as you ask, who can you trust?

Myself.

And not always.

The main ‘feature’ of III shall be a City Survey, a book within the book, with its own contents, and this shall dispel some of the jewelry box effect. The main intent of this letter is that III lacks substance.

Duncan offers ten pages of his Medea to start a serial of the play and print through until completed. There is a comic strip (4 pages) by Jess of Dick Tracy called Tricky Cad Case IV, then a one page North Beach poem by Joanne Kyger.21

Thoughts of Marie Ponsot, and others: a Review by Larry Eigner.

A poem on London by Gael Turnbull.

2 Williams-like poems by Edward Dorn.

2 short prose ‘character’ vignettes by Fielding Dawson.

2 poems about food and markets by James Schuyler of NYC.

A moon poem by Helen Adam.

A poem of despondencies by Robert Duncan.

Poems from San Francisco Blues by Jack Kerouac.

20 Noel Stock (1929-2007), Australian poet, translator, and editor, one of his magazines being Edge, an Australian literary journal, from 1953-1957. At the suggestion of Pound biographer Hugh Kenner, Stock contacted Pound at St. Elizabeth’s in 1953, beginning an epic correspondence and collaboration.

21 Joanne Kyger (b. 1934) has been at the heart of the most vibrant aspects of North American poetry and poetics since moving to San Francisco in 1957. “Kyger worked and held court at Brentano’s Bookstore, meeting poets of all schools, including Spicer, who took her under his wing – the wing of Hecate” (PBLG 100). A regular fixture at the North Beach poets’ bar The Place, she first met Wieners at one of the Sunday poetry meetings that the North Beach poets – at least the “more disciplined and lyrically conscious group than the political publicity-busy invaders from the east coast,” as James Broughton described them – held at the apartment of Joe and Carolyn Dunn (PBLG 107).
Seattle/ and A strange new cottage in Berkeley/ 2 poems by A. Ginsberg.
Still-Life a poem by L. Ginsberg.
Venice, by Stuart Perkoff, a 3 page poem.
Photographs of Mrs Arthur Miller, and Mrs Jan Minsk, strippers. 22
A review of The Poems of Catullus by Jonathan Williams.
A Toronto Poem by R. Souster.
A poem by Larry Eigner “cruel and dark, the city
of all men, close

the window”
A fragment of a Blue Movie by William Lee (W S Burroughs of the adding machines) 23
plus a short other one.
Harangue from Newport, by Philip Whalen, (which I hope to send you a copy of soon).
A dream by Jess Collins, after a reading of works by Rexroth & Patchen. 24
“A nice view” of Fairbanks by John Haines.
(An epiphany poem or what am I doing here) by J. Wiener.
And a series of “Hymns to Geryon” by Michael McClure.

So much of it unsatisfactory. That you must see how important Maximus is to the issue. I
wish I could send II to you now, so you could see what nice work I do, and that you can
trust me, to fix III up, so that what happened to Four Winds does not happen here. But then
again, I would not let it go out until somehow, on its return, it would bring back good spirits.

Michael has gone. Into the show, I only hope that they all keep warm.
5 flights up, or at the seashore. It is good for me to be here at Land’s end.

Dana is working at the Crocker-Angle bank! In the Consumer Loan Department. And after
III goes to press, I shall look for work. It is a great pleasure to see Ishmael in the stores, and
to have Capricorn on the wall.
And to hear fire-crackers explode in the street, the Chinese New Year. Hour after hour. It is
3pm.

Carolyn Dunn came back yesterday from Boston. I read yesterday The Subterraneans by
Kerouac, and against my will, it has thrown up an aura, and set me up in an area of desire,
what will I find to fill it. Rather who? Mardou. 25

22 Unfortunately, not much is yet known about Jan Minsk, the beautiful burlesque dancer and
poet who befriended John Wieners in the late fifties and was immortalized in his Ace of
Pentacles poem “For Jan,” where he approaches her as a priestess who “hustles her islands of
pure flesh,” “sells her body to old China,” for the sake of “the ancestral gods” and
“unknown secret pleasures” (65).
23 William S Burroughs II was born in 1914 to a wealthy family in St. Louis, Missouri, the
grandson of inventor William Seward Burroughs, creator of the modern adding machine.
The Selected Essays of Burroughs, Jr., were released by Seaver Books under the title The Adding
24 Kenneth Patchen (1911-1972), American poet, novelist, artist, and radical. With his friend
Kenneth Rexroth, he was of enormous influence on the San Francisco poetry scenes.
Harvey has gone back to Santa Monica.
Lorraine remains with her cat. And Claude.

I have never seen expose themself as Kerouac in that book, he is the one naked on top of the fence in the rain, not the negro girl he puts up there. But of course, there is so much slush, you slip on your ass all the way through, and curse JK.

It was a good flight, 300 bills awaited my return, but Measure is all paid for. It was a good flight, 300 bills awaited my return, but Measure is all paid for.

And I would most appreciate it if you could send John Burke, as soon as you have it typed. So I could plot the pages. I am allowed 37-41 typewritten lines to a page, but of course, there is no limit to what you are allowed. Also there are 50 letters to answer/ or manuscripts to return, and I can rise to very little of it. But will have to. Everytime, I look at the new Meas… I get a charge and set in.

If I can “help” you in any way, dont hesitate to “let me know”
And I will give introductions to Sankey that no line is to be carried down, or broken;
I am in my usual over-anxious state, so forgive the harping, but always feel until the mss. is in my hand, I am at

your mercy (which makes me

laugh here somehow

(all the words, I take
Blarney Laffan\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{Love, John}

\textit{What can I say to make you sit
right down and do it now.}

\textit{** ** ** **}

The Spring and Summer of 1958 found Wieners in the middle of another exhilarating renaissance, with Spicer and Duncan back in the Bay Area, the San Francisco State Poetry Center bringing in many Modernist and New American poets to read, and small presses like Joe Dunn’s White Rabbit and Dave Haselwood’s Auerhahn pushing the community into a period of colorful productivity. In his journal from this spring Wieners describes one of their Sundays together:

It is poetry day again. I have just finished toast and coffee.
Miss Kids arrived at noon and we went up California Avenue
picking church daisies and ivy which now stick out of a
water-filled glass at my left hand… Ebbe Borregaard and

\textsuperscript{25}Mardou Fox, the free spirited, beautiful black artist in \textit{The Subterraneans}, modeled on one of the many neglected women in the Beat movement, Alene Lee.

\textsuperscript{26}Wieners’ mother’s family name was Laffan.
George Stanley. “This is the last meeting.” Also on the left is Michael McClure. Across from me is Joanne. And beside her is John Ryan. We all sit around chatting amiably. George Stanley’s hands tremble holding the wine. At my feet is a bronze planter I transplanted marigolds and ivy into. They are thriving.

Jack Spicer has arrived.27

* * * * *

[San Francisco]

Dear Michael:

It is 8:30 in the morning, and I am thinking of Sutros and the holiday of November 11, how nice it would be if I could go over and ring your chic bell, and we would bus off. I am wrapping the shoes as soon as I finish this, and I will send them the quickest way possible. The lack of money has delayed me. I will pay for the postage, as I am selling books tonight, and we will write it off to past accounts;

I have been looking for work every day, and yesterday, appeared in the Oakland City Hall, applying for an Educational Asst. job in their Art Museum, and again as a junior librarian in the Oakland Public. The A train only takes 30 minutes; etc. Whatever, I am having much fun wandering about daily. Dana and I have tentatively decided to split. He will, as soon as his unemployment checks come through, and he can pay the back rent. I will, as soon as he does. If he does not, I doubt that I will. If he asks me to stay with him, I will. But as things go and have gone for the past week, we are strangers, and are very seldom alone together (I spent last weekend with Miss Kids) and I am very well in it all. Actually go out on the streets (daytime) with a great deal of joy in the fellows, (at a distance) and have bought marigolds that grow, and two plants that have new shoots, and a red pillow cover, which I fitted and sewed on the foam rubber Magave me. Also, a pastoral scene cover. We have decided that he may have the dishes, while I shall take the red drapes. And I look, half out of the corner of my eye, for apartments on Telegraph Hill, and Columbus, Mason St. area. That is where I want to live, somewhere, where at night, I may walk and have open bars and ice-cream parlors at hand. Not Chink Markets that close at 10, or queer bars.

Miss Kids and I miss you, and dont think about it. The poetry last Sunday was excellent. Even Irene Taverner was here, and did not open her yap once. Nemi Frost Hansen28 wants to return to Santa Barbara, and she broke down last Friday and cried on Miss Kids’ bed for two hours, and Miss Kids broke down and cried later in Vesuvio’s and let her hair down, and could not tie it back again, and Nemi Frost had no mercy, and said cut the scene.29 So the next day Miss Kids wrote to the psychiatrist for dextedrine. And Jack

27 707 16.
28 Emily “Nemi” Frost, American artist who came to San Francisco with childhood friend Joanne Kyger from Santa Barbara in 1956.
29 Irene Taverner (1925-2011), Welsh-American painter active in the New York and San Francisco Beat and jazz scenes. Vesuvio’s, bar in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco.
Spicer wrote a “Masurka for the girls who brought me tranquilizers” and Miss Kids arrived with English Ivy and white daisies tied to her handbag, and Duncan who had cried with tears down his cheeks the Sunday before that Ebbe and Stanley were in opposition to his verse, this Sunday read 15 pages of prose he had written since, in the form of a letter to George Stanley, with reference to poems by Harold Dull, and Joanne Kyger. The Dunns were in attendance, and Sheila in a ratty black mouton coat, lined with white mouton turned gray, someone had given her, and she has left Miss Kids.

There were not enough chairs, and I made $.50 profit on the wine. Dory Dull had to drink water constantly as her bladder is infected, and she spilt a great deal of it. John Ryan had his pearl on Saturday night, which Irene Taverner ripped off and threw across the bar at Francisco, a popular Beat hangout around the corner from City Lights Books, where it still stands.

Jack Spicer’s “Masurka For the Girls Who Brought Me Tranquilizers,” intended for A Book of Music, but did not make the book; Kevin Killian and Lewis Ellingham found the poem among Spicer’s papers at Bancroft Library in 2004, but it remains unpublished. The poem (from Killian’s private collection) reads

In group, out group
In group, out group
Man wearing a beard, 41/2 collar, and a pair of pajamas.
Out group, in group
Out group, in group
Woman wearing lipstick, 36 brassiere, drinking gin and marmalade.
Man and woman unique
Try to dance. People
Say that dance is the basic measure of a poem.

George Stanley, American-Canadian poet. A San Francisco native, he was an integral part of its so-called Renaissance, and active participant in Jack Spicer’s “Poetry as Magic” workshop, along with friends Ebbe Borregaard, Helen Adam, and Joe Dunn; during the Vietnam War he moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where he has written and taught since.

Harold Dull, American poet and teacher who came to San Francisco and the North Beach Spicer scene after studying with Stanley Kunitz and Theodore Roethke. He arrived shortly before Wieners did, on Labor Day 1957, with his girlfriend Dora Geissler, who went by Dora Dull because the shared last name was the only way she and Harold could find an apartment together in the 1950s. “When my mother threatened to visit,” she remembered in an interview with Lewis Ellingham, “I went to the point of purchasing a gold band from a pawn shop, and that was the end of Dora Geissler” (PBLG 109). Dora eventually fell in love with (and married) Russell FitzGerald. FitzGerald had arrived in San Francisco earlier in the same year Wieners did, and quickly enmeshed himself in the community in unexpected ways. First he was part of a tortured love triangle with Jack Spicer and Beat poet Bob Kauffman; later he would fall into a similar, though far more convoluted, triangle with Jim Alexander and Dora Dull. His escapades in San Francisco are thrillingly recounted in Poet Be Like God, based largely on FitzGerald’s own meticulously kept, unpublished diary, now kept in the special collections at Berkeley’s Bancroft Library.

John Ryan, bartender at The Place who participated in Spicer’s Poetry as Magic Workshop.
Vesuvios. And Miss Kids suspects that he has been stealing her ear-rings, and Jerome\textsuperscript{34} is still in love with Ryan, who shared the last of his mary-wanna with me last Saturday, and even Miss Kids, who had taken one Dexedrine before, she persuaded the manager to let her in to Mrs. Hansen’s apartment as we thought Nemi had taken an overdose of sleeping pills after we couldn’t find the Look magazine party, but she hadn’t, and wasn’t home, so Miss Kids stole a handful of dexedrine, and at Ryan’s with the mary-wanna smoke blowing in the air, she went on the nod, and later the two of us went to all kinds of parties, at Jordan Bellson’s who makes movies, and later to Bob Cedar’s up on Fillmore, until dawn, he wasn’t home, but blowing at the Trouper, and his beautiful wife was just getting up, and Miss Kids slept, and I listened to Leo Parker, Charlie’s brother. While Wally Berman sat across from me and sniffled, and pretended he was on junk, because I looked like I was, and Marcella and Jeanne were also at Vesuvio’s and Miss Kids looked up through her hair, and said, if those women sit down, I’ll scratch her eyes out, and So I greeted them, and planned to meet them later at the Place, since Marcella had bought one of Nemi Frost Hansen’s paintings, but being invited to Look, instead, never went, wound up sleeping in Miss Kids’ cool arms all night.\textsuperscript{35}

I will wrap your shoes, and your letter was very beautiful and makes me wish you had waited until Spring, when it was warm, and do go slow, and do not let the jungle eat you.

I suppose in a sense I am glad you are gone, because now I can leave Dana, and if you had stayed I would not, knowing you want me to, there would be too much resistancy on my part, but this way, I can just glide off, as soon as I get work, and I am going this morning to The San Francisco City Hall, to apply in their library, forging my residence date here, and I take two tests March 14 for Oakland, and then later today, I will make the Museum to see the Blue Rider Show,\textsuperscript{36} even possibly stopping and asking Carolyn Dunn to accompany me. Of course, this Sunday will be gala, with Ebbe and Stanley reading their stuff, and Friday before, I will make the Laubadt Gallery on Gough (1407) where Anne McKeever (the far out one from Mexico) and Ruth Weiss (the fat one) are reading their

\textsuperscript{34} Jerome Mallman (b. 1931), American painter and photographer, originally from Wisconsin, who quickly became a fixture in San Francisco’s Bohemian scene. Mallman introduced Joanne Kyger, whom he knew through the City of Paris dept store, to The Place, the North Beach bar where Spicer’s circle was concentrated in the 1950s. His collection of street photography, \textit{Smokers and Sleepers}, was released by the University of Wisconsin Press in 2005.

\textsuperscript{35} Jordan Belson (1926-2011), American artist and avant-garde filmmaker known for his meditative, abstract films. When Wieners lived in the city, Belson was in the midst of his Vortex Concerts, an immersive art project with sound-artist collaborator Henry Jacobs at San Francisco’s Morrison Planetarium (1957-59). Leo Parker (1925-1962), bebop musician who was no relation to – but hugely inspired by – fellow alto saxophonist Charlie “Bird” Parker (1920-1955), one of the legends of the fast-paced, improvisational bebop style jazz that became increasingly popular in New York and North Beach in the decade after World War II. The influence this group of musicians had on Beat poetry cannot be overstated, though ultimately Wieners was far more inspired by female jazz and blues singers, most notably Billie Holiday.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Der Blaue Reiter}, group of painters formed in 1911 by Vasily Kandinsky and Franz Marc. They disbanded by 1914, but their groundbreaking work in pure color and abstraction had an enormous impact on twentieth century art.
stuff, and the Sunday before last, Tom and Richard Duerden and I went to the cellar, and
the black man on trumpet seemed to be blowing right in me, and I had been there earlier
with only 5 people, and stayed after they left, when there were more people on the
bandstand than there were in the house. I wish Measure would arrive, and you would be
proud to see what has been done, when it seemed that nothing was doing;

I have no fear of the one place I know you are in, and will never be
out of, because it is yours and you have your own land, and your own markings, and I would
like to say, dont ever believe it is not yours, or that you are not walking it, but I know you
believe we have to dig through so much to find it, I would be a fool, to say it was yours on
Lexington Avenue, and is in the back room on E. 96th, but I know the anger it is to have all
things in disarray around you, but most things are, and we build. On our own land. Love to
JK. The news you gave was good. Write as you can.

_Love, John_

Robin Blaser

March 10? [1958]
San Francisco

Dear Robin:

Please pardon haste of this but all as usual is chaos.

Re Measure: would you distribute as follows:

1 to Steve Jonas
1 to Tom Balas
1 to James Felts
1 to Robin Blaser
1 to Antonio Giarraputo

I am airmailing 2 to Alan & Jan – etc. Then 5 to Grolier, 10 to Book Clearing House and 2
only to Phoenix Book Shop. Or if it seems better 10 to Grolier and 5 to Book Clearing
House. Whatever this makes a total of 22 with 3 left-over for you to sell. I doubt if there will
be any trouble. I depend upon you to get the copies to Tony, Steve and James as they are
sponsors and come first. I have no job, no insurance case money, no openings and so get
thru each day by me wits. I owe Jim $50, & Alan $50 and Villiers $92. What am I doing?
Each day on the streets looking for work and of course, I am staying honest, simply because
no criminal openings present themselves and I always needed a Fagin to tell me what.

I miss you and since I move on my feet, I stumble. Dana and I are splitting as soon
as get a job. I feel it is necessary as there is nothing left between us, not even a goodnight

---

The Lucien Labaudt Gallery, founded by Labaudt’s widow Marcelle (1892-1987) after his
death in 1943. Anne McKeever, San Francisco poet and photographer who was good friends
with the Beat poet and performer ruth weiss, a Holocaust survivor who lived at the Hotel
Wentley in the early fifties and had her poetry published in foundational Beat magazines like
Beatitude and Wallace Berman’s Semina. Her journal Compass chronicles her trip through
Mexico where she met McKeever and Philip Lamantia and stayed up all night talking, finally
climbing the Pyramid of the Sun, a Mayan ruin, to watch the sunrise. (Knight).
kiss. I imagine it is my fault but it is too late now. I literally live on what I can salvage of myself here. Only my essential library remains. I say none of this, in self-pity, only telling myself what’s left—and yet—

something is mine that was not before. I don’t know what it is yet, but it allows me to look to a future without Dana. Maybe it is only miserliness. I know if you were present, it would be different. As he would see us as something valuable and to be cherished. Etc.

No sense in discussing this to anyone, as “we are all alone.”

Do make sure that Measure gets where they want it. I will handle all previous paid subscriptions from here if they complain. The copies are slow getting thru. Try to collect on the 20 from the stores. Of course—it is better to sell in person than direct them to shops.

75¢ sale price
50¢ to you. 25¢ to store or
33% discount to bookshop.

Do what you want with them as long as the interested parties get to buy one. If you want MORE, I will send.

Michael Rumaker is east. In case you should care to: his address is

216 E. 96th St.
c/o Glenn Lewis
NYC 28, NY

and Jennifer wrote very happy letter. She leaves again Saturday for 6 week tour. And later, I hope West Coast.

Damn the MTA. Not a penny. Alan has the letter from the lawyer and I wish you would see him, as he would love it. I am happy Measure is gorgeous. Cover will be better next time. Love—BABY—John

---

Charles Olson

4. 3. 58

[San Francisco]

Dearest Charles:

I shouldn’t be writing but I must acknowledge your poem and tell you how pleased I am to have it. I feel that you too are too pressed to write, but we have much to say. I am far behind in MEASURE, but if I could only find a job then I could set my obligations to right. For now I am hanging on. Dana and I have split (again) and I am staying until a job with Miss Joanne Kyger. Which is very interesting for me to have her facts so close up. I

38 The day before this letter, Wieners wrote in his journal, “I came home and there is a strange man-boy in the bed. Dana must have brought him home although he has never before—and where is Dana. Whatever, I am tired and my arm aches too much to write” (707 15).

39 Wieners describes living with Kyger—called “Miss Kids” because of her habit of sweeping into a room and calling out “Hey kids!”—in his journal from this time period, The Journal of John Wieners is to be called 707 Scott Street for Billie Holliday 1959. The journal begins just after the letter before this, on March 8, 1958, mid-afternoon, as “Miss Kids” lounges about and the young poet writes down clear declarations like “I must forget how to write. I must unlearn what has been taught me” (13). Before heroin and desperation start to cloud his journal, the life presented is colorful and charming, marked by hangovers and flowers, troubles with Dana and poetry circles with the San Francisco group, and an intense,
dont intend to make it with Dana anymore and say I am claiming my manhood. ETC. But am not, not being self-supporting. This is not to labor you but to explain my falling away from the jobs at hand and also to report how interested the whole business is. The League of Non-Workers which are everywhere here, the Professional Bohemians — Miss Kyger is not one — in fact a Santa Barbara baby with violet doors and gold leaved handles. Her dishes all have flowers painted on them and she looks like a Marilyn Monroe with glasses, her mouth does. It is not a permanent arrangement but what am I to do? It is great to be here and terrifying to be without so much / and to be outside the law takes too much out of me, viz. Boston. Something will break as April always does for me / 3 years ago the Black Mountain. What that change hath wrought. I too feel as this must show I am somewhat removed from my own reality. We shall see where it leads me.

Creeley is here and had a reading at the Dunn’s this evening. Very strong except, I feel, in the current work of which there was very little, outside of that published. 3 poems if I am right but then there is no fear that when he is past this “desert” — there are green pastures. He seemed sure of what had been done with the line as directed by you, by the breath. The audience dug it all. He read chronologically, and included 3-4 stories. The Lover, and, The Dress. Two others I cannot remember. An early one from Gold Diggers and the rowboat-beach children one “Sweet William”? Anyway, the best reading here so far for me, including Stuard Z Perkie last Sunday — What do you do with a town like this! Move to Stinson Beach? Or in with Marilyn Monroe. I have walked out a few dawns in The Tenderloin with the platinum blondes / and suppers-times on Fillmore. And am well so dont worry. As the Mid-Night Gal used to say: “Who knows what tomorrow may bring”

Basil and Martha are married and return to New York in late April Dana is Tom Field’s roomie, and Jerry vande Wiele, etc expects to move to San Francisco. Michael is still unemployed in New York and as soon as anything opens for me I will write. And have poems to send.
Black Mountain continues its power. What that means more of us have been able to say.

Love to Betty and C — Peter
and to you
John

The poem, again, is great
and completed the issue —
made it an issue.

my grandfather’s name
the Laffan one

Post Office Box 2714 (Right now I sell Measure
San Francisco 26 in the bars (No. Beach ones

continued exploration of the Special View of History materials. In May he wrote to Rumaker, “Pray for me, for us all, I think of you often, and sometimes wonder, how far a field I am, and become afraid, of those forces driving me. They sometimes mask as angels” (May 30, 1958). A few weeks later he began his intense period of work on The Hotel Wentley Poems. “These days shall be my poems, these words what I leave behind as mind,” he writes in that same first entry on March 8th, “my record up against time” (14).
Don Allen

Dear Don:

Thank you for sending the Jarry⁴⁰ but I am unable to use same as I have enough mss. for two additional issues without means or hand to print same.

Also there is no job nor shack for its editor. A lovely bookstore-type MM has taken me in, until a job appears. Her name is Joanne Kyger and beautiful.

But what good are we if we are not fast – and M – is not. Still it is as a hope and of course, it will appear but I am impatient. Keep its recession as a confidence as I do not want the few to lose theirs. If I do not, neither should they.

Again I doubt if I would use Jarry anyway. Is it dada? I know humour is needed and translations, etc., and scope but to what purpose The Passion?

And this on good Friday dawn. Enclosed find return and it would be interesting to know, apart from good will, why you thought of Measure. Still, it is impossible for me to read some prose and so I have to read in Jarry, despite brevity of this.

Oh, The Subterraneans should be required reading in place of Silas Marner. How much we are allowed to know, he lets us see, I see no faults despite them. Every word of Mardou is verse to me. I look for her. Where I could not read On the Road, I could not stop reading this book. I want to do it and never will. No one will. What to compare with it? It pulls me as no prose ever has. You should be proud. It is too bad so much of his bad verse gets in print. Then again, surprise.

I know you are busy and do not feel you must answer. I will write as things break. Each day has never meant more.

My best to you.

P.O. Box 2714
John Wieners
San Francisco 26
Take good care of Michael, his shoes leak.

Ed Dorn

Only gossip
Dear Eddie Baby:

Feeling better – without job still, split for good with Dana and living in with a new friend until a job appears. Her name is Joanne Kyger and looks like MM if MM had to swing in a bookstore. It is not a permanent arrangement. Want you to get the sound of your thing –

Creeley esp. liked “Dorn’s beautiful bird business” Ditto Rumaker flown by bus to NY for good, also w/out job. Joanne thinks you’re a person she would like to know. And as of now – no one has put the prose down nor do I think any have dug the effects intended.

⁴⁰ Alfred Jarry (1873-1907), French symbolist writer perhaps best known for his absurdist 1896 play Ubu Roi. Allen was working on Jarry translations at this time.
Frank O'Hara also spoke with much praise. This is not to butter you up only to pass on the joy.

Say Hebrew prayers that M 3 will make it — that I will. It will be a great issue with an Olson Max, and photographs of a burlesque lady I know, etc.

I think the phrase I wrote to you will be printed in capitals on the cover. #2’s cover shit. I wanted small M-backwards but no other mistakes in entire issue. All your letter fancies retained and I do believe the labor was worth it, yours & mine. How I wd. love to see you and Helene and Fred, etc. I hope all is well & warm with you. I wish I could come thru with Measure quick the way it shd. be, but I cannot even come thru with a dollar bill. Miracle sent 10 — and I hope she does not think I’m selling books. Whatever, I sent her 2 copies of II by mistake, etc and her name will appear printed in 4 issues beg. with #3. Why dont you write and give particulars —

Basil & Martha married return East late April
(reminds me he owes me $2.00)

Tom Field has a roommate, Dana Durkee.
Jerry van de Wiele plans permanent move here. Creeley here for Easter vacation & gave beautiful reading at the Dunn’s flop. Lorraine to Mexico with new man, John Barrows, ex-bartender at the Place, and Claude also.
Harvey home in Sta. Monica.

It is dawn again.
I return poems I do not want to use, and there is no sense in sending more until after 3 is done. The ones previously accepted still go. Patience, I will make it. And I would like you in 4 — maybe with a surprise like the birds. Or just 3 or so sharp poems. We’ll keep the idea going that you’re a sharp cookie.

#5 I figure as a Domestic Scene
So if Helene could say turn out 2 pages of children fare and the kid’s drawings (their own).

#6 I think will be letters from contributors only. Please keep faith in me so I can keep it in myself. Let me know if I should send a couple of Measure to people or rather just their addresses & I will mail from here. Also write if I dont. That is when I need same most.

Always, in love?
with much of it
to you two always
John

Can you imagine it without the Fireman after 5 years and with small pain (yet)

Alright, I changed my mind on this. I guess there was so little of you, I got anxious. Very proud of the birds as time goes by.
Dear Paul Blackburn:

I hope you can understand the delay in writing you. I have wanted to, but it being such a hassle here, the move West, still without a job, etc. that to make a day was about all I could. Still, things being worse, I say, make it, as if you had it made. I send Measure I and II under separate cover, I am not sure if I did not send II before, you can sell it, if so.

I have read your work ever since my beginning, three years ago this week at Black Mountain, and so it is a pleasure to print in the next issue: M A L A G A, How to Sublet an Apt…, and Alameda. Creeley wrote that he wanted The Encounter, and so I send it onto him. I hope that is acceptable to you.

I imagine what moves me here is the scene one can make. That all eyes are on you, that all is public, and of no value to them, unless in community, readings, books, posters, that I am swept into this, for it destroys the other reality. Whereas in Boston, no one is known, we do not share in person, that is why Measure had such impetus there, came from a necessity, while here, so much of its intent is accomplished, that I find it hard to push to the work.

Enough intro-spects. Three will go soon, and will be of a good order. A 5 page Olson, photos, oh the whole scene from Helen Adam to Phillip Whalen.

I guess there is no more but that it’s Good Friday, and I have been up all night, sending back poems, and that it is pleasure to keep some. Duncan has moved to Stinson Beach, so the 2nd raters are taking over with more force than before. Whatever, it is good to be here, and I will stay another year, if I can.

Creeley was here this week and gave a private reading at the Dunn’s which was a WOW, and even he was confident, at least sure of what had been done. I hope maybe you can write and give me some of your scene, and maybe we can keep some contact. Whatever, know how pleased I am to have the poems, and wish I could pay you, and return it somehow. It is strange to think of you on East 55; I dont imagine you dig it much, but there are kicks from a city, where else offers them. What they are, I have no idea, but to walk through a field and Central Park proves it, a motor that begins to pick up, or run down. I look forward to hearing again, if you can. But feel no obligation.

Best to you,

John

John Wieners

P O Box 2174
San Francisco 26,

I return the 1st version of MALAGA
Larry Eigner  
4.4.58  
[San Francisco]  

Dear Larry:  

There is no possible way to explain my silence, except to say that the move West was such a hassle that I still am without a job, a place to live, and sell Measure in the bars. I can say that it was procrastination that kept me from writing you to replace the manuscripts lost.  

And when a week went by, each day I believed would be the one that I would send off Number Two on, and it seemed that it was too late to write for the replacements. Three will contain “a city cruel and dark” also the Review of City Lights, and Four, if you still want it will go as we planned. There is no way to defend any of this, my sloppy handling of other person’s interests, but I try to do better, and of course never do, never will. Can you put up with it? Your letters are read with pleasure, and looked for, and if I cannot answer them, I ask you to understand. I will write as soon as something breaks, economically.  

Sincerely,  
John Wieners  

Charles Olson  
4.8.58  
[San Francisco]  

Dear Charles:  

Just a little packet that I got ready for you. With today’s entry included. ‘O Walt h’aint I had a seige’  

I hope all is well with you and that spring takes the plastic sheets off your windows too. There is none here, as you know. Ie. Spring. But plenty plastic sheets, one right now in my stomach that we wait to pass.  

What is it that you wish to call the ‘Descartes:’ simply “From the Maximus Poems” or is there a number? Don’t feel any obligation to answer the enclosed. I just want you to see.  

Red Fred’s Piano I like, for how the form enhances it. The Tea Reverie, etc is from last summer – sometime.  

I just discovered it. Also Spring 1957 I am not sure whether you ever saw. Whatever, the practice in both of them, is not my practice now. There should be a break-through someplace for me, but I don’t see any. But I mustn’t strain, as Marianne Moore, says.  

I plan to stay here for another year, and fight it out, the economy, etc. And have up to FOUR of Measure printed before I return. Three will be flashy, and your Descartes is the real substance of same. I am afraid that the remainder of the contents are mostly tedious ?  

---  

41 This “Descartes poem” became “Stiffening, in the Master Founders’ Wills” in The Maximus Poems. It begins with the observation that Rene Descartes, father of the cogito ergo sum and with it the modern philosophical subject, was thirty-four years old when the Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded in 1630, bringing together the two trans-Atlantic events into one moment in the history of civilization.
Whatever, there is a great deal of variety, but mostly lament, in the issue.

Contents as of now: to repeat myself, but also to show what’s new.

PART ONE – A CITY SURVEY
Alameda – Paul Blackburn
A strange new cottage in Berkeley – A Ginsberg
Epiphany – Wieners
Fairbanks – John Haines
Descartes – Charles Olson
Harangue from Newport – Phillip Whalen
The Washington Market
“I think we rich should get down on our knees
and thank God we have money”

from San Francisco Blues – Jack Kerouac
Seattle – A Ginsberg
Venice – Stuart Z Perkoff

PART TWO
HELEN ADAM : Anise si taorg (Great Diana)
PAUL BLACKBURN : How to sublet an apartment
GAEL TURNBULL : You, there (at the corner
PABLO PICASSO : Poem, trans. by Charles Guenther
EDWARD DORN : The fair relief

The girls in the bank (2 short poems
LARRY EIGNER: cruel and dark, the city
WILLIAM FLEMING: Night piece (scenario for a Australian MAN from EDEE
JESS COLLINS: Tricky cad collages
Dream (a literary one) – editor
ROBERT DUNCAN: A poem of despondencies
LOUIS GINSBERG: Still Life
JOANNE KYGER: Miss Kids
MICHAEL McCLURE: Hymns to Geryon
WILLIAM LEE: Fragment of a blue movie (prose – the Burroughs junk.
HARVEY HARMON: We’ll sit on it, Bunk 4 lines
JONATHAN WILLIAMS Gay cat rides again (review of Catullus trans.)
MM A photograph
RAYMOND SOUSTER: The dark lady
JENNIFER: A photograph
LARRY EIGNER: A slumped woman
PHILLIP WHALEN: Take #4 on 12: VIII: 57

64 pages.

Oh well. I guess without a purpose behind a magazine, without that drive, viz.
Pound and all that he could do, 64 pages that was needed to be done, what can one do? What is one doing it for? The Partisan Review and Everetc. and Poetry is handling the

42 William T. Fleming (b. 1928), Australian poet, translator, and editor who was a close associate of Noel Stock, editor of the Australian literary magazine Edge, from 1953 to 1957. He translated the work of Sappho and Catullus.
Avantguardians, so where does the supposedly avants like Measure and Black Mountain Review get its forces? 

SIMPLY in poems like Descartes, which they would not handle? 

Would they?

It’s too soon to say whether there is going to be a permanent market for what before had none, for what even 18 months ago had none. Now, I'M on the front cover of the Chicago Review, and why?

I would guess it is a time to beware of. The too ready acceptance of what already has turned too many into the second-rate. Hold ground, something says to me, hold off.

Yours is a fine poem for telling us that.

And I am grateful as always 

for knowing I am in your ear.

Until soon

With love John

4.12

Looking over the enclosed 

I see what a heap of Fancy Dan work most of it is, with very notmuch substance. Also that my attentions are slack, I AM distended, and scattered; but I send it.

“A tea-reverie” etc. 

It’s 

man who is on hand for the sound/ Louie’s. Or 

the note/ in time with 

time or the tune 

against it/ his upper back & taut arm 

expose the plan that USE is made when 

man’s after a limit

A high fly toward leftfield well/Williams 

out under it 

and is he? 

going 

yeah for the fence/over & 

(dont hit it 

comes up smelling like a rose is a 

man on hand 

for the sound. The note/ in time 

with 

time. Or the tune Louie’s 

White personnel strictly verboten 

to business in fraternize with or

43 “‘A tea-reverie,’ etc.”
any way give aid or comfort/ in any way receive some of: those who wear the center’s fire
the pinned eyeball

A coiled black sun
strikes/a spike bolt upright

A jagged wall
of smooth stones/you can slip
off so easy. There’s a war ON:
This means
YOU white man Keep out of center
II
Where they pass commerce thrives/man also/woman and not from suck jobs

oh doublebed Panthers.

Like it’s Christmas every day
in Rimbaud’s territory.
buildings rise in line with planted trees
chestnuts gathered. All into Use

Waste not Want
is a different matter.
Desire is of the center
and the man when he sticks his
foot into a bookrest and juggles the leather butterfly chair he was balancing in the air the pots pour water and vine, it’s then I said, “You look like of Laurel and Hardy”

Again Le fou jungle junky-palace at cliff’s edge. That I am sick knowing nothing’s invented.

Art Blake-
“he’s a spy from another tribe,” his drums pinwheel

into bouncing slivers of faint color,
that could be morning’s rather it’s pot. When I said, Rainbows; he said, It’s rainy like. As I said, back to image of junk man poet hung up in middle of room his our at his ass

a stinking poodle. Puddles in leather chair (Butterfly) catches water/Greek vase, and two measly green vines. What the dove did. Poised for an instant

An icepick

sticks from a nailkeg.
He was wearing no shirt. Thus the muscle
of interest. Mustard corduroy pants hang/just on his hip
he is man on the vine
swinging
from left foot held in a gold book of the month rest.

III
Sun holds in its fire atom
the pinned pupil. Smallest of all. Where no
color is. The two:
The fix: in shift constant
is one of flux. The finis is when you get
hooked on either:
gold luxuries a hazard around the house

D W Griffith invented the Iris Shot for the Birth of a Nation now arising in those men Carry it in the eye
of our descendants bear it
at their ultimate needleheads

The first spike
of light this race shall be One/against 100
lesser vigils passed down dark A D’s to come,
to give light
and ground, the black
earth,
for
men: Louie’s

Not the shouter
Mahalia, etc.

A post (mortem) modern
arm strong/back to
what holds him from falling? the windows aint open
that wide and- his rib cage is visible
undernourished and distended
the window aint.

Nor do we care for the Condon’s, smooth able
way to play like everybody else: a treasury of OK

Given, he’s safe his foot caught

---

44 In his racist silent film masterpiece Birth of a Nation (1915, originally titled The Clansman),
director D.W. Griffith employs “the iris shot” – a black mask with a hole is placed over the
camera, acting as a zoom or spotlighting mechanism to direct the viewer’s attention or
heighten the melodrama.
the maker of man’s first breed, held at the brink
The cage cannot be broken open – the sideshow’s
inside the poem. I aint gonna axe up my life for a 100 lines

There’s those cases
the hooked who believe
(blind like I was to
what’s on/inside of
self:
A flux is the fix.
despite
the Mothers/pushers grind
to bits

many
fall
for its
chaos,
they echo
how their word puts a cost on chaos.
Rocks and seaweed, etc. We are
the rock.
The P G baby
makes a hit, a vein left to shoot in gold
that comes out shit. But it is not b. & w. (black and white)
backwash – his and her
tail swinging how cool
at sea.
That the one split that the flux is always
that to be in flux is two, always the hetero
the fix is one stuck
what we were once, the homo one
split
into flux containing his, her, me and you

Inseparable,
one nation,
of
outfielders who dig the ground.
Built for the fence.

Take
into account
the straining for the heterogenous or
taking as lead /Bix again
we are separate (plays)

when all returns to
the structure of
energy welds us
The first rain this summer sounds.

Jan puts the plants out

“To know more than sunup”/

What Fou her husband in khaki

and striped shirt knows

I know somehow now knowledge slides away like sheets of paper this fly ball

The poem does pull us corridors we find every corner brings a new tone/shade of a

Day’s night and day. A summer.

But no rain Today

back in the same (Chair) when the horns blew: NIGHT

I had to sleep two hours in the hall before anyone opened up and I got

Rest junk man the soles of your feet (dirty all day beating the fuzz

like what makes Lady’s coat tie in knots/the mind’s fuzz will hang you up

When all is open and tigers fall as gently through brush as his hands that night over the Miles,

Rest, bearded head, the
keg of nails is pinned
or was by a screwdriver/ice pick
you found on junk. The blue light
the dead carry down with them of life
   and what is buried at sun’s center is
also blue what hangs above my eye on
blue velvet/protected from the wall/paper
   The blue jewel. The
earring a junk man wears in his eye
hornmen carry
   and a few who steal
   the light off both. These last
necessary players
to [illeg – spear?] homeruns, etc
poems.

25 Ridgeway Lane

Spring 1956

Wind stirs up ivy
roots underground
sound
in my ear, this is the time
of year new ghosts try out.

Ha I heard that song before
on Hancock Street Christ
they even came upstairs and
yelled down the banisters
Lady be good God
   my doors wouldn't lock.
I'd crawl in late under the newspaper
   sheets and hear them
   sticking
   long tongues like elm switches
under the baseboard where
   the wood work warped.

I had the bed built up so
   in the morning
I'd step over souvenirs of what
   we'd all been out doing
   the night before.

Dont bother to

45 “Spring 1956” was published in the fourth issue of *Yugen*, edited by LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and Hettie Cohen, in 1959.
show me the marks
on your arms.

Spring 1957
Wieners

**A poem** for the beer at Bermans

The man with a black patch over his eye
stares up from the kitchen table
on top, with 4 beer bottles, 3
empties.

Guess who? mixes marijuana and Shirley says
the door’s open down stairs.

It is to April 12 – an afternoon
where I progressively get attached to
Stimulants

Why?
to hear the word, to have the terror

1898, she says looking in the mirror.

She sponges her face with a pink towel.
Sweet the smell in the suburb kitchen.
Soft the twitches he manipulates
his knees.

She rubs skin cream on her nose.
I get matches to light my poke
and see her silverings on the shelf.

She hands me a framed poem
titled: **A week without you**.
It has been three and
there is little pain
Billie Holiday turns it on, her eye
lids are painted black grease.

My hand hits a glass bowl
that rings church bells

holds two hard boiled eggs
chimes again
 painted black water color and
green with sequin patterns.

He puts on
JJ Johnson and Kai Winding
she hums the drum roll.
I have it all at my fingerends, the
mustard, ashtray, wax –

---

46 “A Poem for the Beer at Bermans”
She starts a story. Later
leaves the room in shades, looking, she says like an owl.

Recant : Later

I cant help it if you dont believe, if
          you eye me with a black eye,
          my eyes are not lies, but that you look for a scene
I make one.

Outside the poem. Dont my poems
move in honest feet demanding me more than the false swagger of
human hips.

There is a space between yours wherever you walk.
I am hid by hedges overhead from your view.
    I am in plain sight.

4.12.

This. 47
I force myself, to make use
    of this pain
    on the inside cover of the poems
    of Hart Crane.
I sit in the back of the Potrero Bus
    It blocks my stomach
on the way to the San Francisco Hospital
    Fight through it in the sun
    on the day after
    Easter, 1958

It does not get easier as
    we get older

I have swallowed my teeth and
negro girls get on
    chewing gum
    flashing their pearlies

    I nearly throw up
The bus stops every corner
    Women shoppers one in
    a white hood
    get off. The Hyde Line is next
I write between jerks when I stare
    vacantly out

47 “This.”
the window at school boys or
what were they
waiting for a bus
outside the State House
I do not wish I was any place
else since this is mine.

We will never get there
carry me off in your shopping
bag big black nigger buck,
hold me in your arms
woman with a red beret,
   your pockets street corner bums
someplace where they’ll hear me,

Dana says they’ll turn me
upside down and haul it out

Inside-outside Olson says
we can be in the 20th century

As of yet, my words, my teeth
   are locked in
and cause great pain –

The bus empties
   by Bryant Avenue
I nearly puke 16th
   Street.

   6 more and you’re
   there, knights of
pain, watch over, let the
dues be not too bad,
junks on withdrawal
I know your names and
   use them as angels
in the war we are
   thrown in.
Ah, catch the high chivalry step, hop-heads of the U S! White Horsemens, who ride on white horses, the junk brigade! They, for their bread in the habit that hustles them All, make a sweet score on Fillmore through night's parade!

These out the closets of life, the pentup house of death Swept, and they woke five flights higher at morning hooked: They saw with pinned eyes, and played cool about the scene, They put horns to work with works to lay tracks from God.

Now wherever their connection is, with it they are:
White Horsemens, who ride on white horses, oh too far out!
They ride, where the Blue Fuzz of Lexington whispers bust, White Horsemens, still swinging after their final fix!

Jwieners – 4.58

Ah, see the fair chivalry come, the companions of Christ!
White Horsemens, who ride on white horses, the Knights of God!
They, for their Lord and their lovers who sacrificed All, save the sweetness of treading where He first trod!

These through the darkness of death, the dominion of night Swept, and they woke in white places at [illeg – mooning?] tide:
They saw with their eyes, and sang for joy of the sight, They saw with their eyes the Eyes of the crucified.

Now whithersoever He goeth, with Him they go:
White Horsemens, who ride on white horses, oh fair to see! They ride, where the Rivers of Paradise flash and flow, White Horsemens, with Christ their Captain; for ever He!

L. Johnson

Oh when the saints 49

Do you know what terror is?

Terror is a pleasure in the morning
to see in a mirror one minute and not know who you are.

48 “TE MARTYRIUM CANDIDATUE”
49 “Oh When the Saints”
Nose pores exude
grease, two voices growl
  in the waste regions
  beneath the belt.
Up since Friday I
await wings on the
  window. Death drops
nearer each swallow.
  This short story.
  (for Jack Spicer
  Now
come to an end,
begin the poem.

Beautiful hands tremble
  because they are
Men grow beards to save face, the
  shine of (call it
  silk) still shows, through.
That flesh stretched yellow
  keeps the feel of
  the skin of a
  green apple
  bruises,
easily
I mean the light at the head of the hall
  has a dead bulb
and warm heaps in the corner
  under covers
a form of warm breath in an empty bed.
The fool with his earful of human voices says:
  Listen to the
  mocking bird, how long ago? The
unreal smoke circles the right shoulder
  Bony fingers
  poke at the left
  hip I switch on
  Boston
tune in again
  see you soon
  as of old
The illuminated heads pay dues for light
  cord that uncoils
to a snake
Whose foot springs creak down the hall of
  my intestines
  to my tongue
burst with thorns

Terror that
will not pass: it
rises and turns
yellow my blood

poison streams we point at shooting
up the night

The sun
sets a rich budded rose down the throat
returns as
orange blossoms at dawn
(oh Garden City
that it is your leaves
I have to steal
and sell second hand in
The Discovery
that terror knows nothing of

SF
3.58

red Fred’s piano
low
down and dirty I sit
having found the connection
Eddy and Taylor

to
day they reprint Cocteau’s
Diary of a cure I am
hooked and you are sick

of my self, my eye
sees my

I
rene Taverner sit down
in front of me The gimp of
Love Oh this is the

place
fifteen forty six Grant

50 “red Fred’s piano” is unpublished. In 707 Scott Street, Wieners mentions “sitting here, swaying / to Red Fred’s piano” (26).
Ave how could anyone tell
you Bass Piano and

I
am the drum Skin you can
swing from the rafters nearly
on the nod make soft

sound
to put in place of this
thick instant There are so few
left for you for me

bereft of that Love
the gimp

3.58
SF

Delauney wrote on the back of his Simultaneous Windows: “This document had to be returned to a poet” and he gave it to one, Jean Cassou. When Apollonaire saw the painting, he wrote Les Fenetres. Now how do I come to the windows? They open by themselves, I look out of both or many for my own: and see each color in his painting is a place: and each line in the poem is a poem, entire to itself, a sound and an end in itself. Without periods. There are no connections. And yet look how each one of us is hooked.

George Washington Day
2. 22. 58

The Windows

First seen by Apollonaire.

From red to green all the yellow runs
When they sing ARISE through the national forest
A bat is pinned in a tree
This is a poem for birds with only one wing
We cannot take calls by telephone
Terror is a giant

Jean Cassou (1897-1986), French art critic, writer, peace activist, and French Resistance fighter during World War II. Robert (1885-1941) and Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) were French artists who together forged the modernist painting style Guillaume Apollinaire would label “Orphism” for its abstractly felt evocation of color, for using color as song; in his own poems Apollinaire had called out for a poetry that contained the “voice of light.” In 1912 Apollinaire wrote “Les Fenetres” (“The Windows”) as a catalogue preface for a Robert Delaunay show featuring the latter’s paintings of the same name, ekphrastically illuminating their Orphic art: “The windows open like an orange / the lovely fruit of light.”
It is the color of your eyes
See our lady plays with all those dead Tunisians
The poor young man munches on his own white tie
You sit a naked cool rider
And now watch the window open by itself
Arranged with their hands tissue of light
Beauty paler than manila violets
We transplant in vain what cannot blossom
I shall cut out this minute
When you have the time you have life time
Oldqueen Lotte keeps time by sundials but her Shadow knows the score
An old pair of yellow slippers before the window
Towers
The towers settle on the street
Pits
Pits open every place
Pits
Southern trees bear crepe to bury the vagabonds
Shoehorns fit the soul for dying
In Shoeboxes painted maroon
And the reed WHA-WHAS through trumpets up north
Where the strippers off stage
Sell their skin cheaper than ice
Tinkling like a diamond
Vancouver
Where the train bulges from negroes and snow balls all winter
O Paris
From red to green all the yellow runs
Paris Vancouver Hyannis Marblehead New York and the Antilles
The window opens itself as an orange
Bowl of fruit full of light

Wieners

Second flight across country\textsuperscript{52}

into the dark California night, my pursuers not ended
I write small so they can not read
over my shoulder

Not yet are we set free.

They dress up a girl in red as their decoy, they play
with the hands of her doll. They
are the two Japanese beside me who do not

\textsuperscript{52} “Second Flight Across Country”
speak English. I hear them whispering. They set a
workman to fish my leg for contraband.
They leave
a PG smell
behind them
I maintain control and
manage my affairs
despite them, they spot me
by my eyeballs, and cane.

Still I am not afraid
if death is all

they have left

You
have put words in my mouth, where there was only dirt.
You have filled my body, how cocks could not do it.
You gave me music and strength, when I was dead
to the world. You withhold your own image.

No worship is due, or fee
(The pilot’s open hand passes up the aisle)
No want of charity, nor use
of its key, locking locked doors,
this prayer wastes words

since drought and torrent
are both your arms, harvest is your hair
and detectives the vermin in it.

There is no breaking without your strings.
No whispering without your organ behind it.

Death comes to the heart
a new lust through the dark

the stewardess stares at
and the Jap says: He’s on

and I am
to land. We do in
Chicago. With no papers
I see myself off
arm in arm with the girl in red, after
her bosses will fly no more.

(on the plane here)
Robert Greene  
4.9.58  
[San Francisco]

Dear Robert:

I am sitting in a cool place in San Francisco, across the room sat a beautiful girl in a red dress, a far out red dress, and her eyes are painted halfway black, and by time this part of the sentence is written, she gone with Ruth Weiss to a place called the Copy Cat, for Wed. nite is Ladies nite & beer is 05¢ a glass. This are new friends here, without Dana, who is an old friend lost, but there shall be mourning in the house, sayeth Electra as the blood flowed red on the drapes, I live with this kindly girl until I can find a job and I enclose something also that I wrote to you, and I wish that I could write to Veronique because I think of her often, but why can’t just break through and explain that I, when I got the translations felt that this was not the time to use the space – in fuck/simply to say that I wanted poems, more.

I see Measure in the bars, and I babysit for the Bermans and Joanne is my hostess.

and what more can I say but that I just took a long walk down Fillmore and the uphills were all down hill and where the hell is Bill Lewis and there is much action in San Francisco, and I am sure you must have Measure II by now, I hope and that you write re same. Luman Drake has written and sends news. He is some army man’s secretary in Pittsburgh, Pa. and Jamie teaches in Laconia N H, and Terry Dewsnap is studying for PHD with wife in Univ of Washington, she in University of Wash Cafeteria as waitress – and on, so on I am on and cannot go on with this tonight, being a night with a stone pot around tits neck, me stoned

Love and write as often as you feel it, and at least with you and Veronique in Boston, at Cafe Expresso on Charles street, across from the Little Playhouse there, the Brunswick torn down, and the S S Pierce Building, and where could one go there. What was left but the alleys to go up. I will be with you Christmas, forced to write that, which you so suavely refrained from, quoting bad poetry.

Love to you and Veronique

John

Love to I mean, the temporary address is c/o Joanne Kyger

949 Columbus Ave   #3

Robert Greene  
Saturday   April 12  1958  
[San Francisco]

Dearest Bob:

I sit in the AM sun, having been up all night. And think about you often. What news can I tell you? In/ or rather until Christmas 1958, when we shall have that drink. I sent Measure off to you, et Veronique, etc. Thanks for the address.
Dana and I are split, and I feel good. His address in case you care to write:
509 Buchanan Street, SF
while mine shall be with the Lady’s for a little while longer. It is a temporary thing until I can get a job etc. But we both enjoy it.

I am not a good one on letters, for I never seem to answer, but only write my own, so forgive? Your letters fill me with a pleasure, that no other give. For it is a dream true, Europe for you, and to hear you speak about the places been etc. makes me feel very proud, that I somehow manage to be about my self, too, for the same reason, that we both are in process of making the dream or the talk in 1950 the reality of 1958, no matter how unpleasant at times that too is part of it, that this is what we have chosen, and that you gotta pay dues for it, but there also can be pride, and pleasure in the action taken, and the pleasure we can give to the others, in our contact, or it.

Whatever, I send the enclosed, as it was written to you. Write about Measure.
Whatever, write, as you can, it is most important. They come that way to me.
I type this as I wrote it down. (On narrow paper).

I am sitting in the 6th Army Base of the Presidio. Gertrude Lawrence has stopped singing on the radio on the table in front of me. This is [redacted on ms.]
new. I was merely existing. I dont know if I am heaven or hell bound.
This is new. I am hurled up to a world I never knew and this is new. This is April 1st, 3 years from the day I arrived at Black Mountain, 2 years from when I left Dana and began work at Harvard from the room on Hancock Street.
1 year from Harvard when Measure was in the works and now I am here and Gertrude Lawrence
4 years from when
I wrote the poem
in the Stylus on
the bench in
Boston Common has
returned as they
all return to
us,\textsuperscript{53} as we are
pledged to return
to them.

I cant believe that
Blue is dead.

It is the score of
Lady in the Dark –
Christ is and
I am waiting to
apply for
a job in the Army
Library, writing
this in a cafeteria
crowded with
75-100 workers
from the Letterman
Hospital.

Tuesday of
Holy Week and
now Jenny’s
lit the candles
and threw the
tapers away,
and I steal away
before this
song ends.

PS: 4.12.
And 59 years from when my
grandfather enlisted in the
infantry and served at
the Presidio of San
Francisco, March 28\textsuperscript{th}
1899 I find
out this morning

\textit{So? love}
\textit{John}

\textsuperscript{53}It is unclear how the poem had “returned” to him, but Greene worked on \textit{The Stylus} with him at Black Mountain, and so had probably sent a copy of Wieners’ poem “Ode on a Common Fountain” from 1954, which Wieners had written in Boston Common, and which would be the lead poem for his first full-length collection, 1964’s \textit{Ace of Pentacles}.
Robin Blaser

4.12.58

[San Francisco]

Dear Robin:

This will be very short, only to acknowledge your letter, and efforts for Measure, and also to give my delight over Evergreen Review. I think it is the perfect back-support to your poem in Measure, at least, stature-wise. When I read Blake tonight, the Crystal Cabinet and Mary, I got such a strong feeling of your poem, that I see how Olson was tracking you down to be this formal, as Blake is, The Chimney Sweep Dream, contains your images, and even the leaves you carry in your arms, are straws from the brooms, or those ones that herons pick at, on the edge of the ice, frozen in the Charles. Whatever, do look at Blake and I would write as simple as a child, in the most unskilled manner, and forms possible. How delightful it would be to have a quatrain back again.

Audience also carries a good advertisement for M. I wonder whether you need more copies. It often these past few weeks, been my sole means of support, selling it in the bars, etc. So if you can push a few more copies, it would be most…

I realize I forced same on you, without warning, and do not worry if the Book Clearing House is too far, or if you would rather not pick up returns. On a postcard, tell me how the town is covered, Namely: number of copies left at each shop. If none left, then I can mail from here: Give out my address to any who want it, and cannot buy same:

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and make sure that Tom gets one, with love, and that Steve, also. If any of this is out of your time, or takes too much of it, then dont hesitate to write; and I can easily handle same from here.

It has been a good season, career-wise for us both. Dana and I are definitely split, and I have not seen him in three weeks. I stay with a lovely poet-girl named Joanne Kyger, until I get a job? She works at City of Paris*Brentano’s Books and has a lovely strength with images, that you would be pleased with. She lives too much, and that makes her easy to live with, for me.

I am going to stay here for a while yet. Have been to Berkeley, and plan to go to Library School, next fall. Would you advise here? when you can. I imagine, there is nothing to say, but that I choose you as one of my references. OK. Will do, later.

Never see Duncan, as he is far removed from us, and does not attend Sunday afternoons, any longer. He was present at Perkoff’s reading, and then of course, Creeley’s, which you must know of. All my confidence in Creeley was restored, and I am sure you would agree, if you heard same. “The second half of the 20th century”. Spicer, often, in the bars, etc, I see.
At 11 in the morning, this morning, I meet McClure, and I am not looking forward to same. He does not offer much, of himself, but then this Wally Berman, and his wife Shirley! He edits a beautiful hand printed, collated, and made magazine called SEMINA, the absolute of the century. The contents are secondary, but the fact of the magazine, the way of it, are stunning. Photographs, and each poem has a different type-face.

Oh, I will show it to you next Christmas,

I have a few exchanges with Jennifer, who is in Toronto, and even one from Alan. I hope all is well. I am most honest, even tho I have a perfect stick-up plan, which wont be carried out.

The town is active, and I barely keep pace. I believe I gave Rumaker’s address: for another week, anyway.

c/o Glenn Lewis
(oh I gave it to you).

The apartment here is lovely, small, with gold phone, and painted violet and tangerine doors, painted vases in the crannies, and vines and even a tree, with a little dog that right above floor in a shadowy corner pisses gold piss.

Do write and give me your right hand that way. I envy you spring.

Love to you and Jim
John

temporary: c/o Joanne Kyger
949 Columbus Ave #3

Joanne Kyger
[May 1958]
[San Francisco]

There is too much to tell you all at once. Anyway I am playing mute like Sheila for the day. 1) I could not find ear plugs, although I tried various devices but none fit. Mike Nathan’s Painting I took to the Coffee Gallery, the middle of last week, and it hangs on the wall opposite the coffee maker. Paul was afraid to put it in the window. The house is immaculate. And no one has been in it, since that night, not even Jerome, who has been at Ryan’s, pleading he has no place else to stay. You received a new record from Columbia called: OH KAY. It is terrible.

The TWINK book is a gift from Shig at City Lights, rather when I told him you owned Twink, he sent along this one. Vincent McHugh per Shig extends his sympathies.

---

54 Shigeyoshi “Shig” Murao (1926-1999), American publisher at the center of the City Lights-North Beach universe. Manager of City Lights Books for its first 22 years, he was the clerk who sold Howl to two undercover police officers on June 3, 1957, a trap that launched the famed obscenity trial. Vincent McHugh (1904-1983), American poet and novelist who testified for the defense in the trial, swearing to Howl’s literary merit.
I am not going to the Poet’s Follies Sunday, rather to the Contemporary Dancers to see 3 Films of Larry Jourdan, and hear Lamantia read. Jourdan gave me free coupon, so I traded in my Poet’s Follies, ticket.
Shig thought I was pulling a con fast dollar switch.
Linda was on the scene last night, panting after Harvey, etc. Ebbe sat most of the night with Spicer.
While at our table was Ryan, Harvey, Dory Dull and Harold, Beverly, Don Sherwood, (a nigger actor) Paddy, new barkeep at the Place, from England, Already Nemi pants after him, and various passers-by. No sign of Didier.

I hope S. Dabney has good, at least warm news. And I missed you last night at the bar, when it was quiet, and I knew if you were around, it would not, be.

The Bermans go to Sausalito for the weekend, and I am getting my hair cut tomorrow at Bob Levigne’s and bringing over a painting of Jerome’s with his permission (Martha Seider?) as Levigne is CERTAIN he can sell one. He has seen J M’s work, and is very encouraging.

PLEASE DESTROY this as you finish. Like in the spy-films, or eat it.
I begin now to walk to Sacramento, as I am very frugal and have a transfer I can use once I get there.
The McClures and L J leave this weekend for Mexico.

Jennifer will soon be amidst us.

Love,
Miss Pip

---

55 From 1955 to 1958, a group of locals staged the “Poets’ Follies,” with a jazz band and performances by organizers Kenneth Rexroth, Michael McClure, James Broughton, and others. The Follies in 1958 were held on Sunday, May 11. Larry Jordan (b. 1934) is an American avant-garde filmmaker who has lived and worked in the Bay Area since 1955.
56 Robert LaVigne (b. 1928), American artist and theatrical set designer long associated with the San Francisco Beats and avant-garde communities. He was the art director for Auerhahn Press, and drew Wieners’ portrait for The Hotel Wentley Poems in 1958. Those poems were written while Wieners stayed with LaVigne at the titular hotel, writing while LaVigne drew.
Michael Rumaker  
[May 1958]  
[San Francisco]  

A poem for the dead I know\(^{57}\)

Gather the voices, forces I have forgotten  


to find those graves I forget how  
to come back to  

DAVID ASPELIN  
died at 16

put a rifle in his mouth, and laid across his bed at night.  

After he held my hand on the way home and said  

I will be dead tomorrow.  

I see his grave and its pink quartz stone.

And my uncle JOHN  
LAFFAN, who I was named after, told me on Christmas  
I wont be here next year  
and died last week 13 years to the day after his mother  
May 13\(^{\text{th}}\).  
And the blue eyed girl across  
the room from me will die. He came home my uncle John  
to die in my mother’s house, as her mother did  
in the same bed, I see her  
& RICHARD TWARDZIK, over-dosed in Paris.

I mourn none of them.  
I want no one to return, boys and girls who I have known,  
none  
to come back and deck the Coit Tower in American flags,  
pin flowers in the market windows, we are wrapped  
in the gloves of God.

Gone for good  
the living and the dead, David and John  
down, and what about the ones who walk above the ground  
where are they? where are my lovers  
turned to dust, settling down on bar stools.  
They sift through the streets of San Francisco.

I feel their hands, I know his mouth as my own,  
I want him as I want my own body on me.  
Her legs to warm my waist.  

\(^{57}\) “A Poem for the Dead I Know” was published in the “Uncollected Poems” section of Wiener’s 1984 *Selected Poems* (Black Sparrow Press). Richard Twardzik (1931-1955) was a bebop pianist born in Danvers, Massachusetts, who fatally overdosed on heroin while touring with Chet Baker in Paris.
They walk through other rooms,
their desire wails on the face of the full moon,
their pricks rise and make flowers, their hands
masturbate for May rain, and leave me marching
dead arms around my back and stupid tears down
the cheeks of my dying face
I hear their voices on the radio.

II
I sit now 4 flights above Fillmore Street.
The dead are far away.
Underground.
Only the staggering woman in a red coat
Rises. We are all Lazarus
And carry our dead friends with us.

Come up.
Above the telephone wires (if I fell on them
I would have a home tonight.
I would know where I’m going

. . as the houses fill the hills
as the humans the front seat of their autos
as the negro on the stairs of 2325
as the birds their blue fields . .

Green trees,
Green trees give forth the love of my old man
Neon lights give up the color of a Boston dawn
There is no death they tell me.
I am on the roof who does not dare to find them out.

III
Dead, be done with them.

How many have I know? have I counted
as my own. Oh does your flesh sit
on your bones, after these hundred years?

Love, be gone with it.

How many heads have I had under mine?
Strange mattresses for our mistakes.
Does it matter? The quick mating,
The meeting in public gardens.

Moon, be cool to night.
How many thighs opened at my hands?
Are your hands still under ground.
Grass, be green on their sunken graves.


Michael Rumaker
5.30.58
[San Francisco]

Dear Michael:
No particular reason why I have not written, except my own personal hassle of living in a different place every week, sometimes every night that causes me to delay in writing you. Delay. Whatever, enclosed find poem, yesterday written at McClure’s, just returned from Mexico. Hating it. Things are breaking for me I think, whatever each day has been filled with such ample rewards, that I can never feel poor or without resources.

The poem is as it was written, so there are places I would most appreciate your word on it, altho i know the hassle you must be/ tied to another job. Forgive the bitchy unconscious, as I want a job myself. If I only could make up my mind to cut my hair.

Then again, do feel free to write whatever. Your letters mean so much, a tie to former security, that I relish them. This is the only one of 50 waiting to be answered, I answer. Except to my Mother this afternoon. I still have The Book of yours and Duncan, also, the Secret of the Golden Flow. And Will mail as soon, as I can.

Pray for me, for us all, I think of you often, and sometimes wonder, how far a field I am, and become afraid, of those forces driving me. They sometimes mask as angels.

Are undercovermen, and we do not know we are going to be busted, until the gates are locked. Whatever, my means are legitimate, and my way of life, so I should not worry/ of the law/

but the other Law, which last night in a dream, showed me on the banks of a deep brown, muddy hill, with railroad, and highway trestles overhead, and as we descended (I forget those with me) we found more dolls in the mud, and the trestles crossed over our heads, and we were warned away, but the thought that we were unearthing treasures from lost and earthly kingdoms forced me. I remember picking up one doll, in the mudd, and seeing its painted face, and plaster hair around the face, black, and there was a red plaster jacket on it, too. Brown like the skin of a Gauguin native, and the trestles, were brown, sandly, with the grains of sand still showing in the cement.

Ah asphalt/

Enuf, baby/ do write. Lady Field still out to sea/ Dana still on barstools. I saw, sought him out two nights ago, and we talked, I cried. Puked, etc/ Duncan, still on Stinson Beach. Tell me about Tony Perkins,\(^{58}\) I love to hear, and please write as you can, again. We will keep closer now, as I will have my own place shortly.

---

\(^{58}\) Anthony Perkins (1932-1992), gay American actor who had affairs with more than a few members of the overlapping circles of New York artists.
Love to you always. And we will see each other Christmas, anyway/

Again love – 
John

* * * * *

Between June 15th and 23rd, 1958, living with Robert Lavigne and writing as Lavigne drew, John Wieners wrote the series of poems that Auerhahn Press would publish as The Hotel Wentley Poems. It is a slim collection of audaciously lyrical poems with startling images of the underground and crafted with the exhilarating euphony he called, in his letter to Ginsberg, the “magic of vowels” (its opening poem’s core declaration, “I am taking away from God his sound” containing, somewhat onomatopoeically, the long and short sounds of all five vowels).

The small book – it would now be called a chapbook – had an incalculable legacy, filtered through the poets of many different “schools” who read it. In 1959, Allen Ginsberg wrote about it Jack Kerouac: “John Wieners by the way – I heard him read his Hotel Wentley poems – it made me cry, they are classic like Hart Crane’s ‘Behind my fathers cannery works’ – You have that book? He is a real poet, sad and damned and tender.” In New York, Frank O’Hara called the book “a beautiful sequence of things,” writing in one 1959 poem that “everybody here is running around after dull pleasantries and / wondering if The Hotel Wentley Poems is as great as I say it is” In a review for Kulchur, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka wrote of the book, “A moving remembrance of the book’s impact comes from David Rattray, who would later befriend Wieners on the Lower East Side in the 1960s, in his memoir of the late poet Alden van Buskirk: Van had just been moved from the recovery room to a private room when I arrived. Barely conscious, he asked me to read from John Wieners’ Hotel Wentley Poems – the book was on the bedside table. His fingers a waxy yellowish gray, he fiddled with an ice sliver, touching it to his lips. The sky outside the window was bright blue. I paused. “Don’t stop,” he urged.

But all this renown would come later, in 1959. This next sequence of letters are written just after the work of Hotel Wentley was done, a period Wieners remembers as “a funk of magnitude.” He adds that talking about the “funk” of June 1958 “seems to get it more out of the system.” “Now tonight,” he writes, “I am swinging on my own wings, which is a relief.”

59 From O’Hara’s 1959 poem “Les Lufts”; these O’Hara quotes taken from Marjorie Perloff’s Poet Among Painters (15).
60 “Van” 13.
Ed Dorn

June 30 [1958]
[San Francisco]

Dear Ed:

Let me come back quick: even if it disappoints. Cuz I aint up to it. And to be a whiner, for the last 5 weeks, in a funk of magnitude, something that hasn’t been on me for a year anyway. Maybe that’s the reason, that it is a return of the season/ whatever, talking abt it, seems to get it more out of the system. Now tonight, I am swinging on my own wings, which is a relief. Oh melt those purple pills. Also I had received a batch of poems that were a burden, no lift, from Ginsberg, Snyder, Whalen/ which didn’t make it here AT ALL, yet a hard job to answer their letters, this, I have done, so I feel clearer. Then again, O’s been quiet, in the hills, tho he sent WU last week, he is way out, & that is good, then he plans a jaunt to NEEngl. Also Measure I is nowhere, altho promised, four weeks ago! that fuckin printer, I’d kill him if he was here. He says becuz he wanted to put in all the fancy work I requested. What!

That’d done. OK Forget it.

Let’s get to business.

Yr paragraph on Magick sends me off. ‘But there isn’t any Magic, ie, one magick. It is made, on the spot. One Makes Magick, like love. This is man’s gift to the Gods!’

That’s saying it, daddy. I dont think I understand the majority of the paragraph. Just what yr difficulty is. That I thgt taken for granted. It is what the man, any man, sees, as magick, is magick.

Olson ends up that note: saying. ‘Thus magic

is not for, or for only
the PRIESTS (like you & me!”

I carry that over to you. Not really, I dont see now, magic as a matter of importance to any of us. That as yr wife told me re you, in Peeks, you will make it. And that only is of importance. The Use of yrself, yr language, & yr reality.

Now before I talk abt what you sent, I wis h to hell, you had sent the ‘field-notes’ that I sense very strongly, it is here, you wd stand most cleanly. And that you havent sent them yet, with the deadline, makes me urge, that you do it at once, despite those terrible commitments of yr time, strength, you are faced with. It is immediate action, that comes into value. I find this out from my siege of five weeks. Not the immediate action of cocksucking. I cant see the gift of that. And that is what I guess I am pushing. That immediate action, means, we force ourselves into giving. Cocksucking, just takes it all in, sucks it dry, while the csucker thinks he’s doing somebody a big favor. And the sucked thinks he’s Mister Hercules. ‘Ultimately’ of no value. Spit on the ground. Now the field-notes a different story. And I hope you dont hold back. WCW: the poem is to assert love, not to get it. A gift man, all the way. Every syllable we spit out. That was why so hard to answer is, to answer the Whalen;

I had chance to see WCW on stage at Brandies last month. & The generosity of the man so manifest. And the return is there, altho at times not manifest, when we need it. In safe-deposit for us, I believe, how those two babies endure, he & Pound. And Wms. in not at all the bad physical state I had been told, much vitality still left, & joy. The
new poems show it. As you come across them. The love of object. And the joy he RECEIVES from them. Flossie's roses.\textsuperscript{62}

I will print NY: school for the disturbed (children)
But I wd rather in the City Issue, No III, OK? Depite the black stockings’ magic, says more abt village (ny).

I have nothing against using the letter as whole in Measure, except, that it wd tend to confuse a matter in the minds of many: get them all riled up as to what we are talking abt: confuse rather than claritas. This is not the letter's fault, is the nature of something like magic.

I cant seem to say anything, & I am going to bed now & will come back on this tomorrow however it sets with me overnight.

June 30 8PM

I end this up with simply send the fieldnotes:

Creeley sent two pages of short hot things, which will go in. And I think over the weeks that the Frobenius does not set well enough: has not enough source to be of value, rather a watered down Arabian Nights, at least, the translation. I send back the pictures of the kids & nose-hand having a copy made. Thank Helene and since I am going to the West Coast! for a couple of years, I guess, this Sept-Oct. I will find you, or if you go anywhere (New Mexico, etc, I will be going thru it all too. The Fireman wants to sleep on ‘the hallowed ground’ of Gettysburg, etc.

You have to excuse my not being able to rise to yr letter. I will come back better on the fieldthings.

Love to you both
John

Robin Blaser the 4th of July, 1958
San Francisco

Dearest Robin:

Just a short note to thank you for the last letter, and the check which was needed.

Where are we now?

For the last week, I have been living with the McClure’s, and it is fine. I am able to tackle some of the jobs underhand.

\textsuperscript{62} Florence “Flossie” Williams, wife of William Carlos Williams. His 1959 poem “To Be Recited to Flossie on Her Birthday” describes a flower “struggling to assert itself / simply,” ending with the lovely tercet “you will believe me / a rose / to the end of time” (\textit{Collected Poems} 410).
Measure is still in existence, but when #3 comes out, it is impossible to say. San Francisco is still most active, despite the loss of its major poets to the lowlands. Or some of them.

What can we say? I look forward to you. Each day is taken up by its own necessities. I have no job, so the basic necessities took up most of my energies. Not to say that there was no pleasure, but where I am, it is difficult to relate. I have a green fern over my head, a wood table under this machine, and brown burlap drapes before my eyes. I see everyone. Kathryn McClure cackles behind a Persian print at my right. She has no pants on, and she pushes a red cart. She swings now on the baby gate.

Will you really be here on January 1st. I cannot believe it, only hope it is true. It would be ideal if we could touch as before. I will be here, and trying. Now that the fervor is dying down, many are left without their blueprinted boats, and of course that means, a new outburst of work. Mine own has been more than hoped for, as the new way of life has produced much from its own hands. It wrote itself. I look to see if there are any copies at hand, and if so, I send them. By no means, feel that a critique is necessary. It is a pleasure to have you there to see. I hope you saw Miss Moore. She was a delight here.

I close now. Also a joy to hear that you and Michael R. met. Try to answer, if only a note to confirm your arrival. A messenger from the FATHERland is what every outpost town needs. I say little, but feel much in this letter, and know that all is well, with the Charles blue on your hands, and the Gardens green.

Chinatown is pink.

Always yours,

love,

John

PS Could you return if possible.
It is impossible for me to type copies. And would you send yours? And I will return. I have not forgotten James.

---

Ed Dorn

July 12 [1958]

San Francisco

Dearest Ed:

We are desperate men, and the rest bore. That is why we are friends. And I can write to you. And to Harvey in the nuthouse. (Only for a few months. It was that or jail for vagrancy. He moved into Joanne’s soon after you left). I live now with the McClure’s, another desperate man. In trying to preserve himself. I have a double brass bed. And not much else. Enough for the present time, when all have too much. It is necessary for me I imagine to have the movement of family around me now. I cherish them all. Am too tender to make it comfortable living tho. Still being such strangers. With them. There are drugs to break the barriers. And I am breaking down whatever stands before me. Not in a big prick way, but with the hands of love. Whatever that is. A regard as one touches leaves, that are still on the tree. Leaving oily grease on same. “The hand of man.”
I wish there was a person to lay my hands on. In love. Instead of my own miserable prick. The hair of Joanne Mc\textsuperscript{63} bent before me as she fixed this machine. And it has been so long. That when she comes again, Lady Love, into my life, I will be swept away. The brushing of her hair. Against my flesh. How beautiful that you are close. That your $2.00 will always be remembered. I am glad Helene liked the silk. It is lovely.

No word on Measure. I live from day to day. I send you 4 poems I wrote a week ago exactly almost to the hour. They are not poems. But literal messages from somewhere. I send them only to have something to send you, as I am wordless. Now.

Write often, Ed, whenever you can. There can never be boredom for us. By no means, did you leave me, fed up with you. I was filled only with the terror of the place I was living in. THE RATS, man. They nearly came in and took over. Scuttled the walls, etc.

After supper, with Fred Astaire’s Bandwagon. OK. Enough for now.
I send the communiqués.

Love always
John

\begin{quote}
You asked me what
I think & I will tell
you, I am not
one of those [illeg]
\end{quote}

Oh listen to my words for I am wise\textsuperscript{64}

I am like a lily fruit
blooming in the wilderness.

I write the same words again, sitting here with Charlie Parker and his rhumba band. I am one with the music, my cigarette stays on the top of the table. I have decided I write prose. No one understands me when I speak in poetry. It is not madness.

This sound, this syndrome

12/22

I pace the same ground as my forefathers,

\textsuperscript{63}Joanna McClure, American poet and educator who married poet Michael McClure after moving to San Francisco in the early 1950s. Her collected poems, \textit{Catching Light}, was released by North Atlantic Books in 2013.

\textsuperscript{64}“Oh listen to my words for I am wise” was collected recently as the leadoff poem in the British publication \textit{Strictly Illegal} from Patricia Hope Scanlan’s Artery Press, a beautiful art book that juxtaposes previously uncollected Wiener’s poems with art by Gilbert & George. As the title makes clear, the collection does not “acknowledge copyright,” and free of its restrictions is able to present for the first time many poems that were printed in small magazines and might otherwise have disappeared with time.
let this be jagged, let this be a new continent. It is.
My fingers are determined by the laws of the universe. They are
writing this. I have no power over what I say. I am ruled
by La Cucuracha. Go

yells the Bubus from under her bedroom door. No she also says.

And if this is madness it is divine.

There are magic happenings going on all over the world.
I pick up an ashtray and it has the hair of Jean Harlow in it.

We have come to the place where we can worship.
That is enough. There is no need to address America.
We dont even stay cool anymore. We have the language
on our side. Brought in to us by musicians, by heads from outer space,
the junkies, the far travelers who always walk with a knife in their
back pockets, as I have walked today.

It is not the time for poetry. We go under as Rimbaud went,
if we let it catch up to us, but we are moving that fast,
that we stay one head up on the game.

I know not what I do. I am ruled by wonder magicians.
The green grass.

Blades of it, switch in your back hip pocket. Swing
your ass sister on Market Street, there is enough for all. Your
baskets will be full in this day after the 4th of July, our forefathers
brought forth on this continent a new

2nd Communique for the Heads 65

I love my fellow poets.

But I do not write for them. I write for heads.
They who stick your necks up into outerspace, they who
will not allow my fingers to make a mistake on this machine, no matter
how I falter, or err. It is all here. The periods are struck in the
furnace the same as the chains we all wear, around our heads


65 “2nd Communique for the Heads” was published in Wiener’s 1984 collection Cultural Affairs
in Boston.
I can do nothing but write. I starve, and have no roof over my head but the homes of strangers

friends who take me in. I travel everywhere. I am as air. I am puffed up with myself as a crow. I learned this trick from a friend.

Who is a fellow poet. Traveller.

4th Comminque for Joanne and all the women

I am wearing down. The ashtray lies littered with butts and matches, ashes even that the Lady Bubus will carry safely and empty in some other room. Her mother has given me corn to eat. And hash, and egg yokes, no not yoke, but egg

WHITES.

We who sit in such color, feast and drink to the whites of your eyes.

You maiden. You girls whose eyes turn blue with the sky. And who walk through the high house in white shoes. The typewriter is a magic instrument and I perform white magic upon it. I call down the gods and ladies of long ago to wait on me. Patience with me, who sound horns into the mystic places of my heart.

I will come to you Lady bearing gifts, these white sheets of paper, the sheets I lie between each night, they are yours and blue,

from your linen closet.

5th and Finale Comminque

There is a brass bed.

There is a rhumba band, there is a junky saxplayer

66 “4th Comminque for Joanne and all the women”
67 “Fifth and Final Communique”
on it. It fills the air with sweet space sounds.
It tells me of the long ago Mexico
down under land. If I went there, I would go down.
You will never get me there. You can beat your brass
bands, I will not go. Bands around my head

of yeast that feeds my hair, that makes bread
that feels ovens. As I am filling this space, with puffed up words

The drum

Pour water on me so I will stretch in the sun.
As in the morning rising from
the sea the sun does.
I do from a brass bed.

And the sun, where do you come from?
With a spectre over my shoulder, with night on yours,

Morning star.
It shone for me. Glitters on the headboard. It is what
we place in the firmament to take place beside nature.

The poem.

And always not enough. Not enough light. Water on the drum.
Air for the lungs. Earth for us to walk upon. We war.

Unless we rise, can stick our heads
(oh lustrous hair
up for the Morning Star. Up like the Morning. Not an imitation
but basking in reflected glory.

The sun shines for us.
We shine because of the sun. My brass bed shone

My hand pulses under the peyote plant placed there.
I am in pain, and it soothes me. Oh

Robert Creeley		July 24 [1958]

[San Francisco]

Dear Bob:

Enclosed find return of yr copy of poems. I use in No; 2 Juggler’s Thot; Just Friends:
She Went to Stay; The Tunnel; They say. OK? I have made careful copies & will split them
up thruout book, like Juggler’s serves as ‘preface’ to the HANDBOOK OF DREAMS.
What else? That you will continue here, is one of my hopes, that you will review say maybe: Wyndham Lewis. Or New Directions 16, or Evergreen Review, or The Blue Guitar, or whatever you want to.

The REASON for Measure is you & Charles, & Jonathan, whoever, else I respect. That it is not my generosity, but yours that will allow Measure to mark the end of the decade, say PV beginning it.

You know all this anyway.

No; 3 A CITY ISSUE: Poems on the burly queen and her pleasures, background music, no serial views, blue prints of polis: is how blurb reads. W/reference to what’s left & how to survive, on it. So you come thru for me (sure) however you can. This way I am able to come thru.

Hope you will write as you are able.

the best,

John

John W.

Also my thanks for what has been done before. See above.

* * * * *

For the holidays of Winter 1958/59 Wieners came back to Boston and New York, spending time with family and old friends. In these next letters Wieners is maintaining contact with old friends, checking in on the production and distribution of The Hotel Wentley Poems, and telling stories about his adventures back east, including time in New York with the newly-famous Beats he’d published in Measure.

* * * * *

Charles Olson 1.6.59
[Milton, MA]

Dear Charles:

It seems I will never get the mss. of these poems typed up for you. Anyway they are old and the contents of a small book which is supposed to come out this month by the AUERHAHN press in San Francisco. 16 p. with the dates following each poem. Whatever, we shall see.68

68 The Hotel Wentley Poems was the first book published by Dave Haselwood’s Auerhahn Press in San Francisco. The printers went against Haselwood’s instructions and removed “Cock” from the title “A Poem for Cocksuckers,” leaving a blank space in its place, so enraged the young publisher that he immediately began learning how to do the printing himself, which he did from then on. Future editions of Hotel Wentley put the “Cock” back in, and Wieners would add it in pencil to first editions he’d sign.
All except the last one which I write tonight and send to you as a birth day message as I sit at my sister’s desk.

Next weekend I go to visit her in Mary-land with my mother (if I could only be rid of my female soul, whatever it is mine. And then if it would be agreeable I feel a compulsion to use the word permissible Robin and I will visit the week following At least me. And I am sure him.

You shall see my ever present confusion. But that is all right. To be pulled two ways at once. If you are built right. and we are. It is too late to type long and so I write this shorthand which is a pleasure to see one’s hand move, no?

I am in a good mood, with the temperature and the moon down. And my stomach and my cheeks are full. And you wd. not recognize me. No, I doubt that. Anyway – close to you in the night. I am

With love
John

Twilight in the Boston Suburbs

Dorchester turns blue,
John Hancock gleams 20
miles out to sea,
land of the Irish, we
sit 20 different animals
in overcoats, riding home
at 5 PM, my neighbor puts
his paper under his arm as if
to lodge it there forever.

A document of God.

A woman blinks and the car short circuits.
Another stares, we all stare, out into
Ashmont, where we get off and I get on
a car to Mattapan. It is 18 above

zero, the New Engleander would never add.
There is none in this world. Supper is
laid out on a 1000 tables. Behind a square
of light. the wind from the Neponset
blows down Eliot Street, and
I am home looking in Mrs Redington’s win-
dows, rows of venetian
blinds before my eyes, the trolley roars
on in the night, my mother runs water
and
steamheat hisses thru the pipes, and she clinks

69 “Twilight in the Boston Suburbs”
dishes in the kitchen. A spoon
drops in a drawer. overhead
the 6 o’clock flight to New York. there is
so much I could go on all night, as the cars
on their errands, taking the world
home.

across country 3000 miles to
spend for Christmas and my birthday
in the room where my ancestors died.

Don Allen  January 15 [1959]
[Boston]

Dear Don:

OK. Put me in, if it is not too late.70 I dont know why the hesitation on my part. It is
a chance so many would jump at. Sometimes we get removed from the happenings around
us.

I hope to be in the big City by the end of the month, and we will meet. I have to be
back in San Francisco by February 9th, as I received notice yesterday I am being evicted. And
also being scheduled to read at Poetry Center February 8th. If you want to use it, I will have a
book out at the end of the month, THE HOTEL WENTLEY POEMS, from

The Auerhahn Press
1605 Laguna Street
San Francisco 15.

I was outraged for awhile that you used She Went to Stay,71 without credit or at least
notice to me, until Robin told me you got permission from Creeley. Anyway, it is past and I
understand.

My best to you,

70 The New American Poetry, Don Allen’s 1960 landmark anthology, which used five of Wieners’
poems (four of the Hotel Wentley Poems and “A poem for trapped things,” in addition to a
page “From a Journal” in the anthology’s “Statement on Poetics” section. The anthology
grouped the poets provisionally into five “schools”: the Black Mountain poets (Olson,
Berkeley Renaissance pioneer Robert Duncan, non-Black Mountain student Denise
Levertov, Larry Eigner, among others); the San Francisco Renaissance (Helen Adam,
Madeleine Gleason – two of the four female poets in the anthology – Blaser, Spicer); the
vagabond Beats (Kerouac, Ginsberg, Corso, and Orlovsky); the New York Set (O’Hara,
Barbara Guest, Ashbery and Koch); and Wieners’ group, the final catch-all poets “of no
geographical distinction” (Northwesterners Whalen and Snyder, Venice Beach-based Stuart
Perkoff, LeRoi Jones, Wieners).

71 Robert Creeley’s poem “She Went to Stay” was published in For Love.
Dear Dave:
Instead of mailing 50 copies here, air-mail (special delivery?) 1 copy to me c/o MARSHALL, 28 Perry St, New York, as I (one) can do the work as well as 50. And then I can direct orders to you. You see I am being evicted Feb 1st and have to be back as soon after that as possible if I don’t want to lose everything.

Been seeing Olson every weekend and he loves the love poems in THE HW poems. Says to Don Allen “he’s got love working for him” and says to me “you can invest the whole world with these powers.” His wife says: “It’s simply a matter of dimension.” Anyway I am made. In the image of god. The anti-self. “I met Zoroaster my double walking in the garden”

His 3 are
A poem for cock suckers
A poem for the old man
(Dana)
A poem for record players
and says “the Book itself is such a whole”

how glad he is it is coming out.
It shows its own order.
and I too am pleased. Felt the excitement growing even tho it may take them a couple of years. And you that time to get returns, your labor will have reward. More than you dream.

Olson is making copies & sending green mss. onto to Marshall in NY where I shall pick it up for YOU.

Now I hope OK on the 1 or 2 advance copies c/o Perry Street as I will not cannot be there long enough to wait for bulk by regular mail. Howard and I plan to come west together & pray to the beacon light’s and widow’s watches that we make it.

I will also check on Ryder73 & do my utmost.

Love to you & keep heart. Do not do too much w/o sleep and the strain will catch up & eventually be more crippling. But no fear as we are in good hands. Involved as we are in this vital work: the poem. Love,

John

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72 In January of 1959, Wieners traveled cross-country (the first of two trips that year; the second ended in Massachusetts with his hospitalization) with Jan Minsk.
73 “Poem for the Old Man”
74 Ryder, a poetic, digressive novel published by the Bohemian modernist writer Djuna Barnes (1892-1982) in 1928.
We will send 50 copies bulk EAST later, if you want. I will set up an agent to distribute. Or will write again quick if more immediate plans demand the large amt. I think showing the one around. Letting them touch it will whet their taste. Anyway Ginsberg, Marshall, Allen, O’Hara, Blaser, O, Corso are so much on our side already that the work is done, no matter what AUERHAHN does.

Hope to hear from you again quick in New York. Address once more, Wieners
c/o Edward Marshall
28 Perry Street
New York 14, N.Y.

AL-5-4952

Even if there is a delay on book, let me know.

---

Charles Olson

[New York City]

Dear Charles:

I am sitting in 116 Eldridge St. Jan is across the room from me. & others. She holds a package of Turkish cigarettes. There is a 3 year old girl talking to her and beside me on the bed is Howard reading French.

It is Twilight. Allen is in Chicago and I haven’t seen him yet just left Kerouac in The Rok bar. An “Irish” lush. Jan says he looks like a bum. And he does. But more with a gleam in his eyes. & $300 in the bank. And a Life reporter smiling his white teeth. and Rachel looking for her ball under the bed Throwing it in the air and letting it drop.

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Kerouac’s novel On the Road had made him a pop cultural sensation in the late summer of 1957, and the year-plus between that sudden fame and Wieners’ visit was, to say the least, rough on Kerouac. As Bill Morgan and David Stanford note in their edition of the Ginsberg-Kerouac letters, the early months of 1959 found Ginsberg courting more fame while Kerouac retreated: “When Jack was in the city he tended to drink to excess and retreated more frequently to his mother’s house for solitude…. In order to keep his sanity, Jack was trying to keep out of the limelight” (427).
Dan Rice\textsuperscript{76} a piece of steel, full of wires and cable. Blackburn officious. Corso in Chicago. Ed a NE minister and Howard lays lengthwise Rachel is pulling up her red pants. Still throwing the ball

3 page letter from Marshall coming to you with poems.

Basil great. Martha thinner and no violence in their house. Home made chicken soup there last night. On Whitehall Street #33 at the tip of Manhattan a loft in an office building that closes at 5.

LeRoi Jones\textsuperscript{77} a king and his house a court Yard I said where we all gather into the night on the floor

Max Finstein\textsuperscript{78} Joel (sissy)

\textsuperscript{76}Dan Rice (1927-2003), American artist. A whiz trumpet player, he filled in with Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, and Woody Herman as a teenager. In the Navy during World War II, he served in the Pacific, then went to Berkeley and Black Mountain College on the GI Bill. A talented shortstop, he played in the Brooklyn Dodgers farm system. His true vocation, though, was painting, and he was closely associated with the Abstract Expressionists.

\textsuperscript{77}LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka (1934-2013), American poet, prose writer, critic, and playwright who has been a powerful force in American culture for over half a century. An integral member of the Beat and Black Arts movements, close friend of Edward Dorn, pioneering editor and publisher, Baraka gathered and encouraged a great deal of the emergent poetry and poetics through seminal publications like \textit{Totem} (1958) and \textit{Yugen} (1958-1962), and as co-editor of the first 25 issues of \textit{Floating Bear} (1961-1963), a galvanizing poetry “newsletter” initiated by Diane di Prima.

\textsuperscript{78}Max Finstein (1924-1982) served in World War II and then spent time in New York and San Francisco before settling in New Mexico. The naming of Max’s Kansas City may or may not have been inspired by Finstein, and was more likely the provenance of Joel Oppenheimer, a New York poet who had studied at Black Mountain. Finstein’s 1966 collection \textit{The Disappearance of Mountains} was the only book published by Dorn’s \textit{Wild Dog} magazine.
The Librarian looks great imprint complete. Opens Yugen 4.79

Things are tight. The people are who are people. Dan made the strongest impression on me with his “junky” ways, his tics and pain — Full of steel. Mass —

ive in his diminuity.

And so we sit in the night. Miles finishing up on his trumpet. And Teddy in the corner reading a pocket book. With a cylinder light in the middle of the room.

Silver tinsel hanging on all its sides so it looks like a chandelier

New song now.

Lower east side. Everyone clean except Kerouac with a three day growth of beard. Double wines.

Not an act. Lost. His girl with a pheasant feather in her hair and a white shawl over her coat. Overdressed. A

79 “The Librarian,” a poem by Charles Olson about Gloucester’s “Black space, / old fish-house” and the “Motions / of ghosts,” opened the fourth issue of Yugen (1958-1962), which also contained Wieners’ “Spring 1956.” Founded and edited by LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and subtitled “a new consciousness in arts and letters,” Yugen was a wide-ranging and essential venue. As Steven Clay argues, “Yugen’s willingness to engage in debates over theory prefigures a growing concern within the avant-garde to define a poetic principle,” which sets Yugen apart as “one of the most important precursors of the New American Poetry” (73). Like Measure and Floating Bear, Yugen’s mission was to gather the work of poets from across the country who were otherwise largely isolated.
Venus mark between her teeth. Tall. Her name is Dodie Müller.  

I am staying at Ed’s for a while yet and cant say what’s up because I dont like it there. Mike in Bellevue from an overdose of sleeping pills. w/see him Tuesday. Tube in his throat. Out of critical condition now. Fielding thinks 

of you a lot and drinks a lot. Jonathan bitching still. No one has any patience for him or regards him much.

It is Dan. And Max. And the usual real ones who make it. You know them. Iso-morphic (that is not the word but the form that does not change with place.

Love to Betty and you & yours the blue cups. A pile of red paper bricks collapsed in the middle of the floor. 

John

Charles Olson 2.10.59 [New York City]

Dear Charles:

Tomorrow we leave. Driving as far as Canton, Ohio w/ Jan where she begins her 1st week on tour. From there who knows but without her at least for a little while.

Yesterday dinner, spontaneous with Ginsberg and Corso on East 2nd. First time I had caviar. There the 3 of us sat. The Russian Jew, the Italian and the Irish. Spent until 5AM with Ginsberg. What to say? He wants to make it. Not only on the crest but always. Showed

80 Dody Müller, American painter and Kerouac’s girlfriend for a brief time in early 1959. Kerouac would later credit (or blame) her with inspiring him to try painting.
me 75 clippings from Chicago. I said “Is this how you treat visiting poets?” Read as far as I could into his long mother poem 81 (60 pages) typewritten, single spaced. Interesting to me because of the paranoia of his mother. Her actions I know and have lived to some small degree. At least her terror. “The dropping of the mind on the page.” This phrase I most remember. But it’s this lack of the original which ultimately bars him. Bores me.

I mean all poets inhabit the instant-cous the immediate but we all we beat suffer from lack of joy, inability to lift above ourselves.

He carries a weight with him, even tho he moves with delicate lightness, walking down stairs. Spring. That twist which shows

I sense none or little of the excitement I have with you. Or Duncan say. Or Mike Rumaker even who is better. In violent ward at Bellevue.

Ward 07
1st Ave & 30th St.

tho most calm himself and realizing that this too must pass. The void. He will get out, and be alright. On his own terms.

As Allen will not. There is a challenge in him. Like Beat me or Accept me. When I would rather it was

Let’s watch it
Happen between us

There is generosity and mobility in both, in their lives. But they are hooked on their own lives. I mean you said it.

Personal history is a love.

Or something like that. Inability to grasp the whole situation. Or rather only to see my side of it. Rather than that other side, which is the mysterious, the unknown, & unconscious. How lovely it plays when it does in our lives. And juggles events. And shakes us by

tune to the moving of the
universe.

But there is poetry in their lives

and they allow that to lead them. Corso the quickes to grasp the exotic, the weird violent. Still a slum kid being wacked on the ass for what he didn’t do.

Showed us his tunnels and mansions around Wash. Square Park where he grew up. But on the wrong side of the tracks. Lower east side, I think. Ginsberg more aware both his parents school teachers. Corso The

trickster. But more spontaneously kind.

Sentiment.

On my part. For the dirty undershirts. And the frenzy. And that we gotta make it somehow anyhow, anyway we can and this is it. And why not.

Ginsberg pretends a nihilism that all is nothing. And has no meaning. We live in illusion. Reality is this. We only think we exist.

And when I said
Everything has meaning

I don’t think he believed it. That its only a cartoon with a Woody Wood Pecker laugh at the end. “A huge laughing bowl” His prosody which he is most concerned about, I mean his thoughts about it are all acquired.

I am writing this at Marshall’s desk and our contact has been negligible. I mean I am unable to link arms. Maybe later. There is much to appreciate in him and much to despise. Or rather much that I have worked thru myself and see as dross. And yet his own pure light shines above it all.

Jonathan now living in town. Trying to pull things together
Yugen is the center of activity. #4. WOW.

Max Finstein a fine man. And Dan Rice a joy to see walking 8th Street.
Forgive the tone of
God in the letter after this.
Just spot judgements and I believe all we see in others only a reflection of our lights and shadows. So the danger there. Where is the real man amidst all these men that inhabit me. Where is the one that is apart and how to deal with him and let him have his space as he walks it.

On his own and
w/o interference
from personal forces.

Ginsberg can pour soup in his ear but it does not have the same power as your hand on Betty’s knee.

The real vs sur-real.

Heard Big High Song for
Somebody. by
Whalen on
the Jazz Canto Record and it is
a must when you are in NY
next. Joel Earnest also

but without the surety of
Max or Dan.

Anyway, NY is

What? The
center of the current scene?
No. That
is in our “hearts.” But how you gonna keep ‘em down on the farm after they’ve seen Paris, how you gonna keep ‘em away from Broadway,
  jazzing around
doing the town. How you
  gonna keep ‘em away
  from H’rlem, that’s
  a mystery.

So me and my burlesque baby go off in the night again. To see her is a joy,
  walk through a bar, open her eyes at me, or touch my knee.
    To walk with her
    down Broadway and

turn on. To pass the pipe, It is
  her hands & breasts
  ETC… leave it

to Tin Pan Alley to do her
justice. Anyway Boston is
  dead now forever
  for us.

And the country (or continent)
  is alive. Oh open
plains embrace my love
  and I. Bless
my love and I. Travelling
  light.

We linger on.
  Love to you & Betty
    John

4AM

---

Charles Olson                       [February 13, 1959]
[On the Road]

Hotel Canton, 5th and Cleveland N., Canton, Ohio

Room 10
10 mins to 2
Friday the 13th
February
1959

A picture of HORSE on the wall, a yellow
leather chair, Jan’s black stockings on
her legs in yellow leather shoes, she sits
writing in black a letter (w/a gold pencil

Communique.
Rain out the
open window at
my left, and
w/in reach of my
right, her and

the night cold in Canton,
Ohio – Mid – West America,

All these colors. This unreality is not
necessary. This heightening of the senses,
so that all becomes blur, and dazzle.

In the dark of the year
We are only flesh. Animals
on the plain. Pushed
out of doors, driving
over the land, landing
nowhere in sight, the
great lakes at the
top of the state, somewhere
from the top of my head,
verse and
its making
lost in the shuffle, see-
ing only now, this God
and my entrance way
to him.

When Jan read this she shook her
shoulders and said
that’s me.
So what. A shimmy and screech
So soon she will be gone

* * * *

Most of John Wieners’ great journal *707 Scott Street for Billie Holiday* was written during this period of sparse letters, the spring and summer of 1959. Wieners was using harder drugs with harder people, pushing the derangement of his senses to its extreme. As the journal reveals, however, this was not “lost time” by any stretch; even as he was scoring with friends and remaining the charming center of the party, he was also studying Olson,
Jung, and Sufi mysticism,\(^{82}\) and intensively rethinking his poetics. In his stoned introspection he sees clearly the potential glory and certain suffering of his poetic vocation:

I can count on countless years before me with no food in my stomach, writing out history in some dark room, doing my bit towards creating a new structure from love.

It can only be that. For [any] other motive we fail. And love is a sparse thing to nurture all these years.\(^ {83}\)

* * * * *

Charles Olson

6.2.59

[San Francisco]

Dear Charles:

And so I come to call on you. I just finished a colored note to Duncan to ask his involvement with MEASURE again as there is $ to print another issue. And I ask you to be in it. I have “Descartes, age 34” which I will use if nothing else is forthcoming. Deadline is June 30. Here in San Francisco and I will keep on the press work, etc. so there is absolute freedom there. THE AUERHAHN PRESS will do it. Hand set, etc. See Lamantia’s new book EXSTASIS\(^ {84}\) which I will have sent to you. Sorry on the cock in cocksuckers, I am writing the word in longhand.

#3 will still be THE CITY and Descartes is more than enough but I want more of you in it. More important that we erect again the poles we need to keep each other in view.

I dont know what I am aiming for in THE NEW ONE but that place be manifest as cause even tho causes are not interesting. That the root be exposed which we are and the ground we take place in. That our minds are nurtured by it. The land where we are. And we all seem to be by a city and a sea. Is this polis? The beginning place.

I have been given the chance and needs must use it. I ask you to use it too before it is too late. Will it ever be that? If we keep on our toes.

I dont know what I am asking you but that I am asking you is important. To chain up the old links. Gang bang. Creeley seems so far away. Always from me anyway. Tho I give him my attention. I leave it till later.

LOVE John

IT is an open book. A brook we can all cross together

---

\(^{82}\) The journal is filled with quotes from one uncited source, Edward Jabra Jurji’s *Illumination in Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1938), a translation of a fifteenth century manuscript called *Maxims of Illumination*.

\(^{83}\) 707 43.

Underground in the city…

‘concealed yet
visible’

There are 3 poems
from Tom. What about Michel?

---

**Robert Duncan**

6.2.59

[San Francisco]

Dear Robert:

I am just this on a shot out that I could get something from you new for The CITY. I will use A Poem of Despondancies but since I have had it on my hands so long I do not feel any excitement about it. It is **NOT** a question of the poem itself. It is a matter of freshness; that I involve you a new. A-gain. A city – of god? of gods? of what place in us does this place take hold of. Can we go on in it or will it all slide down the mt. slide into the sea. Will you see into this with me. I know you are involved with Foot but I want to involve you too. It does not have to be long – but of any length. Again it is does not have to be forced. And of course, I do not want to make it just San Francisco. So I leave it up to you. Somehow we have to raise the communication centers again.

Yours

John

---

**Charles Olson**

June 13 [1959]

[San Francisco]

Dear Charles:

Could I have an immediate reaction to this? no matter how brief. It was written in the last couple of hours, & is it just watered down Olson?

Is it necessary to be printed? A rush out after reading His essay. And sensing something wrong. But some many influences apparent?

And the fear that I could set others wrong. And the distaste over editorial statement.

But I am most interested in how you take it/ and you MUST be frank.

We have no obligation to each other but the truth as it comes to us.

Just a note on a card wd be enough maybe light to set me to attack it again. If anything remains. How crazy we are.

Whatever I hope this doesn’t interfere. It’s my only copy so you gotta return it.

Love & --

John
THE COMEBACK

a job. Sally Rand’s peacock. Leda & her swan. A bird of paradise

with yr painted yr measure held together in stays. A struggle for object. ‘Hunger for sound’.

Backroom piano out of place
this lady loses it
on ‘moonglow’
caught in colored spots. I think constantly of that parade of women, who drop their clothes who change spots before yr very eyes.

not interested in the art. She came downstage after her act in an operagown: I like old ones better they give what the young promise.

Study physics
what a makes a body move/ what moves in the body
And she learned it all at the World’s fair, her hair a mess of bleached in the sun seaweed.
See what the boys in the backroom do, she does not she needs so little, naked.
Like the swing of her pink hip tells us grinds/
a new image for market.

Figures
(as she does) on the top stair?

Fans and eyelids the only drop in her business. (my)?

this for magick

---

85 “The Comeback”
Don Allen

June 25, 1959

[San Francisco]

Dear Don:

Please see to it that credit for MEASURE appears in Kerouac’s new book, Mexico City Blues when it appears September 30.

Choruses #14, 19, 51, 95 and 235 first appeared in Measure (Winter 1958).\(^{86}\)

I hold you personally responsible.

Enclosed find poem for your trouble.

My love,

John

707 Scott
San Francisco 17,

until 29 June

Act #2

for Marlene Dietrich\(^{87}\)

I took love home with me,
we fixed in the night and
sank into a stinging flash.

¼ grain of love
we had,
2 men on a cot, a silk
cover and a green cloth
over the lamp.

The music was just right,
I blew him like a symphony,
it floated and
he took me
down the street and
left me here.
3 AM. No sign.
only a moving van
up Van Ness avenue.
Foster’s was never like this.

I’ll walk home, up the
same hills we
came down.
He’ll never come back,
there’ll be no horse

---

\(^{86}\) *Mexico City Blues* was published by Grove Press in 1959.

\(^{87}\) “Act #2” was published in Wieners’ 1964 book *Ace of Pentacles.*
tomorrow nor pot
tonight to smoke till dawn

He’s gone and taken
my morphine with him
Oh Jonny. Women in
the night moan yr. name

6.19.59

---

**Robert Duncan**

[June 1959]

[San Francisco]

D:
Give me notes on
the Qaballah, the
hidden NEW: The
issue’s core is SHAPE-
ing UP. I want yr.
very depth, yr. point
of most involvement,

LOVE

John

(Wieners)

---

**Don Allen**

[July 1 1959]

[San Francisco]

Dear Don:

I sit in my yellow silk shirt, in love with myself, and what better love is there? And: lots
Light comes thru the windows, Mike Rumaker is awake in Rockland, Robert Duncan sits in
solitary splendour in Stinson Beach, and where am I. Half of a back room in San Francisco,
where I watered ½ grain of heroin into the plant the afternoon you were here. I see you still
on the bed. Gray figure from another world. This is a world of red poppies in a green glass,
of black type on green paper, a world without end, which any moment the next could throw
into chaos, it will not, yet, we wait for the next event, the next letter to impose itself on the
universe, making a new universe. One letter of the alphabet can do it. And we sit, guardians
of that throne. To use a medieval image. Like the heart, which contains still that fire of love.
Richard Rolle: Hermit. 88

---

88 Richard Rolle (c. 1300-1349), English Christian mystic and hermit whose best-known work
is *Incendium Amoris (The Fire of Love)*, an account of his mystical experience in its various
visual and aural manifestations. Wieners quotes this book in *707 Scott Street*: “For the
boisterous and fleshly soul is not ravished into contemplation of the Godhead unless all
The 2nd half of the 20th century, they say Creeley says. How sacred our duty: Alice Dalliance in the No, Nothing Bar.

The Put Me Beside A Colored Man, Anytime is OUT.89 Thank you for sending it, but please dont use it. A cliché, and containing nothing of the original force I think a poem should have. OK.

Enclosed Re*write of the Nemi Poem. And The Head poem.

And a few others for your own pleasure. Do take things easy there, at least take things.

The Pot Poem is such a piece of masturbation that maybe you better not see it as anything else but. Even tho at the time I was etc etc.

OK See you later, when you move thru on the way to

Japan. Kansas City here I come. There is no re-write of the HEAD poem, except that you spell falter, as flater

OK. Yr letter has given me a good day of work & pleasure. Plans for M proceeding, with (why not) you turning over to me any mss. you think I might use. NOT BEAT not drugs, unless first hand, but needing plenty of CITY.

Dont despair, darling, I think of you more than you think.

John

The Nemi poem falls down at the end but there is nothing to do, as this is the fact of the poem.

Don Allen

Sept 20 [1959]
[San Francisco]

Dear Don:

Well. I cant do anything new. But I will send you a poem I wrote this morning. And an excerpt from a journal I keep, which is abt. poetics, as I have been able to come to it.90

fleshly lettings be wasted away by ghostly meditation.” To this quote Wieners adds, “Delectable heat is also in the loving heart, that has devoured heavy grief in the fire of burning love” (34).

89 “Put me beside a colored man anytime…”
I just fell over on my back with the typewriter on my chest, and I looked up at the ceiling, and said, I’m gonna die this way. Like the goddamn cat I stepped on, with my left Mexican shoe, the drops of blood spread throughout the house. Gasping for breath. Always. Anyway.

A poem for trapped things.  

Oh God what have you given me that a black butterfly lives in this room.  
This morning with a blue flame burning this thing wings its way in.  
Wind shakes the edges of its yellow being.  
Gasping for breath.  
Living for the next instant  
Climbing up the black border of the window.  
Why do you want out.  
I sit in pain  
A red robe amid debris,  
You bend and climb, extending antennae.

I know the butterfly is my soul and it is weak from battle.  

A Giant fan on the back of a beetle.  
A caterpillar, chrysalis that seeks a new home apart from this room.

And will disappear from sight at the pulling of invisible strings.  
Yet so tenuous, so fine this thing is, I am sitting on the hard bed, we could vanish from sight like the puff off an invisible cigarette.  
Furred chest, ragged silk under wings beating against the glass  
o no one will open.

90 Published in 1996 as The Journal of John Wieners is to be Called 707 Scott Street for Billie Holiday, 1959.  
91 “A Poem for Trapped Things” was published in Ace of Pentacles, beginning with the line “This morning with a blue flame burning.” It was read at Wieners’ funeral in 2002.  
92 The first three lines are bracketed with “omit” written on the left  
93 “Next” is circled
The blue diamonds on your back
are too beautiful to do
away with.
I watch you
all morning
long
With my hand over my mouth.

(1959)

July 17 [1959]

From a journal

A poem does not have to be a major thing. Or a statement?
I am allowed to ask many things because it has been given
me the means to plunge into the depths and come up with
answers? No. Poems, which are
my salvation alone. The reader can do with them what he likes.
I feel right now even the reading of poems to an unknown
large? public is a shallow act, unless the reading be given for the
fact of clarity. The different techne
a man uses to make his salvation. That is why poetry
even tho it does deal with language is no more holy act
than, say shitting.*

Dis-
charge. Manifesting the
process of
is it life? Or the action between this and
non-action? Lethargy vs
Violence.

For to take up arms against the void is attack, and the price of war
is high. Millions of syllables
shed over the falls of our saliva, millions of teardrops
roll out of our eyes. Giant screams echo through the halls of our house
gaged in. Hundreds of days, months have to go by before the
spirits descend and the right word rolls out sharp and full of
fire air earth and water
[ off the tips of our
tongue. And one cannot avoid the
days. They have to parade by in all their carnage. The events of
them like images on a shield, we carry thru the streets of
the town
later on our way to the poetry reading.” Drunk or

94 “From a Journal” appeared in the poetics section of New American Poetry, but without its
postscript “*quote from Olson.”
doped before that wild horde who press in
to get a peek at the bloody hero. And is he?
You bet.

As a postscript abt any of us writing on poetics: this.

(I changed
my mind.

Love to you always
J

*quote from Olson
For Christmas 1959, Wieners traveled back from San Francisco to New York and then Boston to visit his family, who were frightened by his erratic behavior and conversation. His mother had him forcibly committed. In a letter to Ed Dorn, LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka describes Wieners' state during the trip's New York leg:

John Wieners was by here a couple of weeks ago. Stayed with us for week or so. He’s in horrible shape. Sullen silent … never saw him like that before. Very disturbed (??) And that’s a terrible way to try to say it. Disturbed??? Like who isn’t? When John left N.Y., he went up to his parents in Boston. His mother apparently flipped and called up the mental hospital people. They came & from what I get from Irving Rosenthal, they carried John off in straight jacket. He’s got to stay in that place at least 40 days, cause his mother signed him in. Seems so bleak…

Word spread quickly through New York poetry communities and many friends, most notably new champion Irving Rosenthal, rallied to his side; so many of their circle – especially the homosexuals – had been hospitalized, everyone knew the fear and desperation Wieners was feeling, and letters of support were circulated to speed his release. What was initially a 40-day hold turned into a six-month stay in Medfield State Hospital.

Though the New Yorkers knew of Wieners’ hospitalization right away, it took his Black Mountain friends longer to get the news. Olson a couple of weeks to get the news of Wieners’ hospitalization. Olson finally wrote on February 5, 1960, declaring: “I’m still ‘following’ you!” As Dorn reported back to Jones, Olson had heard about a hospitalization but thought it was Michael Rumaker (“there are so many of us in the nuthouse,” Dorn mused.) This was the first of several hospitalizations Wieners would endure. Less than two years later, in November 1961, Wieners would be telling new friend Rosenthal that after “30 shock treatments at Bournewood, and 91 insulin treatments at Metropolitan State,” he has no recollection of their preceding time together. “I wish I had some memory of last year, but I do not, of living with you, of your kindness, but all is a blank.”


2 the sea beneath the house: The Selected Correspondence of John Wieners and Charles Olson (v. 2) 31.

3 Dorn letter to Jones, March 1, 1960, ibid.
Don Allen  
I. 21. 60  
[West Harding, MA]

Dear Donald:

Proofs remain in Milton, out of my reach at present time. Holds out for us slight hope of reprinting Hotel poems in yr. anthology. Why not give SPACE to Measure and my shorter lyric poems of later date, now on hand (Lenin, Iran II)?\(^4\) Love screened here. Die Kuhl Wampe\(^5\) is my scene.

If you go ahead, w/o OK, it will be necessary for ERNST ROHM to be included. Heroes overwhelm! us. Fuck the West Coast Irish Hunk.\(^6\) Prowl the labyrinth and of course, Chicago, go before Empire City. Also E 87\(^{th}\) St.\(^7\) Whatever yr decision, biography must be changed. If no word from HYM, I leave it to yr. hand.

John

Quite serious now about fresh work. Sample enclosed. Minus the refreshments: life is tendresse. Now I raise my finger to you about USE of the WENTLEY in ANTHOLOGIA [illeg]. Ground Hog Day seems auspicious for a visit, if anyone cares.

SUKI YAKI

e tc.

the wrong word in the love's fading light.

Too much—

Is it justice I seek

Include me only as

a heavy Russian lyric. Forget

matter

Also stop at my edges.

O God wheres thou art, return me to the region of summer stars, where dreams are barren and without strife. Start fresh streams forth up the planets & implant thy spheres with new found souls dropping desert sand into the

---

\(^4\) Rather than the still unpublished “Lenin” and “Iran II” Wieners refers to, Allen used four of the older Hotel Wentley Poems and the Wentley addendum “A poem for trapped things.”

\(^5\) Kuhle Wampe, 1932 German film about unemployment and the class struggle in the Weimar Republic, written by Bertolt Brecht.

\(^6\) Homosexual Nazi SA officer Ernst Rohm was killed as part of the Night of the Long Knives in 1934. It is unclear to whom Wieners is referring as Rohm, or the “West Coast Irish Hunk.”

\(^7\) Michael Rumaker lived at 36 W. 87\(^{th}\) St. in New York in the late fifties.
O God return me to the region of summer stars, where dreams are barren and without strife. Start fresh streams forth upon the planets, implant thy spheres with new found souls, dropping desert sand into the hands of my sister who cries out in her march unto the sea, Valkyrie, for that word.

Refugees awash upon the waves.

Seeds to start the journey, at Refresh the new century.

Put me beside a colored man anytime
Not beside the white with

his bundle of tensions, his over active thyroid. It is not a case of genitals. It is a case of the heart is greener on the other side.

Feel the peace in your heart beside this savage

beating of his heart runs calm, beside by the nerves of his white brother reading the Organization Man. This is the end for us in our horn rimmed spectacles. We are the lions and caged in an arena of our own making. the pads silently by on black feet, “not moving the grass”.

San Francisco, 1958

And always these tropical songs call me into the south, the bush land that I have denied long enough, the heat and speed, I now embrace, in this yellow flare before my eyes.

---

8 Handwritten in pencil, possibly by Allen.
9 This revised version of the former poem, both included in the letter, is written in a very atypical handwriting, like a child learning penmanship, cramped and formal in a bold ink.
The Voice of Mexico syllibant in my ears,
its rose along my flesh
in the drugstore window along with
The spikes and needles.
Vera Cruz. Prefix dans Mexicali Rose
Nemi and Bop. Ah Cinerama
A red horn strokes the sky. Cheap
visions and highway
motels. Move over the
guitar strums. Storms flash across the
Camino Sky Real and at the top of my eye-
ball. this is the place baby
he said where everyone comes to
On a tin can

Dave Haselwood

Dear David:
Excerpt from THE PLANETS\textsuperscript{10} herein. My heart in bad shape and so I sit in dying afternoon light, ‘fragments for the feet of Aphrodite’. Do I dare pick up a book again. Or trust the structures of a New England mind. My father has me confined here under 40 day observation paper. Please pull the tendons of yr. mind for my release. Narcissus blooms here. And the new colors. Violet Naturelle? Do you feel I am needed with you? Or should I let Ginsberg rescue once again. Whatever, it is a mad house and I find it imperative to leave it behind me. If only we had established ‘household’ together. Left MEASURE c/o LeRoi Jones 402 W. 20\textsuperscript{th} Street, New York. Some new works forged out of the ‘reverberations’ of the hall.

Petition

that my life be extended hour by hour
Lady, day be loaded with new gods and

Niobe

\textsuperscript{10} THE PLANETS was one of the names Wieners had given to a journal that was tragically lost during his first hospitalization. In a December 4, 1961, letter, Irving Rosenthal described it to Wieners, who had no memory of the journal after his extensive electroshock and insulin coma treatments:

I don’t know how to respond to the loss of Jewels. It is the notebook you kept under the name of Planets at Medfield, a black book with a yellow spine. You changed the name of it to Jewels about the time you left Medfield. It was about half full of writing – poems, prose, several sermons. It was the only thing you carried when you left this apartment a year ago to spend Christmas with your family. I think it was the most precious thing you had. I remember your standing with the notebook at the door, and I remember thinking of asking you to leave it behind. But it was your working notebook and you had kept it with you constantly all during your study at Medfield.

\textsuperscript{11} Each grouping of words on the right – these four, then the successive groups – is bracketed with a } pointing to the words beside them (in this case, “cyst syndrome”).
that kite remain in our hands.

Tuesday Mymnoseme. Pack up and tinkle around a bit. But dont let these keys attract beadie eyes. Travelling light in my wicker case with the goods of the world strapped to my back, what port may I stop in next?

lyric seems lost. Am I to die in a state of despair. Or is this [Lichtenberg?]. Unter Linden roots

old coldgod lies. his hair a mass of seaweed and ivory bones. Beached dry a new line, the bounds between men is narrowed so that it now seems we all steer together. Set my course straight. False clocks wind in the arms of my father. Is a machine? Or Jimmy, Man voices [love?] over the soft blue waves of a new harbor. Let my life not end with a cry of help rather let these bones live as my dreams tell me buried beneath the sand after the giant night subsides its pace.

I struggle for night song now to guide the ancient Nordic mariners. Who I know steer the old ships straight.

[Greek letters?] to you & Do let me know what yr. prospects for continuum in 57 are. Also whatever lit. gossip available.

Have new ER #11 & Big Table 3 from I. Rosenthal & Howard Schulman left NERUDA, H. HEINE etc. But cd. stand, in

\[12\] Astarte is the Greek name of the Mesopotamian Ishtar, goddess of fertility and love who traveled to the underworld to rescue her beloved Tammuz, god of the harvest. See Wieners’ letter to Olson dated September 22 and 23, 1957, for more of his insights into Ishtar and the Mesopotamian pantheon.
fact find it necessary to see WHALEN’S new work as adv. also yr. word. What can I do for you? If I am KEPT away from Cortez’ coast. Come home to the coronets and palisades of dawn quickly.

Faith-fully, John

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Charles Olson</th>
<th>2/12 [1960]</th>
<th>[West Harding MA]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dear Charles:</td>
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| Third attempt at letter to you. My great dilemma here is how to have freedom. I am committed here on 40 day paper per stretcher and straps of Father. That time will be up at the end of next week. And if I am not released I know there will be such great pain ahead, only you seem an avenue of salvation.
| I also have some crimes I could confess to and thereby go to jail which after time done there, life would be my own again. Your letter was a godsend. Whatever I want out and will use any means to gain same. I have learned to pray again. Home phone is [illeg]-6-2471 if a call to parents would convince them what an injustice any extension of imprisonment here would mean. |
| Will you let me know what your mind reads? I have a new book: THE PLANETS. Also word from E Marshall that he would shelter me when released. If parents refuse to take me home. |
| Your friend JAWN        |             |                   |

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<tr>
<th>Irving Rosenthal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dear Irving:</td>
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<tr>
<td>How kind of you to let Charles know my imprisonment here. And how much I want freedom at the end of next week, if only parents will claim me. I have the jailhaus ahead “of course” as a last extreme but again to possess life as my own gift is the only desire. Will you do everything to see me home? Their number is [illeg]6-2421. I have written to both them and Olson this morning. Where else may I turn?</td>
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<tr>
<td>A white flag. With no state bars upon it. Is Allen back yet. Perhaps he or Peter could help. I am not Rumaker and do not believe in the institution. Then there is Don Allen. All these voices must band together as Blaser, etc did for Rosario Jimenez in the 40s. I have also written to Duncan and Hazelwood. Word from Alan Minsk and Tom Balas in</td>
<td></td>
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13 Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), Chilean poet and writer known for his political manifestoes and lyric love poems. Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), German poet and writer known for his early lyric poetry and later political satire.

14 Rosario Jiménez, Puerto Rican classics scholar, Greek tutor for Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser, she introduced the poetry of Frederico Garcia Lorca to Duncan’s “roundtable” of friends in 1945 at “Throckmorton Manor,” the rooming house where he lived at the time. Her passionate, bilingual readings from the poems and plays would inspire a lifelong love for Lorca in Jack Spicer.
Uneaseville is “good.” Until after abscess jaw, tooth extractions and [illeg] are treated this AM. Also call for breakfast. I remain a servant to the structure of language.

Yours

John

---

Barbara Guest

2.16.60

[West Harding, MA]

Dear Barbara Guest:

Human affairs are a matter of necessity to me this morning. The dream world being such a shambles of old cafes, florid women and our old liquid yellow horn. Being caught as I am right now in the grips of an asylum, there is not much I can think about but the New Measure. Will you be a part of it? Lemon cover, chocolate print on etc. This weekend (20th) I expect Irving Rosenthal & Schulman who are contacting printer and distributor, also supplying $. Is the world too jaded for a small Tigers Eye? Write here. c/o Dr. KORMOS. His name seems to be a “sesame” for good fortune. How I miss Washington and the Holidays. But February seems kinder to our world. Do clasp tight, even the pain. There is always laudanum. And the mechanics of the “human face”. Pray for my freedom and we shall be kind enough to find release in each other’s arms again.

Faithfully,

John Wieners

The unconscious is a lion. He stalks. Pots from the pool of day. Is a boy in blue riding waves. Let the lutes play. In our tombs, jars and narcissus sprout from the weeds. Define of now. It is not a poem. It is the paragraph. In dent it. Mine possess no space at all.

Crowded with the dig of his bruise. His sail I use to bail out the boat. Rudder and mane overflow in our concrete world. What is the wave made of? Tides from the belly and balls of the the bull : Aleph. See his stamp in the sky. As we are constructed, so are the stars plotted: the poet marks a new chart. Pinpoint pocks the day of his birth. This morning astride her precious light the an hallowed woman stands aboard. from a bk. The PLANETS 2%

If you can forgive this intrusion of your morning, and the pressure of thot; there is some need in the male psyche for possession of cool hands. We shall not expend ours. DROSTE

---

15 *Tigers Eye*, short-lived but influential arts and literature journal edited by John and Ruth Stephens over nine volumes (1947-1949). The elegant, eclectic series was reissued in 1967.

16 “Droste of Holland” was a popular fine chocolate brand at the time, advertising “Circlelettes of pure, mild bittersweet chocolate… wherever fine confections are sold” (as seen in the December 21, 1963, *New Yorker*).
Irving Rosenthal  

2.17.60  

[West Harding, MA]  

Now Irving:  

Let’s get down to business. A new TIGER’S EYE. See my letter to Howard S. of the 11th, w/o illustration as it is is enuf for NY. What we need is a good “topographical” survey of new forces inherent in the 60’s. Leave drugs alone. To the likes of “big” slicksters. Luce etc. What we must concentrate on is new use of (dialect, intonation, verb. Don’t forget Creeley is editing American section of Renate Gerhardt’s Fragments.17 But who needs it? As I have the fresh work from West Coast. Duncan, Joanne Kyger, Hazelwood, Also my own work shd. take care of Boston end. Do you want to include a “few” letters. They always add intimate touch. SAY one from Rumaker in asylum. And I ed. hit on Charles for article on HITLER he once promised me. Say 2 from Guest, or James Schuyler. ALSO yr own work by all means. I also have Lamantia & Spicer [bracketed, with “COTTON BATTEN” in the margin] with SHERRI MARTINELLI’S SHORT? prose? piece on RUTH GILDENBERG18 in hands of LeRoi. But lets leave NY verse alone. Unless someone like Jonathan Williams can hit us over the head with variety! Do you see a CITY of VOWELS rising from this? I know this must sound chaotic to you after the long hours you must put in at GROVE but the spur of yr. visit impending) impels me.  

The only one on the West Coast I really want to get involved with us is BERMAN. For a possible cover?? He has never failed me yet. Possibly a word on the film from him. He KNOWS. The old stars well. I will write to him when I receive definite word from you.  

Love  

John W.  

Philip Whalen  

2.17.60  

[West Harding, MA]  

Dear Philip Whalen:  

I’ve had word that Measure is starting again. & cd. you send me a short lyric on the “ordinary” around you. Not carbuncle, nor “magick” but that use of the ordinary object we [illeg] rather you practice so well. No spatial jumps now. Even the Indian myth wd. do. Yr. treatment of “fetish” if you believe in same. As I do. Roses, etc. 10,000. petals.)  

Any legend left? Yr. other mss. I left in Freude’s cellar 1960 21st Avenue, if you care to pick up same. I am sorry I forgot to bring same East, but I had no hope then.  

17 Renate Gerhardt, German translator and publisher who had an affair with Henry Miller in the 1960s.  

18 Sheri Martinelli (1929-1996), American painter, poet, and editor who spanned the Modernist and Beat generations. A protégé of Anais Nin and friend and lover of Ezra Pound, she later went on to become the “Queen of the Beats,” a muse to poets like Ginsberg. Her own poetry was striking in its original, surreal vision; and her visual artworks are widely collected. Ruth Goldenberg was a friend.
Note new predicament. Dilemma. Please exert force with Western forces to free poor Pip imprisoned behind China’s walls. The mainland here gone dry.

All love to you

John

The institution of course is no answer. Nor the, or any use of the mad, as Pound knew so well. What are yr. dreams telling you? Expect to hear from! 

Irving Rosenthal

February 21, 1960
[West Harding, MA]

Dearest Irving:

Why in the sun do I feel such oppression? We wait again from word. Famine of same? My mind so cluttered in Medfield there seems no way to yr. home. Olson arrived 10 minutes after yr. departure with some plans. We spent twilight together. Now Sunday call for dinner. And I will tie this up on return.

Hair of course is our secret answer. How fenced in they will never know. The insane tortures inflicted without will destroy each palace of the mind I attempt to erect here – Where when will the day of release be set? Every time I step out I seem to hurt something. “that no tenderness be lost”. How difficult to write those words after food.

I think of yrs often. The gifts.
And the new Measure? Now be honest. Without personal contact how much can be done. “Korrespondence imperative.

Again in faith

John

If ever two were one, then surely we. If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.
Thy love is such I can no way repay;
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let’s so persever,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

Charles Olson

[Feb 25, 1960]
[West Harding MA]

Morning of the 25th
with Mrs. Halloran, sitting on the bed, sunspots and all workers convene here.

19 Wieners has hand-copied Anne Bradstreet’s “To My Dear and Loving Husband”
Medfield State Hospital. the secret
source of the ring, alligator bag, ragged
nails, snap a button, at the belly

what we fear

    Cheeks spread, thru the fore
head bumping over ruts in the lot,
        Jumping
tractors and yellow trucks.

II

    Fields Corner itself, on the
overpass past St. Margaret’s, not nodding
to the bricks _

Empty railroad depot, by the radiators
    in stocking feet
stood up Cambridge Street

money, stocking cap, navy blue scarf
silver box, all the tricks of the trade.

Even handwriting betrays us. Overseas

Dear Charles:
    Here is 2nd copy of RAFT.

    Caught in asylum again, how hard to
break thru the wall. Wish you were here. Staff
meeting Tuesday clears nothing up except
word of day off to visit Widener and
study works of ancestors, James and William
Leave Stuart de Courcy20 for policia. Yr
greetings puts such stuff in my mouth,
The ward remains far away. But a Dr.
Kormes claims there will be new inter-
views.

20 Apparently matrilineal ancestors William MacKay Laffan (1848–1909) and Stuart de Courcy Laffan were both Irish authors.
Now take me back to my own ruins, the raft\textsuperscript{21} on the Naponset in February, with Mother beating thru the woods, red coat and all autumns come down, leaves caught in flood.

Gutters, Michael Murphy raking blue smoke by the old stone wall, swinging off birches, beechnut, the big rock and hot tin barrel.

Roll me over one more time. Marion for this scorch in the sun. Sister who haunts me in alleys off Blue Hill Avenue.

Rats under the crib, smashed glass and blankets hang out all windows of this mustard seed world.

---

**Charles Olson**  
*Leap Year [Feb. 29, 1960]*  
[West Harding, MA]

Dear Charles:

What with all the excitement in the air, chance provides us upper cavities to complain about. Your visit here a secret but no date set for release. Charge 4.50 per day. Is it worth? What news I can bring you.

Interview with Dr. Vispo talk of father’s hunch. And treatment of childhood. Wish I were in NY with Vien-er [aunts?]. Pleasant scope to the back-jam of [illeg] wds. and clearest view above his radiance.

There is a black queen in Journal which I wd. reproduce in M- if you let me. Such words so foreign pulled from my mouth by the Nurse.

“delight what tender mist drifts down foothills for the [illeg].

Ma visited Sunday. When will that well

\textsuperscript{21} “Now take me back to my own ruins…”
run dry. I try to keep you posted if that be your command.

John

Wallace Berman  March 2 [1960]  
[West Harding, MA]  
Dearest Wally:

Will you back me on the new Measure? Letter to Larry for another on Film and Thgt. But you cd. pass on few short lyrics. Read directly? And any mss. that might come into your hands dealing with the new breath. I E Alexander – also word HWPoems might be reprinted here in the East by “private foundation.”

There is no new word on my condition but general increase of labor continues. Hope to be released soon. Think of Tony Jacobs and our night at Jimbo’s. Poems still possess me.

Expect visit this weekend from I. Rosenthal who handles NY end but what I am anxious for is the underground production. A little inexact in my thinking so will have to close until you come through.

Visiting hours 3-4 and 7-8 at night. Walks through the ground under elms? Twice a day. Rise at 6 AM and retire before 11 PM so each hour seems full, especially with new issue before your most

Faithful  John

I dont expect you’re an answer from this slight attempt at long range consolidation but hope you see how exact and proper we must be with the new productions on the face and with the race – of this country.

Charles Olson  March 9 [1960]  
[West Harding, MA]  
Dear Charles:

How solitary I feel here. Surrounded by the bustle of the ward. first morning I hope without medication. The drugs of course allow us to enter the vision? any world but my touch/ sense

Charles Olson  March 9 [1960]  
[West Harding, MA]  
Dear Charles:

How solitary I feel here. Surrounded by the bustle of the ward. first morning I hope without medication. The drugs of course allow us to enter the vision? any world but my touch/ sense
of reality is diminished to such an extent that we are prey to any passing interruption. Here I go again. Name just called for more of what I feel takes away all spark/burst of new order on the confusion of these past two months. As you can see the handwriting changes. Back now with 3 more pills down. So many drugs over these years – after I had withdrawn on Scott Street for that blissful train trip across filled with ordinary concerns/hunger, money, schedules etc. All the paphernalia of traveling. The stuff hits immediately and I know it’s a sin to the soul but I follow orders so that my discharge may be advanced as soon as possible. If I don’t get out soon therapy includes electrical catheter treatment, something I don’t need at all, but which is being fostered here at such a clip that even my own deepest reserves are threatened. Trying to write a paper on childhood for Dr. Vispo. Thank you for writing Michael as his word here I still live off.

I have written to asked an aunt in New York for legal counsel and my family visits Sunday also gifts (Irving and an Else Dorfman22 from Grove on Saturday.

After hair cut and session at the piano with voices, what a multitude of birds, Lark, martin ghosts emit from these keys.

You can see how my language is threatened here, the constant repetition of connectives, but it is the only thing I can use to maintain what shreds of thought fear leaves.

I am trying to cohere some force for the new issue and am even trying on the name FORENOON for size. What do you think?

I see great prizes ahead. Now my pen points/ remains poised for that dart out the nearest exit. Until they provide it I contain the closet of my love for you.

John JAWN

Wallace Berman  March 13 [1960]
[West Harding, MA]

Dearest Wally:

Sunday evening and I sit in the twilight after supper. Thinking of the big photograph and how much I would like a copy, for the 2nd edition of THE Wentley Poems, if there is to be one. I’m not sure yet as maybe the first 500 were enough. Anything to displace the drawing by LaVigne.

———

22 Elsa Dorfman (b.1937), American photographer based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, known for her Polaroids of writers, artists, and rock stars. In 1959 and 1960 she worked as a secretary for Barney Rosset’s Grove Press in New York; she also founded the Paterson Society, a non-profit venture whose aim was to act as a liaison between poets and reading venues, particularly colleges.
What are your plans? I am in a state hospital, private room, visitors and family get togethers. Your gift has brought me such balm that it occupies the shadows of the my western window-sill along with the yellow stems, cup and bulb of a dead spring plant,

Let's hope that New England produces a gay May. If you ever want mss for future printing they are in care of Freude 1960 21st Ave. It is hard to write as the TV blares thru out the layers of this ward. And of course most of what we think is channeled to its level. CBPS as my mother wd say. Corn beef and potato salad. Today her birthday and this fact makes the moon rise fuller.

Until you come through again

measure my spirit by yours

JAWN

My love to Shirl and Tosh

---

**Dave Haselwood**

3.22.60

[West Harding, MA]

Dear David:

Still confined at Medfield but awaiting word from you. Whalen’s new book and a copy of Philip’s Narcotica I wd. appreciate. Sometimes all letters do not get through but I pray this one does. Visit last week from I. Rosenthal who brought Mike’s word. Please keep me on to your activities. If you do another edition of HWP see enclosed type.

I have psycho-analysis with Dr. Vispo 3 times a week. Monday 3:15 Tuesday 3:45 and Thursday 3:15PM. A private room up front by the desk but of course I am lonely for the bustle of the press. Until you respond I remain

Faithfully Jawn

---

**Wallace Berman**

May 13 [1960]

[West Harding, MA]

Dearest Wally:

Still under observation in the State Hospital how many more months (6) doctor [Raul or Rand] Vispo says. I think of you more than I should but find true communion impossible because of the interruption constant of TV 7 AM sometimes 6 till 11 PM but often your house i.e. 707 and the (our) show returns and the walls break and we move together, spirits dancing before the hearth.

Will you write and inform me of new work (rec’d both photographs and treasure Thur along with visits etc of Charles and Duncan last Thursday Irving Saturday and Mothers Day with Aunt Mary in Dorchester.

We are able to go out for one day a week if special guests arrive. Notice the new handwriting and continuance of my effort to keep my head above water. What a dangerous existence.

I wish I cd say more but even to write out now breaks the steady flow of keeping close to each movement within my ken. So many webs rather senses cluster voices will you send Semina 6 so I may bathe in the works of your hands.

---

Auerhahn Press published Philip Lamantia’s *Narcotica*, the American surrealist’s third book of poems (and second that year with Auerhahn).
Now return soon and know how precious your words are.

In strength Jawn John

* * * *

This next letter to Ginsberg is the only one from the nine month period between his first and second hospitalizations, a time when he was cared for by various friends, especially Rosenthal and LeRoi Jones, who signed for legal custodianship so Wieners could spend time in the city with them. The next letters in the collection, to friend and publisher Dave Haselwood, are written from Metropolitan State Hospital in Waltham, Massachusetts, where he was held from March through August 1961.

* * * *

Allen Ginsberg

November 4, 1960

[New York City]

Dear Allen:

Please forgive this rather hasty note. I am trying to get to a poetry reading. Here are all the copies of MARIJUANA I could get. They are looking for me for more. Also two added clippings I found referring to drugs, printed since I left.

I didn’t call Felicia Geffen at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, as I will wait until I really need it. It was a moment of panic I called you. Sorry I missed you at the Village Gate. I could have been there too, out wandering around with Szabo.

Am coming in for Joanne’s reading November 11, or 12th with Helen Adam, so will see you then.

Love,

John

Wieners

Dave Haselwood

March 19, 1961

[Waltham, MA]

Dearest David:

Forgive this short note after this longest time of silence but I rose from a bed of sickness under compulsion to write to you.

Will there be a small second edition of THE HOTEL WENTLEY POEMS?, as there seems to be some demand! My father even tried in Greenwich Village without success. My mother [no second page]

Dear David,

You must give me some response to let same know you are well. And that the press is likewise.

Re-reading constantly in NEW AMERICAN POETRY ANTHOLOGY (1945-60) my own excerpts from “WENTLEY” POEMS. I am so ashamed for the “yeah”(s) and the limp wrist evident; also for the fact of saying in print. “That poetry is no more holy act… than say, shitting”. There is nothing I can do, except apologize, for those words, to ones like yourself, who are giving their very existence over to it. What an honor to have some lines printed, to be able to list my self as your close friend, and to have tender, intimate memories together! Of those days when I was in need and had benefit from you and others, Lavigne and Michael. Neither of whom have I written. It is so far now. But we may bridge this space gap here somehow.

How can I help here. Having HARVARD so close and BOSTON’S multifarious book-shops to carry AUERHAHN’S items. I could be an outlet on the quieter parts of the East Coast. Let me know how this sounds to you.

My very dearest love,
John

---

“Blake had a friend and patron in Thomas Butts who fulfilled the artist’s golden rule: “The worship of God is: Honoring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best…”

“I am … grateful to the kind hand that endeavors to lift me out of despondence even if it lifts me too high.”

Dearest Dave:

How wonderful to think of you coming East. Of course, you would be my guest, or will be, as I would be yours,

May 25, 1961

May the little prince guide our hours

Dear Dave:

This is the second letter started to you. I know that if I persevere I may be able to finish it. I write every day but to get the mind in such order that out of the confusion inbred there, order beauty proceeds, I am most grateful for that I strive.

It is not ourselves right now that demands the major attention but the fact that the press is still operating and even more important, remains in existence. It is three years now?

25 Wieners may be referring to the casualness of his “Statement of Poetics,” which ends with the phrase “You bet”; there is only one actual “yeah” in his contributions to New American Poetry, in “A Poem for the Insane,” reprinted from The Hotel Wentley Poems.
How you are to be congratulated, when so many have fallen by the roadside. How you do it appears as a miracle! Pay the rent and extend yourself as the mighty lion thru the jungle or even more important; the wild auerhahn thru the forest.

[cut] the end of the summer. And we will go to HARVARD together and to visit Charles and wander around historic landmarks. God threw us together once, at Lamantia’s reading, I believe but I cannot remember just whose it was; possibly one of [Larry] Jordan’s films; what I do remember was Foster’s afterwards, and some hot soup.

And staying in your room for a week and writing the poems afterwards with Bob, that year or the next I do not remember. Whether it was my condition then or my condition now I cannot say.

It seems those meetings that later come to rule us take place in reality in such a haphazard manner that the facts slide by the conscious mind.

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Letters Never Sent
The full moon causes a restlessness in the spirit as compelling as alcohol or drugs. May wind blows along the window and causes neighbors’ trees to brush against the wood, in a song silent to my ears.

Others may hear.
Suddenly sun shines and brings a lift to the spirit shadows and clouds never do. Crowds never do or even small groups addressed as this. It is all the same
There are 5 other pages to this letter, already destroyed but be assured there is O full moon let these letters shine As phosphorence upon the ocean’s brine. I cannot hold my tent flaps down.

The #2 is for Marshall’s book. God love you.

Faithfully,
John
Dearest Wallace:

Still in hospital but there is nothing to say about it except I have weekends home and am quite involved with family.

Now New words on the American Bandstand “each” afternoon at 4. Museums, and libraries, each weekend with sometimes a play on Saturday night.

Sophocles’ Ajax all in Greek and Eliot’s The Cocktail Party at the Charles Playhouse what used to be THE MIDTOWN RENDEZ-VOUS and my favorite singer next door “I WANT A SUNDAY KIND OF LOVE” in her blue evening gown. White Billies. I cd. say NOTHING CHANGES but the cornbeef in our bellies. Internal ones but you and Semina holding forth like eternals, I love

JOHNSON

I tried to send a poem with the letter, what I cannot do anymore, string the words out in “a meaningful” pattern, what the ancients never knew that you are one in our communion of saints, working over the type, each individual letter nursed by your hand. How many can match this.

In the rain
On his birthday
The man I haunted men’s shops for
Buying cuff-links
In the heat.

Oh, to hold open his naked arms

FOR HIS BIRTHDAY

As love sweet sweet as love
after the rain the birds singing
at twilight in the trees the air love
as loud as birds at twilight
after the rain singing in the trees
loud as love after the rain singing
birds in the trees at twilight.

26 A loopy cross-out mark goes down from “after” to “twilight,” over to “trees” and then up to “singing,” appearing to loosely redact those two lines at least.
Charles and Betty Olson
Sunday June 18 [1961]
[Waltham, MA]

Dear Charles and Bette:

Just a short note to thank you for the wonderful dinner and time spent Saturday. Enclosed find Herald book review which I hope you’ll keep. I’ll wait to hear from you before I come again as I don’t feel I contributed very much to the day.

Just an open ear for you, Sir.
Best wishes and
Love,
John

* * * * *

Released from the hospital Aug 25, 1961, Wieners returned home to Milton to stay with his parents again and try to recover from his treatments. His letters from this period are moving for Wieners’ renewed dedication to poetry; as he tells Dave Haselwood, “I am still young enough to wait, and have no hope of fame.” In its way this was an exciting time for Wieners as he rebuilt his life, “devour[ing] the Public Library,” reading Waugh, Greene, Woolf, Melville, Jung – anything he could get his hands on. His biggest project was getting back the reins of his career, picking up the threads of publications and a theatrical production that had been initiated during his electroshocked blank period.

* * * * *

Dave Haselwood
Sunday, August 27 [1961]
[Milton, MA]

Dearest Dave:

The importance of the Auerhahn now. I realize it reading Dark Brown,\(^{27}\) and seeing the Dogtown,\(^{28}\) and being home, for good!

That it all goes on, without one, except for you. And with this shiny new machine. I am preparing a book, and would hesitate to send you anything until it is done. Also the fact that you are busy, and probably sick of ‘poetry’. Are you working on Philip’s now?

Am spending each day working on it. And thinking of you, and your trip, how important it will be. Seeing you, and showing you the manuscript, in person. Even doing a little traveling together. Traveling light, as Mambah says. Sings. I am with you in all things, am now there, in the touch typing of my fingers, not wanting to let go.

\(^{27}\) Michael McClure’s Dark Brown was first published by Auerhahn Press in 1961. Dave Haselwood reprinted it under his eponymous imprint in 1967.

\(^{28}\) Charles Olson’s Maximus, From Dogtown – I was published with a slate-grey cover and introduction by Michael McClure in 1961 by Auerhahn Press.
Andy (Andrew!) left me 5 Hotel Wentley Poems, and I am so proud, even tho it being over 3 years ago. How the poems come out of the simple acts of each day. How I wish you were here. My mother is an awful talker, and takes over each social situation, monopolizing McClure and Andrew both, satisfying her ego best, while Else just walked in Walden Lake behind us, and let us talk together alone! sometimes my mother doesn't even realize she's talking. How good it is to be in love, even though it is only long distance.

I have mixed myself a drink. Gin and Quinine. The press is in the black, and how can I hold back, the rhyme.

I will not remove from him my steadfast love,  
or be false to my faithfulness.  
I will not violate my convenant
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.
Once for all I have sworn my holiness:  
I will not lie to David.
His line shall endure for ever,  
his throne as long as the sun before me.
Like the moon it shall be established for ever;  
the witness in the skies is sure. Selah!
But now thou hast cast off and rejected,  
thon art full of wrath against thy anointed.
Thou hast renounced the convenant with thy servant;  
thou hast trodden his crown in the dust.
Thou hast breached all his walls;  
Thou hast laid his strongholds in ruins.

Psalm 89

‘Cool breezes round my forehead  
‘Cool liquors in my throat  
So what if years to come  
No one hears a single note.

Cool breezes on my forehead  
Cool liquors down my throat  
So soon if in years to come  
Someone hears a single note.

On rereading the manuscripts done, I give up all hope of a book. I believe it is something beyond me now, but then again I may change my mind. We'll see what the dogend of the year produces.

I am still young enough to wait, and have no hope of fame. Don’t mistake this as despair, as I am far from it today. The joy of writing or the ‘apprehension’ of it is with me always. And some part of me must be left out there. I feel it so, that the dance of the day is not complete until or unless I go through all the cycles of emotion, even tho this is not the most fitting occupation of a man. As I wrote to Andrew, I am reading Whitman’s Leaves of
Grass, and the most amazing thing, you can not open the book anywhere, but there is something on it, to read, that entices one, moves you, and I even hear echoes of him in McClure. Dark Brown, such a masterpiece of print. How these three years, you have served so faithfully.

I wish I had the money to bring you East in the style you do deserve.

Also, so good to read of your trip to Sierras. I am so hungry for all news of anyone, that I believe I have come into a second being of some sort.

I send you these notes from a journal just to send them, and have no hope of a response. Don’t feel any obligation towards them.

There will be others, and if there is not, there has been enough.

Love to you and Bob LeVigne,
John

---

Don Allen
October 2, 1961
[Milton, MA]

Dear Don:

Here’s a selection of poems taken out of a journal for 1961. Use any that meet your eye, as few or as many as you wish. They are all unpublished but form the substance for a new book I believe Auerhahn plans to bring out. I’d rather you didn’t use any from Floating Bear, as the quality is so poor, and they are so old. I have revised the entire set done there, used without my knowledge or permission, you might like to know.

Your letter brings all sorts of pleasant reactions here.

And much good luck to you in your work.

Faithfully and
with love,

John

PS?

Let me hear soon and I can send others, if these are lacking or fail you in any way.

---

Irving Rosenthal
November 9, 1961
[Milton, MA]

Dear Irving:

I have thought of you over the months, and tried to write to you, but nothing ever comes of it; you were in Cuba, you sick with hepatitis, you were living uptown, and finally I heard from Barbara Moraff, that you are back on 8th Street, and so I try again.29

29 Many New York writers, artists, and intellectuals had been traveling to Cuba to see Castro’s new socialist state; LeRoi Jones visited in 1959, and both Rosenthal and Howard Schulman (of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee) visited in 1961, later appearing together at Columbia University for a talk on current events in the island nation. Barbara Moraff (b. 1939), American poet. By the time she was 18 she had already published in Evergreen Review, leading
I wish I had some memory of last year, but I do not, of living with you, of your kindness, but all is a blank. All I remember is waking up in the hospital, trying to get well in April, and finally after 30 shock treatments at Bournewood, and 91 insulin treatments at Metropolitan State, I was discharged last August 25th. And I am quite well; I go into Boston nearly every day, looking for work, or visiting friends, who have also been through the galleys; and think about my past, which is most tantalizing as I believe the shock treatments took away my memory.

I have no memory of Medfield, or the many visits there, of your calls, or the trip to New York. I have most of the information from my mother second-hand, that I was even on East 8th Street; what we lived like, where, and how we survived from day to day with no money I do not know, except it must have been through your generosity.

So this note is to thank you, and to hope you will answer even if it only be a few short lines, that you are well, and that I will see you again. For I truly want to, Irving, but don't know how.

Some days I hope you will write, or even call, but on what presumption this hope is based, I do not know. I just know that I feel a great affection towards you, but its root is

Kerouac to give her the nickname “the baby of the Beat generation.” Since 1961 she has lived in Vermont.

The long-term effects of electroshock therapy has been well documented; less known today are the other early and mid-twentieth century treatments for mental illness, including the induced insulin coma. This treatment was first developed in the late thirties, after psychiatrists noticed that a post-coma patient was more placid, “less self conscious,” as Robert Whitaker writes in Mad in America, “detached’ from their preoccupations of before. The ‘emotional charge’ that had once fueled their delusions and inner demons would diminish and perhaps even fade away altogether.” However, studies showed that the more treatments the patient received, “the more severe was the pathology,” with autopsies of patients treated thusly showing evidence of neuronal shrinkage and death, softening of the brain, and “areas of cellular waste.” The pathology often resembled the brain damage that arises from an extended shutoff of oxygen to the brain, leading some to speculate that insulin coma killed cells in this manner as well (89).

Bournewood Hospital, private psychiatric facility in Brookline, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, where it has stood since 1895. In the 1960s Bournewood was in severe decline; by the late seventies it was in such financial and physical disrepair that it lost its accreditation.

In a letter dated December 4, 1961, Rosenthal replied to Wiener's:

You have a way of creeping up behind me with a club of stars. I would have answered you sooner if I could. We spent a lot of time talking, and I was at my wit’s end thinking of ways to keep you talking & bring you out of yourself – that was mainly how we spent our time. I don’t know how to respond to 30 plus 91 shock treatments. I don’t know how to respond to even one shock treatment. I think they are a vendetta, but it’s over, you are well and exploratory, and your muse is smiling at you (thanks for the poem!) and she will never leave your side.
most shadowy and tenuous. It’s almost, or is, a love for a brother, one has not seen for many years. And yet the love remains there, nothing can take that away, except the beloved is blurred. I saw your photograph in a book, and it moved me so much because I cannot even bear to look at it, where it is, in a bookshop or on the shelves of a friend’s apartment. Just there, with your face turned as if listening to a wall.

The enclosed I synthesized yesterday. It is incomplete but pleases me more than the hasty notations I keep in a notebook. The underlined words did come from dreams, and the rest is just romanticizing. But how to work in the dream words to a whole is the problem and preoccupation. As they appear in the dream as complete, but of course by the time I am awake the body of the poem is lost, and I am left with the tantalizing fragments.

What are you reading? I devour the Public Library, and have gone through most of Waugh again, and as much Graham Greene as is in, just to keep some mystery in my life. The novels of Ronald Firbank are out in one complete edition, from New Directions. I want the gay now, what is just a little bit unreal. I will start Virginia Woolf. Also I read Moby Dick for the first time, and am now on Pierre, which he started just a few weeks after he finished Moby Dick.

Also in the hospital, I read Jung’s AION, Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self, and kept notes.32

But this is all me. What I think about is you, and long to be rejoined. If that is too blunt, let it stand. “The heart! the heart! ‘tis God’s anointed; let me pursue the heart:” (from Pierre).

“I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart, than Jupiter Olympus with his head.” (Melville, in a letter to Hawthorne, spring of 1851).

If you call I don’t know what to say, but if you write, my heart will blossom, and I will answer.

32 Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966), English novelist, biographer, and journalist renowned for his wit and impeccable prose, in such work as the novels Vile Bodies (1930) Brideshead Revisited (1945). Graham Greene (1904-1991), English novelist, playwright, and screenwriter who wrote espionage tales alongside more philosophical works about the modern human condition and his own Roman Catholicism. Ronald Firbank (1886-1923), openly gay British novelist whose witty writing was heavily influenced by fin-de-siècle aesthetes like Oscar Wilde. New Directions brought out the Complete Ronald Firbank in 1961. Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), English modernist writer and feminist. Herman Melville’s Moby-Dick was published in 1851, and Charles Olson’s groundbreaking first book, 1947’s Call Me Ishmael, was required reading for his students, so it may be notable that this confession – just getting around to Moby-Dick in 1961 – was made to Rosenthal and not Olson. C.G. Jung’s AION: Research into the Phenomenology of Self was published in the United States by Princeton University’s Bollingen Series in 1959. A continuation of Jung’s later work in alchemy and religion, AION looks closely at the rise of Christianity and the persistence of the fish symbol. In 1964, Charles Stein published AION: A Journal of Traditionary Science, a magazine of occult philosophy and poetry, featuring Gerrit Lansing, Robert Duncan, Aleister Crowley, and Robert Kelly.
If you are in good spirits, or unhappy, I want to know. If I show up at your door, will it open? What do you think?

Love,

John

I want to mail this off, right away before I tear it up.

Tell me about that forgotten year. B. Moraff mentions that I had a notebook, called Jewels, which is either lost, or possibly with some things if any left with you.

If only I was there, I don’t know how long it would last, but right now, it is close to love. Try and forgive this letter; I feel it is a blathering of feelings that border on the un-real; but know that they are felt and genuine at this time.

IF

only someone would call and take me out riding
in the afternoon
we would park under the trees and make love
in a lane.

In my closet I keep an old Bible
and boxes full of letters
I cannot answer again.

I also have a notebook
with words I write down
from dreams:

    too slender to cross the narrow reef
    wreathed at the wrist, wreathed at the waist.

Do not say this is so
    said my grandfather
he who gave me my first car
and took me over the mountains to see it.

    they have not heard it nor seen it
    milk white song run from the lily pod
they have not heard
    song milk white from the lily-pod
This next letter is his first to Diane di Prima, who was his lifelong friend and champion, first through her poetry newsletter *The Floating Bear* (co-edited with LeRoi Jones) and the New York Poets’ Theatre. With Freddy Herko, Alan Marlowe, and LeRoi Jones she had formed the Poets’ Theatre in Spring 1961, and Wieners’ play “A One Act Scene” was on their second slate of one-acts. Rosenthal, who was holding Wieners’ papers and personal belongings for him while he was hospitalized, had given them a copy of Wieners’ play but specified that they could not perform it without Wieners’ permission, worried that it was not Wieners’ best work, written at a time of great personal duress. Rosenthal advised Wieners, “I personally don’t care too much for the play. It could be that I don’t understand it, but it seems fragmented to me, and the sad state you must have been in when you wrote it makes me want to cry. I hasten to say that Diane, Jimmy Waring, & the other two are creaming over it, but I think they like it for the wrong reasons.”

However displeased Wieners was with the production – he expresses his thoughts later in this period of letters – he continued his collaboration with the Poets’ Theatre through the early 1960s: *Still Life*, in January 1962 (on a bill with Duncan’s *Faust Foutu: Act IV* and Waring’s *Nights at the Tango Palace* at the Off-Bowery Theater), and *Asphodel in Hell’s Despite* (at Judson Memorial Church) in 1963. Reviewing *Still Life* for *The Floating Bear*, Jerry Benjamin called it “disconnected in form in a manner which is compelling.” Of the night’s triple bill, Benjamin felt, Wieners’ “was closest to the author in tenor.” Looking back on the period in her *Recollections of My Life as a Woman*, di Prima recalls the “haunting” *Still Life*, with its “marvelous set and costumes, and a young, very intense Yvonne Ranier,” but admits that in these early days of the theater “I am not quite sure that his amazing words were truly memorized… The plays were dark, the way that time of the year is dark, as the sun sinks to its lowest point, and in New York you are boxed in by shadows.”

---

*Diane di Prima*

November 21, 1961

[Milton, MA]

Dear Diane Di Prima:

Andrew Hoyem tells me that the New York Poets’ Theatre is producing a play of mine, which Irving Rosenthal has in his possession. The strange thing about this play is that I have no memory of ever having written it, either its title or anything of its subject matter.

---

34 *Floating Bear Anthology* 191.
35 279.
Therefore I rely on you to clue me in, even to the extent of sending me an actor’s copy, so I could see what’s up, and thereby give you my permission to go ahead with it. Not that there is anything holding me back; but if you would send me the date of opening night, I could down for it, possibly even see some of the rehearsals.

A friend in Boston, a painter by the name of Tom Balas, had a copy of DINNERS AND NIGHTMARES in his possession, and I read it all through, enjoyed it, and see it as something unique in the field, something of which you should be very proud.\[36\]

Also the faithfulness of Floating Bear, its regularity, not to mention the hard work is all to your credit.

Let me know when you can the dates of the play, and I will see you then, if same happens; it’s an ambition come true.

Sincerely,

John Wieners

John Wieners

PS: My first reaction on re-reading this is that I had no hesitancy in worrying about permission for the play, or whether there was any quality to the project or not. All I have is Andrew’s information to go on, which is enough, I believe.

---

Don Allen

November 26, 1961

[Milton, MA]

PS: Could you return what you don’t use? If any, you do.

Dear Donald:

Thank you for your letter of the 6th of this month, and the check, both of which made me supremely happy.

This Wednesday was spent with Charles Olson in Gloucester, along with Andrew Hoyem, Gerrit Lansing and Harry Martin, a painter.\[37\] Andrew says you keep in close touch with the Auerhahn which has created quite an achievement over the last three years. We spent the day and night with Charles, and it was wonderful to renew old ties. We talked of you and Olson has transmitted some message via Andrew which I hope he remembers to give you.

---

36 di Prima’s book of short stories, Dinners and Nightmares, first published by Corinth Books, the publishing arm of Ted and Eli Wilentz’s Eighth Street Bookshop, in 1961. It was reissued in 1998 by Last Gasp.

37 Gerrit Lansing (b. 1928), American poet and scholar who has spent decades at the center of Gloucester and Boston’s poetry and arts communities. After studying at Harvard (where he was tennis partners with John Ashberry) and Columbia Universities, he published two issues of the literary journal Set. His essays and criticism, A February Sheaf, came out in 2003, and his collected poetry, Heavenly Tree, Northern Earth, in 2009.
I spent most of my intown time with Jonas, Tom Balas and Joe Dunn, who hopes to start the White Rabbit here. Also I look for work, some part-time job to give me $25 a week; if only I was subsidized as Duncan, etc. Right now I am on a $5 a week allowance from my father. But I am going to New York within the month for a one-act scene of mine which the New York Poets’ Theatre is presenting, staged by James Waring, if all goes well. They tell me Duncan is on the same bill.

Right now I send you new work; also two poems by Gerrit Lansing, 92 Main Street, Gloucester, which you might want to use. Let me know how the new book develops, and if you want more work. Feel free to choose as many as you want.

I also hear from Else Dorfman of Paterson Society, who offers some kind of tour; but the real heart’s desire is to be in San Francisco in the spring, when the new book appears. Possibly help run it through the press. There is also Barbara Moraff, 250 East 4th Street, #22, New York City 9, whose work is out of our ordinary, but might prove interesting to you.

There of course is always the Woodberry Poetry Room at Lamont to keep abreast of the new magazines. What a knockout Locus Solus #1 is. Andrew says, who had lunch with John Ashbery in Paris, that the magazine is all subsidized, and they have a free hand editorially?.

Know you have my best in your work there, and my own personal

love

John Wieners

Charles Olson          December 5, 1961
[Milton, MA]

Dearest Charles:

Thank you so much for two weeks ago Wednesday time at your house. Your hospitality never ceases to gratify me.

I can’t send any poems, because none please me that much, and I know they would not please you, not that that is the main object, but what good are they if they don’t bring pleasure; by that I mean joy. I sent a group to Gerrit and will ask him if he will bring them over to you.

The main purpose of this note is to get the address of that flyer from Cuba: ARRIBA. I enclose a postcard for you, if you can just take time out to scribble down

38 Locus Solus, avant-garde literary magazine named for Raymond Roussel’s 1914 French novel, published in France by Harry Matthews, and edited by New York School poets. James Schuyler edited issues 1 and 5, Kenneth Koch did issue 2, and John Ashbery numbers 3 and 4. The first issue featured Barbara Guest, Ebbe Borregaard, the New York editors, Edwin Denby, and others. Future issues would feature writers from Europe and the United States, including new “cut-up” work of Ashbery and William Burroughs. For more of Locus Solus’ history and images of its covers, see Jed Birmingham’s brief history at realitystudio.org.
Howard Loeb Schulman’s address,39 I will be most grateful; as I would like to have a copy of magazine and flyer sent to you.

Duncan’s photograph is in this week’s NY Times Book Review, along with a group review of his OPENING OF THE FIELD. It is the photograph used in The Evergreen Review, Number 2, when they did the issue on San Francisco, the ‘cross-eyed king’ one.40

Last night went to hear T.S. Eliot at Boston College.41 He read for an hour and a half. The only poem he showed any enthusiasm for was a dog poem called Morgan. At least that was the only one you could hear in toto.

Will go to New York this weekend for opening of play at Poets’ Theatre. I hope you got the flyer. I knock on wood that all will be successful. I can’t worry about the play, as I know nothing about it; it’s just the trip down that worries me, where to stay, etc. It will be the first bit of traveling I’ve done since last December.42 Well, ‘don’t worry about the future’ as you say, and live, so I won’t.

Goodnight, Charles and much love,
John

Thank you again for your time and devotion to us.

Irving Rosenthal
January 17, 1962
[Milton, MA]

Dear Irving:

Forgive me for not arriving Monday night.

I traveled over to your place Sunday to tell you that I was leaving the next day and would not be able to see you, as we had planned that evening; but there was no one at home

39 Arriba, a “cooperative bilingual magazine” published by Peruvian poet Juan Gonzalo Rose in 1961, featuring Wieners and Howard Loeb (“Howie”) Schulman. Schulman was a political radical, a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New York who edited Pa’lante: Poetry Polity Prose of a New World, a journal put out by the “League of Militant Poets” in May 1962. Schulman included a prose piece of Wieners’ called “Monday (In the jungle)” in 1961. Schulman was under FBI observation from 1961 on because of his pro-Castro activities and an “unauthorized visit” to Cuba, and was arrested in 1963 in Morocco in connection with the assassination of President John Kennedy, though beyond his Cuba connection, there was no other link to the murder were alleged (J Edgar Hoover memo, December 20, 1963, Harold Weisberg Archive).
40 Duncan’s The Opening of the Field was reviewed along with three other books of poetry (by Theodore Weiss, Olive Brooks, and Lee Anderson) in the New York Times on December 3, 1961, by Arthur Zeiger; Duncan’s “cross-eyed” photo was the only one included.
41 T.S. Eliot’s December 4, 1961, reading at Boston College was his second and last visit to the school.
42 By this point Wieners had been back on the east coast a year, since traveling back and being ambush-hospitalized. The terror felt since is put into lyric and yet less “confessional” form in “The Acts of Youth,” written the same night as this letter, and included in his next letter to Olson.
I went up on the roof, and smoked a joint, very lonely as I remember, on the parapets, overlooking East Eighth Street. I walked back across town; after leaving the wicker basket, outside your door; to the Theatre, and saw Eila Kokinen. We walked in, but after watching it for five minutes, I left in a cloud of embarrassment. Alone.

I couldn’t take 31 St. Mark’s place any longer, so took the 4:30 bus out Monday afternoon, after missing the 2:30 one. Joe Rivers and Jarry drove me to the station, and I remember the hectic ride, careening around New York streets, high in the afternoon. Jarry had vomited during the night, and I was sleeping in Joe’s bed, while he had to share a cot with Jarry sideways. So I thought it would be too much of an imposition to stay another night. Anyways, I was under a cloud, whether because of the two days of rain, or my cold, or having spent all my money on bad grass, I cannot say.

Anyways, Jarry’s place was in an awful mess, and I couldn’t take it any longer. I bought Cain’s Book in the bus station and read it on the way back, and it has haunted me ever since.

For some reason, there was a spirit in New York that weekend that I couldn’t overcome, or rise above, so I left. The only time I could break through it was the time spent with you, and at Elia’s. I can’t stay and fight a scene, it seems, or wait for it to pass; I only retreat.

So know you have my apologies for not coming to you, and I hope our friendship is not lessened because of it.

Would it be possible that you would like to take a trip to Boston, and change your scene for a little bit while? If so, I would be your most glad host. It might do you some good to get away for a while, and although there is not much to do here, we could take buses, and sight-see. See my friends, Steve Jonas and Tom Balas, Jerome Mallman, both painters, and Joe Dunn. What do you say? Why not do yourself a honor and get away?

I wrote to Edward J. Ennis today, thanking him for the award, and telling him of my plans, to start Measure again, and go to San Francisco in the spring. If I dont see you before that, that is when I hope to see you again.

It has been three days since I started this letter. It is now Saturday, and I have been out to see my doctor today. He somehow got word that I was associating with narcotic addicts and told me that we were under observation. All of this has upset me very much, even invaded

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43 *Cain’s Book* was published in 1960 by Scottish Beat writer Alexander Trocchi. It was an immediate scandal and underground hit for its frank (and autobiographical) depiction of heroin use and its uncompromising, often non-narrative style.

44 It is unclear what award Wieners is referring to; Edward J. Ennis (1908–1990) was a longtime director of the American Civil Liberties Union. Before that he worked in the federal government, where he oversaw the “alien enemy control unit,” despite his vociferous opposition to its program of internment of Japanese-Americans; in this respect Ennis had an experience with the Roosevelt administration that was similar to Olson’s, so perhaps he is the connection.
my dreams, so that I am being kept where I don’t want to be. He recommended a new drug
to cure depression, its name is Tofranil,45 and I take it three times a day; it usually takes 10
days to work, but if it is not successful, then he asked my sister if she could give it to me
intravenously!

I’m afraid his questions took me off guard, and I told him more than I should have, so that
this new drug is the result. I asked him if the information was confidential, and that my
family doesn’t know, but he didn’t say yes; he would keep it to himself. All of this of course
is personal trivia, but it does add burden to a life already weighted.

To rise above myself, or to make best use of oneself, this is my ambition, my aim; not to be
weighted in personalism. Whatever here are two poems, which have their rough spots in
rhyme, and clarity of expression, meaning; but I enclose them to you as an offering:

If thou in me the sweet flush of love see46
Know it comes of the rose that does not die
But lives in the corner of thy true eye
A coarser blossom than eternity
Since it too perishes and fades from earth
And drops into that kingdom without joys
Where all wingèd things cruel time destroys.
Let this be said I loved with all my worth.

And with thee gone I hold thee closer still
Than if thy cheek pressed up against my hand
And will go on loving thee sweet until
My name and thine erased are from sand
For that substance contrary to belief
Is as eternal as the ocean’s grief.

Love to you

John

He too must with me wash his body, though47
at far distant time and over endless space
take the cloth unto his cock and on his face
engage in the self same toilet as I do now.

A cigarette light upon
his lips; would they were mine
and by this present moon swear his allegiance.
If he ever looks up, see the clouds and breeches
in the sky, and by the stars, lend his eyes shine.

45 Tofranil was one of the marketed forms of imipramine, the first tricyclic antidepressant,
developed in the late 1950s.
46 “If thou in me the sweet flush of love see…”
47 “He too must with me wash his body, though…”
What do I care for miles? or rows of friends lined up in groups? sweet songs, the light’s bright glare.
Once he was there, now he is not, I search the empty air the candle feeds upon and my heart, my eyes gone blind to love and all he was capable of, the sweet patience when he put his lips to places I cannot name because now they are not what they once were, the same sun shines and larks break forth from winter branches.

James Schuyler
January 24, 1962
[Milton, MA]
Dearest Jimmy:

What a surprise to get your letter, and such charm to it, too. I went through my manuscripts and found one called: The Acts of Youth, which I suppose is the one you mean. I would very much like to be in Locus Solus, as I read it at Harvard, and was able to buy a copy of Number 1 at the Pangloss Book Shop. Thank you for asking me.

Congratulations on the prize re Current Events. I read it twice and loved it. “Your historian” Last summer at our Milton Public Library I found a book on a bench, and much to my delight your photograph was on the back of it. I took it home and devoured it, (I am smiling now) this was before I read Kenneth Grahame’s Wind in the Willows, Dream Days, and Golden Age, the only three, I think, he ever wrote. Your Alfred and Guinivere is very close to his, in style and mood. I hope you write more on this stunning duo. I also hope, for your own pleasure, that you have read Kenneth Grahame.

It has come into my means that I am able to publish one or two more issues of Measure. For the next issue which will go to the printer sometime after the 1st of February, I have included two of your poems: Shed Market and Joint. They will open the magazine. Now, are you satisfied with this? Or would you rather send some others for inclusion? There is plenty of space and I would love to have same. I believe I’ve had these manuscripts nearly five years. They’ve probably traveled 12,000 miles, but at least they are going into print (knock on wood). I hope you are pleased, but if you would rather send somethings more contemporary, don’t hesitate to do so.

If I don’t hear from you, I will just go ahead with Shed Market and Joint. I send two rhymers for your own grief. I don’t know why I write that, except they are sad poems, and will go on mounting up pity until I am bathed in it. I love you James, and hope the sun shines as brightly on you as it does here, before breakfast.

Until we see each other again, I remain

Faithfully,
John Wieners

* * * * *

In January 1962, almost exactly five years after first conceiving of Measure, John Wieners found himself back in Boston, staying with his parents and relaunching the magazine with its long-planned “City Issue.” In those intervening five years Wieners had lived a uniquely glorious and agonized life
as a full-time poet, and the experiences of those years, and the relationships forged and lost then, would inform this final Measure as well as his next (and first full-length) book, the 1964 masterpiece Ace of Pentacles, a collection which encompassed work from 1954 right up till printing. That book’s centerpiece, “The Acts of Youth,” is included in one letter to Olson, as is a description of the night that gave rise to it. On December 5, 1961, a year after his ambush hospitalization, he writes to Olson with excitement over upcoming events but anxiety at the prospect of traveling again, this time down to New York for a performance of his first Poets’ Theatre play, reminding himself “dunt worry about the future’ as you say, and live, so I wont.”

In his next letter, the trip successful, he includes a typescript of “The Acts of Youth,” a poem he tells Olson may have “merit in places.” It is dated December 5, 1961, and in it he echoes the fears in his letter, the “fear of travelling, of the future without hope / or buoy.” From this private terror Wieners keeps moving outward, changing from “I” to “one” to the whole suffering world: by the end, the voice is fully outspread into the plural, the glorious “We rise again in the dawn.” This centrifugal move, from the deeply singular out to the collective, is Wieners’ most significant inheritance from Olson; it is his astonishing ability to use his own “pain and suffering” so that, as Denise Levertov wrote in an Ace of Pentacles review, “they are not autobiographically written about, they are conditions out of which it happens that the songs arise.”

* * * * *

Dave Haselwood

January 24, 1962

[Milton, MA]

Dear Andrew and Dave:

Thank you for your letters of the 2nd, 3rd, 8th, and 22nd, all received.

I have thought it all out, and the only title I can find is: FOR WHAT TIME SLAYS. It is from a poem of Hart Crane’s. I have been through his book twice and cannot discover just what verse it is.49 I also enclose two short poems, I hope short enough, for you to choose from, for the catalogue, which sounds like a grand and elegant idea.

48 Levertov 227.
49 “For what time slays” is a line from Crane’s masterpiece The Bridge.

Then let you reach your hat and go.
As usual, let you—also walking down—exclaim to twelve upward leaving a subscription praise for what time slays.

It is from this same section of Crane’s epic, “The Tunnel,” that Wieners drew the title for his one-act play Asphodel, in Hell’s Despite, Crane writes, “watch the curtain lift in hell’s despite.”
I received an award from the Poets Foundation for 1961, and with the monies I am publishing one or two more issues of Measure, just to fulfill my obligations. The first one goes to the printer the 1st of February. Also there will be enough left over for me to go to San Francisco this spring or early summer with the manuscripts of the book, and we three can plan it together, if that meets your specifications. Anyway, it will be grand to see you again, and pick up some loose ends. What do you say? Isn’t it wonderful the way life or Fate or outside consciousness treats us. Down one day, and up the next. I had one cent in my pocket the day the check arrived, for $1500 dollars.

I have been to New York twice, since I last saw you Andrew, the day before Thanksgiving, for performances of the play at the New York Poets Theatre. It was a failure, I believe, the production was so poor; no lights the first performance. But the audience liked it, although I sat and shivered all over. Gregory Corso was there, and Frank O’Hara, Carl Solomon, Irving Rosenthal, Howard Schulman, Leroi Jones, Joel Oppenheimer, Ted Wilenz, Arlene Dahlberg, Diane Di Prima, plus hordes of others I got in free, who could not afford the 2 dollar tariff. Barbara Moraff etc. She paid.

W. Berman has called up from Los Angeles under the pseudonym of Pantale Xanthos, and we spent 5-10 minutes in joy. I sent him some books, as he complained he had nothing to read, also the magazine from Mexico which Andrew so kindly sent. Also, BEAT POETS check and book received here, plus the letter from Mondadori, which I answered yesterday. It is 5:15 and supper will soon be ready, so I go now down to the corner and mail this. Remember me to Sally and know you both have my love.

Do you think the book should include selections from work as far back as 1955? or should it be small and contemporary.

I am writing every day mostly, but as soon as I get any typed up, off they go to somebody or other. Locus Solus (James Schuyler) wrote today asking for a long poem called ACTS OF YOUTH, which I love and am sending that off with this.

Bob LeVigne called yesterday, but I think we got his difficulty straightened out. Thank you again for your letters, which always treat my spirit so well. And spring will soon be here.

I hope to write again soon, with some poems. And do keep in so close contact, as this past month. It diminishes much of the loneliness, just to receive a letter, no matter of what sort.

---

50 Pantale Xanthos was a pseudonym used by Wallace Berman, used frequently in his landmark arts magazine *Semia*.

51 *Zarza*, Mexican arts magazine which published a Spanish translation of “A poem for the insane” ("Poema para un demente") in its April/May 1961 issue.

52 Wieners is referring to Italian publishing house Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, founded in 1907. Mondadori released several translations of Beat writings, including *On the Road* in 1974, and attempted to secure an Italian translation of Wieners as well.
Olson is reading at Harvard the 14th of next month, so I imagine that will be a gala occasion. No one knows about Measure, and I don’t want them to; I just want it to be a belated surprise in their mail. God is good.

John Wieners

sends his love by the mail.

---

Charles Olson  
January 29, 1962  
[Milton, MA]

Dear Charles:

Certain monies have come into my hand whereby I may publish one or two more copies of Measure. I have three poems of yours at hand, which I would like to use in the next issue, which goes to the printer February 1st or so.

They are: The Year Is A Great Circle Or
The Year Is A Great Mistake.

The Post Virginal.

and Descartes, age 34, date Boston’s settling. …

Will you give me your OK?
The issue isn’t much without them. But I have had these manuscripts on hand for maybe five years, and would like to get them printed, also fulfill my obligations to the 200 or more subscribers.

The issue will only be 36 pages, and although you might feel there is no demand for another magazine at this time, I see so few around that are open to new verse, that I would like to go ahead with this, if only up to Number 4.

I am well, and look forward to your reading February 14th.
Am reading John Donne’s Devotions, when I got the impulse to write you.

Send a few poems for your pleasure.

Love,
Jawn

Not that they are complete, but that they have their own merit in places.
THE ACTS OF YOUTH

And with great fear I inhabit the middle of the night
What wrecks of the mind await me, what drugs
to dull the senses, what little I have left,
what more can be taken away?

The fear of travelling, of the future without hope
or buoy. I must get away from this place and see
that there is no fear without me: that it is within
unless it be some sudden act or calamity
to land me in the hospital, a total wreck, without
memory again; or worse still, behind bars. If
I could just get out of the country. Some place
where one can eat the lotus in peace.

For in this country it is terror, poverty awaits; or
am I a marked man, my life to be a lesson
or experience to those young who would trod
the same path, without God

unless he be one of justice, to wreak vengeance
on the acts committed while young under un-
due influence or circumstance. Oh I have
always seen my life as drama, patterned

after those who met with disaster or doom.
Is my mind being taken away me.
I have been over the abyss before. What
is that ringing in my ears that tells me

all is nigh, is naught but the roaring of the winter wind.
Woe to those homeless who are out on this night.
Woe to those crimes committed from which we
can walk away unharmed.

2.
So I turn on the light
And smoke rings rise in the air.
Do not think of the future; there is none.
But the formula all great art is made of.

---

53 As he had with Wieners’ application to Black Mountain ten years earlier, Olson replied
immediately and enthusiastically to this, with a card calling “The Ages of Youth” (as he mis-
remembered the name, a variation Wieners preserved for the poem’s section title in Ace of
Pentacles) one of “the most beautiful and truest” poems he’d ever read.
Pain and suffering. Give me the strength to bear it, to enter those places where the great animals are caged. And we can live at peace by their side. A bride to the burden that no god imposes but knows we have the means to sustain its force unto the end of our days. For that it is what we are made for; for that we are created. Until the dark hours are done.

And we rise again in the dawn. Infinite particles of the divine sun, now worshipped in the pitches of the night.

December 5, 1961

Wallace Berman
March 17, 1962
[Western Massachusetts]

Dear Wally:

I am staying on a farm in the western part of the state with Freude Solomon and her new husband Norman; just for a week. You remember her as Much or Mittelman. It is an 11-room farm house on the outskirts of Massachusetts.

How much I enjoyed your phone-call. Did you get the books?

MEASURE is at the printer’s in London. At least I think it is. I sent the copy air mail registered return receipt requested on February 23rd and haven’t heard yet how or when it was received. I sent a letter afterwards and there will probably be an answer when I get home.

Are you all right? Shirley and Tosh.

When I get home, I will begin preparing for my trip home; i.e. the “West”. First I will spend a week (end in New York) or a month or two, then plane trip (most likely bus) across country. In June. Will I see you? Probably. Perhaps. In Los Angeles, L.A. (my mind is throwing up so many alternatives for each line) (word) that it is hard to make sense.

I am sitting in a room cluttered with 1000 old letters on the floor, books, bags, boxes, bundles, Brahmin. This looks like a manuscript: holograph.

Shall I go to San Francisco first and telegraph down that I have arrived and then meet you in Laurel Canyon or should I just wait and see what our letters [cut off by microfilm]?  

54 Freude Solomon-Bartlett (1942-2009), independent filmmaker and distributor, a close friend of Irving Rosenthal and Wiener; she went on to be a prominent producer and champion of avant-garde film on the west coast.

55 A loose bracket around this paragraph in the left margin, with “see postscript”
I wanted to send a poem, but looking through my book, I find I have none worth it. Poetry is a very trying art for me just now. I think the nuthouse and the shock treatments, pills there and insulin coma (91) treatments destroyed some part of that essential you that is necessary to make a poem, make anything; or just be a cog in that great machinery called society. Which is what they want.

Whatever, I keep trying, but take drugs to ease my despair. Which is the wrong motive for taking drugs. Sometimes when I am high enough I see what I write with new eyes and am pleased. Right now, after reading that book of daily entries, attempt at creation, I am very displeased. There must be something to send you.

RED RIBBON FOR HER HAIR

(To FREUDE ) tho she doesn’t know it

In the night under candlelight
beauty lies asleep. Her gold slipper
has fallen to the floor where flowers doze.
Around her, maids and musicians,
storytellers and sahibs slumber
in the porticos of a palace:

O fairy realm.

The wood is carved faces of pharaohs
and the pillars burnt amber from forests

where lances are forbidden; cobwebs cling
to the strings of their lyres.

Door? No doors but leaves sift in the
wind with pennants and pipes
that blow smoke through the timeless air.

No king

you send me the ending and the missing lines (three). Wasn’t David’s poem, opening FLOATING BEAR (the new one) great? Or do you get it? It’s a mimeographed semi-monthly “poetry” newsletter out of New York:

Write Diane di Prima
229 East Fourth Street
New York City for it.

They ask contributions, not compulsory; but I haven’t paid them a cent and still get it monthly or so.

Oh how I miss the activity of those days in San Francisco? And the stimulus of your relationship, nearness, friendship.

It is fine to see Freude again. Since 1959. Even tho I saw her in New York last year, I have no memory of it. She is a mother now and has a 6 week old daughter: Samantha.

56 “Red Ribbon For Her Hair”

57 Issue 18 of The Floating Bear opens with several poems by David Meltzer, beginning with the occult-themed “Poem to H.P. Lovecraft.”
Those steps in the sun. 
Those steps after midnight 
in the park, dark across the street 
where desire was loosed and old men 
sat playing chess in the afternoon 
sun.

-----------------------------------

If thou in me the sweet flesh of love see 
Know it comes of the rose that does not die 
But lives in the corner of thy true eye 
A coarser blossom than eternity 
Since it too perishes and fades from earth 
And drops into that kingdom without joys 
[line cropped off in microfilm]

(drop one paragraph)

Let this be said I held thee closer still 
Let this be said I loved with all my worth

And with thee gone I hold thee closer still 
Than if thy cheek pressed up against my hand 
And will go on loving thee, sweet, until 
My name and thine erasèd are from sand 
For that substance contrary to belief 
Is as eternal as the ocean’s grief.

THE MERMAID’S SONG

It seems David has hit his stride what with Journal Of a Birth in that City Lights Magazine 
and this new poem in FB. I especially “liked” phoenix feathers: the sound of it and the look 
of it and the writing of it (just now).58

Call again or write. Or let me know. For I would like to see you again “soon”. Love to 
Shirley and Tosh. And

Love to you, 
John –

There doesn’t seem much substance to this note and I could have said in one sentence what 
took 4 pages; if the sentence was right and accurate and weighted enough. But it is an 
attempt and a beginning again.

58 David Meltzer’s Journal of the Birth was later published as a pamphlet by Oyez Press, in 1967. 
“Notes for a Poem to H.P. Lovecraft” appeared in Floating Bear. “dusting bowls & globes 
with phoenix feathers, / clearing table space for oaken racks and yes!”
When you’re at ease with yourself and the person you’re writing to is at ease, then what is there to say. As Duncan wrote in a letter [last line cropped]

Post Script:

I won probably wont leave until late April, early May or June. I have to wait for Measure to arrive and to be printed there yet. But I have the money. I received a Poets Foundation Award for $1500 in December of last year. And have spent half of it already. What with booze dope and women.

You don’t mean to but you do.

Irving Rosenthal

March 18, 1962

[Milton, MA]

Dearest Irving:

I am with Freude on their farm in Conway, Massachusetts. Samantha their 7 week old girl tomorrow is a dream, and Freude breast feeds her in front of all of us. It is the first time I can remember seeing a woman’s breast in the light. Very exciting for me. I wish I had beautiful poems to send you, and in place of letters in the future, I will send you poems. That is, if I write them.

I don’t know when I can get to New York. I want to, soon. And will, before June, or in May. Measure is in England, but I have not heard from the printers whether they received the manuscripts. They were sent air mail registered letter, and no return receipt has been received yet. It takes, say two weeks to print it, then my correcting of the proofs, then their return, plus 3 to 4 more weeks printing up the bulk; then mailing by boat the bulk here, so that sounds like it will be May before I will be free to come to you. I would be there now, if I could.

Keep up your spirits, don’t despair. If only you had money. Mine is down to $900 and I am trying to keep enough for at least 4 months work on the book, with Dave, there.

Try to forgive this terrible letter. It is being written very fast.

Trembling Lamb just fell out of a bookcase, and I was surprised by the quality of its cover, etc. Not so much by contents, which do matter, but by espirit. Also a little jealous. The cover is tops: Glamour.

Do try and write every day. It is so important. Just to set down an image or two.

Write to me if you need $50 and I will send it.

What is a letter without a poem in it. I will try and find one for you.

---

59 *Trembling Lamb*, one-off literary magazine published in 1959 by American poet, musician, and publisher Michael John Fles (b. 1936), who had co-edited the *Chicago Review* and *Big Table* with Irving Rosenthal, and was a contributing editor to *Kalebur*. *Trembling Lamb* published Artaud and Carl Solomon, as well as LeRoi Jones’ “A System of Dante’s Inferno.”
Here are quatrains: (?) couplets.

And the only sound one hears
Is the blood beating in his ears.

#
Nothing can stop the passage of time.
The fast falling of hairs from my head.
Nights spent in dark supper clubs.
With music and feasts to the dead.

**Did I send you this?**
Comforter, it is for their sake
I write,
that I keep alive the roses,
am the dew on their petals
what the closing eye discloses
the discovery of precious metals.

And again,
that they are not roses
but stitched in flowers,
the Book of Hours
by Jean Porcher
with stags, and ladies in the field.
What these flowers yield
Blue and yellow
in the light
that the tallow

drips
and the blanket shows no rips.

But stitches in their seams
and the Book of Dreams.

#
By candlelight I write to sum up day
And know it is a simple child at play.

#

What wrongs I have done my fellow man?

The robberies, thefts, desertions in the night
let this be my pardon.
This my absolution, eternal arbiter
If that be weakness, let it stand.
As a drowning man, between two arms.
Who dare not speak his crimes out in public
but know they come from desire of the soul
to be a bright gaudy thing
and dance his afternoons away
in lust, not caring
for the object.

#
POPULAR SONG

When you’re in my arms
The night is day
I feel so gay
When you’re in my arms

When you’re in my arms
I sleep just right
My dreams are bright
When you’re in my arms

THE MERMAID’S SONG

If thou in me the sweet flush of love see
Know it comes of the rose that does not die
But lives in the corner of thy true eye
A coarser blossom than eternity
Since it too perishes and fades from earth
And drops into that kingdom without joys
Where all wingéd things cruel time destroys

Let this be said I loved with all my worth
And with thee gone I hold thee closer still
Than if thy cheek pressed up against my hand
And will go on loving thee sweet until
My name and thine erased are from sand
For that substance contrary to belief
Is as eternal as the ocean’s grief.

#
Turn out the light, turn to the dead
Night surrounds us. Darkness sublime
Where you may whisper: what is time?

60 “The Mermaid’s Song” was published in Ace of Pentacles with only a couple of changes, to the third lines of each stanza. In the published version, the third line ends “the corner of that sure sky,” and the second stanza’s third line swaps the “my” and “thy” – “Then let my cheek press up against thy hand.”
To the black heads around the bed.

Kings and queens all must
go down to the dust.
Hands and feet the prey
of vile worms each day.

The moon a barge in the sky.
Curved brow, carved prow riding high.

For old friends rarely seen
For memories ever green.

A picture book (rather mag-
azine) of Persia with crown
Princesses slipping packages
of condiments, cigarettes?
into the pockets of their
flowered print dresses.

THE TALENT NEEDED TO WRITE

In the middle of the night
I lie awake,
by candle light,
under a rose covered blanket.

Sitting all alone by the telephone.

Cant stay away from that stuff
That’s tough cuz I never get enough

END.

Well, that gives you something to read for a while. As I know, its value is negative, or at least nebulous. They dont mean a thing, but the rhymes lead them, and are a beginning to expression, of emotion, without deluge.

I am writ out. Goodnight and
love, John
Dear Hank Chapin:

Enclosed find two revisions of poems you accepted for Blue Grass. What a lovely title if I didn’t say so before. I hope the revisions are to your fancy, critical standard, or taste.

The quote from Olson is: “(first pounded into my head by Edward Dahlberg): ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION.” from PROJECTIVE VERSE Which I find I can send to you as I have another copy: photostat. OK.

Thank you for your letter and comments which have got me excited, so that I revised the two poems and am sending them off to you tonight, or tomorrow when I go to the bank.

Can you get a hold of Edward Dorn? ADDRESS: Barton Road, Pocatello, Idaho. His book: THE NEWLY FALLEN is available from Totem Press, 324 East Fourteenth Street, New York 3, New York. He is going on tour for the Paterson Society this spring, but I think that address with a Please Forward would reach him.

The prices from England are 300 copies: 36 copies: $201.00. Of course, it is demi-set. 500 copies: $231—so you are getting a bargain for this country. The prices have gone up at Villiers, the printer. Previously, for Measure II, the price was 64 pages, 400 copies, 2 color ink on the cover, $225. Demi-set is a form of letter press, which is standard printing, no off-set. I don’t think that you can get a better buy than what you are offered. Creeley might know of something in Majorca, Spain. But then you have an editorial tie-up, mailing expense, lack of contact with printer.

What you say for the magazine sounds good. And I would jump at the chance, to get the thing going, started. All good luck. It is always exciting to hear of a new magazine, and in retrospect, to have worked on one. The results are gratifying and will surprise you. Everyone lists it in their future books, as having their works first been printed there.

That is, if you are careful on selections, and I have a feeling you will be.

Please feel free to say what you will re the revisions.

Here is something else I found from a reading I made at Harvard Thursday:

A STORY OF OLD

And it comes easy in the night
like some slight
touching of a bird,

61 “A Story of Old”
and it becomes a bright
burning in its brilliance
like a bird or some other flaming
thing on the wing.

Blown over with the snow,
oh look at it go, it is not me
but the wind that rushes through me.

In the night I desire
it to be eternal darkness
with no sun rise
through the long hours,
only the broken towers,
of the moon
only the lady underneath them
in her gown of blue gold
that shimmers like the fire fly.

Bye and bye
love will hit
again between men
and we will swing
in the dawn
with long arms.

It is slight but I send it just to fill out the letter.

There is no need to print dates as in Wentley. They were included there just to show the consecutiveness of the writing of the poems. The re-writes, I think, answer your other questions. Creeley’s new book: For Love is superb, from Scribners.

I omitted ‘infinity’ and ‘eternity’ from the “Stars” poem because I come to find I don’t believe in either one. The reading of Olson’s Maximus Poems are what prompted that re-write. He is so exact with words that I find I must be.

Don’t worry about the printing of the magazine. I don’t think you could do no better, if I may say so.

Try to do what you can with the poems, and let me know your final decision. I will send more when you want them.

All best now, and until we hear again,
that song in the night,
Yours,
John Wieners
Dave Haselwood

April 4th, 1962

[Milton, MA]

Dear David:

The day of the world. And it is 12:50 AM. I have just finished watching Tallulah Bankhead on television in THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP where she plays the wife of an insane submarine captain, played by Charles Laughton who wrecks the ship below water and ends up drowning, hatcheting away at his wife’s photograph in the cabin. Gary Cooper is Miss Bankhead’s lover and they end up escaping the hatch with oxygen tanks. They meet later in the rain when she stops to buy a billiard cue and admire the stars, as they did their first night in the desert. The last scene is they going by cab together (with stringy hair and the billiard cue in the gutter, with rain falling on it. It is a film made in the 30’s and shows Miss Bankhead in many, beautiful gowns and low breasts, being harassed, slapped, thrown to the floor by her husband (she married him because he helped her father) but the brain specialist declares, by Miss B.’s conversation, that there is no help for Charles, only he can help himself. But his jealousies are rampant, even before she meets Gary Cooper on an Arab festival night, he accuses her of an affair with Cary Grant. “A year ago, in Tangiers, six months later in Gibraltar and now here” (unnamed) says Miss Bankhead when she lists the times he thought she was unfaithful.

So it goes, and the low breasts hang in the moon.

I am waiting for Measure to come back from England and when it does I will be on my way: first to New York and then to San Francisco. With the manuscripts for the book. The few of them there are.

May I take you up on your offer to stay with you?

It may take require a couple of months of actual writing before the thing is in shape to be printed. But this is all to the good. And we can work on it together, with Andrew.

I asked the printer to send a 100 copies of MEASURE to the shop’s address in San Francisco. Is this agreeable to you?

No need for you to answer right away, as I feel it is, or I wouldn’t have gone ahead without your permission. They can just sit there until I arrive; or anyplace that is convenient. Or you could, when you distribute new books locally, drop them off at City Lights and Discovery.

I hope to get a job and stay longer than my parents know. As I can’t face living at home (one reason: I cant work at night: the typewriter disturbs my family who start to go to bed at 10 o’clock. And I dont feel “inspired” until after midnight.

I made a record for Harvard’s Poetry Room which I will bring with me. And the contract for the Italian translation has gone through. Very agreeable to me. There is no other news as there are not many here who are interested in the same world as I am. We did hear “poetry” tonight on a show made by KQED in San Francisco: a John Dodde of Stanford reading Keats, Shelley, [Masfield?], Shakespeare and Browning’s poems on Nature.

I do like to keep abreast of letter writing for as I said before there are not many here and the few are so strung out it is hard to talk to them, only commiserate with their agonies which are true and so real it is frightening. Steve Jonas has had his eyebrows plucked and wears a handmade silver ring. Charles’ reading at Harvard was disastrous on Valentine’s Day in a blizzard as I believe I wrote Andrew not so dire an account.

---

62 John Dodds (1902-1989), English professor at Stanford who consulted for several notable poetry and humanities radio and television programs in the late 1950s and 1960s.
Love to you and I dream of Philip more often than not, racing around in a red sportscar without any top, or raising the chalice at Mass in vestments of gold. It will be good to see you again and I am looking forward every day to the trip. Even to think about it makes my heart beat faster.

John

If only this instant could last forever
And I ride high on it from dawn to
Midnight [not?] sever
The charm of these arms that hold me, and stretch
Out to eternity where I reside
Beside the breasts of my beloved.

LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka   April 10, 1962
[Milton, MA]

Dear Le Roi:

Steve says you want might come to Boston or pass through on your way to Gloucester. Do call and let us know (avail yourself of Steve’s apt.). Or have a private reading or time there if you do – decide to let us know. Howard plans to come before Easter and there may be a ride.

Send poems to Hank Chapin c/o BLUE GRASS a new magazine from:
315 Dartmouth SE
Albuquerque, New Mexico,

Is there anything else I can do for you besides a big blow-job?

Love,

John Wieners

Phone Number Here is
Oxford 6-2421

Irving Rosenthal   April 12th, 1962
[Milton, MA]

Dear Irving:

Just want to answer yours of the 29th, March, and expect no reply; with you working your time must be most precious. I am so glad that you have a job as the income will help, and once you put your mind to it, it will not be so bad. I wish I could and when the money runs out, out West, I have to.

Been writing, mostly bad, but yesterday worked 12 hours on the book, typing from a journal since the beginning of this year.

Measure’s proofs are corrected and I await the final bulk.

You may call me Jack but I much prefer Howard’s JAWN.

I dont know what a true relationship is, but I know that desire has to play a part, desire of some sort, either for the brain, from it, for the intellect or the body, I dont know. But the combination is the ideal. And when it happens there is no will. Just a “swill” of emotion.
Your letter is a great comfort. And I see pictures of Elise in my room in San Francisco; associate her with another girl I know called Shela Plant, who took an overdose of sleeping pills in a hotel room. Why depress you but she sublet my apt. while I was East in 1959-58 – with Howard. I look forward to his visit.

Love for now. Until I see you soon. John

Let me know yr. mood

On re-reading this, it is a terrible way to end a letter with an anecdote regarding a dead girl. But death doesn’t hit me at first, but it grows in retrospect. And lingers in a most unfortunate way when I least expect it, comes sneaking up on you, with its smell of flowers. I always think we go to feed the roses, but so young. It is a wonder we do anything at all, with its presence hovering about. Let’s see each other soon and be close together always.

John

Whatever that is, we might possess a bit of it in our “hearts”.

Forgive this blather but they are my sentimental thoughts now. It is so good to be away from the brain or the emotions for a while. That is why drugs are a way out, but only a way into another hell. Don’t worry.

Do you hear from Allen? I want to write to him.

James Schuyler

April 14, 1962
[Milton, MA]

Dear James:

Believe it or not, this is fifth attempt at a letter to you today. I am not well, can’t put into words the intent of my mind. Don’t take my word well too seriously, as I am sort of geezed up, to coin a phrase. Let this serve merely as a cover to two re-writes of those poems you have, not that they are worth much or are successes. And also to let you know how I feel towards the poem, and how seldom I come close to the great tradition we are involved in, I enclose Deposition.

Your letter was most welcome, and thank you for your kind words.

I look forward to each Art News, and immediately go through the reviews for those signed J.S. The photograph with the Alex Katz article was a great pleasure.64

Until we meet again, which I hope will be soon, I remain

Your friend,

---

63 Elise Cowen (1933-1962), American poet. She was briefly involved with Allen Ginsberg, and remained romantically attached to him for the rest of her life. After years of struggling with depression, she committed suicide a couple of months before this letter, on February 27, 1962, by jumping through her parents’ seventh-floor locked window. Her friend Joyce (Glassman) Johnson wrote about Cowen and their youth together in her valuable 1999 memoir, Minor Characters.

64 James Schuyler was associate editor of Art News from 1957 through 1962; many of his reviews from that time were collected by Black Sparrow Press in Selected Art Writings, edited by Simon Pettet. Alex Katz (b. 1927), American painter in the New York School and close friend of Schuyler.
Don’t despair re writing. There is nothing to say but that it has own laws, and Graham Greene says, the last word is written in the mind, before the first word gets on paper.

I know great things can come from you, and have, so don’t worry, yet we all do. I go miserable if I don’t get some words out each day, and then later, they make me sick at their ineptitude.

Give me love to Jerry, he is so quiet, it is refreshing to be with him, some kind of angel in the slaughterhouse.

John
with love.

Deposition

Of the cigarette that glows in the dark
Of the cars that run over the snow covered streets
of old men that sit in the park
of the sun that shines on lovers’ retreats.

To be a poet and sing of these.
To renew my vows and somehow learn the myriad secrets of the word. To be as the wind is outside windows in November.
To know the thickness and fulness of the line, how long it lasts;
as the instant ever changing, ever new; even if no success comes,
nonetheless to mark the rose of each year, the daffodil shape of each day; to hold it as a cup in my hand.
The pond, unseen and invisible shall mark my image.
And to learn rhythm. The voice; what comes out of the mouths of other men and my own. To hold true, fast as the years go.

And yet this is not it. That dissatisfaction is part of it. Homer, it is out there, where the great battles are fought,
and the legends of men. Unnamed heroes who die and are dragged outside the walls, Virgins and priestesses who burn incense to forgotten gods. I see him at his brazier, peacock feathers as his head-dress, falling down his back and shoulders.

To master words or be their servant. Puny bones that shall lie washed up on death’s beach in the far distant sunset.
That each instant is an eternity.
Loud as the ticking of a steel clock that tolls all men to toil. Work daily over the syllables, for no matter how fast you run, can never catch up to what’s spent out the mouth: the flames of longing and desire.
Spirits descend.

65 “Deposition”
Some lie hidden as the rose in December. Some appear only under drugs, some in dreams, waking us from another kind-
dom (mystery how we enter and when we leave) in the light most
hide, do not move in the day but after midnight work their magic
spell as the streets empty, cities become deserted and abroad on
the night infested are the dooms, the demi-gods, -urges of
the syllable, the spirit which I court and trade all earthly car-
avan for. Give away the goods, gowns and long hair to keep the
word abroad, the flame lifting unto heaven; as the stars look
down, but register no vision.

**Hank Chapin**

[n.d. 1962]

Dear Hank Chapin:

Much thanks for your letter, received today. It encouraged me and you must be so
busy. Here enclosed is a version of High with the line lengths straightened out. The content
I believe is the same.

I think it is a gas you might print both versions of it. That is what I think; to show
the finished product, and the spontaneous outpouring.

Some poets whose addresses I have, you might use, if only to send complimentary
copies.

Philip Whalen
4291 24th Street
San Francisco 14,
California

and he is collecting manuscripts for Richard
Duhrden’s Foot. Also there is a magazine coming out or out, which is publishing journals
called Mendicant.

William Margelis c/o Helen L. Turner
335 Huntington Avenue
#33
Boston 15.

this is in case you write and would like to see your
work published.

Others:

James Schuyler
500 East 11th Street
New York City 9,

or c/o Porter
49 S. Main
Southampton,
New York
Fairfield Porter, himself, if you publish prose. On Art.

The A-E group in New York.

John Ashbery
16 Rue d’Assas
Paris 6, France
for Locus Solus

Daisy Aldan
325 East 57th Street
New York City 22,
(He might not be still there).

Helen Adam
4927 17th Street
San Francisco,
(Again she may have moved, but I doubt it, as it is a family house).

The others I am sure of.

Wallace Berman
Semina
1548 Crater Lane
Los Angeles 24,

Achilles Fang
341 Harvard Street
Cambridge 38
(May have moved, but doubt it)

I am trying to hurry before supper so forgive the bad typing.

Andrew Hoyem
708 Oak Street Apt. 5
San Francisco, California

He publishes the Auerhahn Press Series, and writes. Book of his out this fall called BLOOD ORB.

Randall Jarrell
3916 Jennifer Street NW
Washington, D C
(May have moved).

Joanne Kyger
C/o First Zen Institute
107 Daikokuji-cho
Murasakeno, Kita-Ku
Kyoto, Japan
is traveling now in India with Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg and P. Orlovsky. All good sources if you can get their addresses from 8th Street Bookshop, New York City, Ted Wilentz. It is a simple matter, he forwards all mail per previous arrangement with Allen. But Creeley might have their addresses.

Edward Marshall
510 West 110th Street
Room 204
New York City
(new address)
   M C Richards
   Willow Grove Road
   RFD Stony Point
   New York
   writes poetry and translator of Artaud.

Louis Zukovsky
30 Willow Street
Brooklyn 1, New York.

You may use my name with all of the above, for good results, except Jarrell and Zukovsky, whom I don't know, except through their work.

Good luck to you. Things must be progressing by now, and I envy you.

Oh yes, Howard Schulman
1299 Third Avenue
New York City, N Y
Publishes or is in process of published large Pa'lante, Revue of Two Continents, 10,000 copies, 126 pages.

Plus
   James Stoller
   The Second Coming
   200 West 107th Street
   New York City 25, N Y
   Slick but publishes verse: and

   Jerome Rothenberg
   600 West 163rd Street
   New York 32, New York
   Publishes and is editor of new enlarged Poems From The Floating World

James Boyer May
P.O. Box 1068
Lost Angeles 28,
who will list Blue Grass in his directory, Trace.
I hope this pleases you, the “revision”. If not, discard it, but if yes, publish all three! You dont have to do that, as you must be pressed for space.

As for other poems, I have none, as Whalen wrote for Foot, Margolis for Mendicant, Stoller for Second Coming, and James Schuyler wrote for Locus Solus, all except the last one, which I have answered, but the other three, no; not according for their specifications. After Second Coming received poems, they wrote asking for others. Plus I forget H. Schulman, who took a lot for Pa’Lente.

Am stoned in the May twilight, and hope that similar graces fall on you, even though we pay for them, most dearly, later.

5.4

When the blood in the dropper
runs red
you go
to my head.

When the flash in the veins
comes gold
behind my eyes
you rise

as the moon in summer skies.
When my mouth hangs open
and the tongue
turns dry

I say to myself:
What a way
to die.
    For you.

are heaven,
the saints above,
beloved one
and love.

You may not use the above as I am sending it elsewhere but will send others as they come to me. Right now writing, but everything called for.

love,

JAWN Wieners

I think two are enough to start with, even though not up to top standards, I was gassed with them at the beginning but Time and your critique have taken their toll.
Philip Whalen
June 25th, 1962
[Milton, MA]

Dear Philip:

I have tried so hard before to answer your letter and let you know the great joy it brought when receiving it. But I haven’t been able to simply because there were no poems to include with it.

Enclosed find a copy of Measure to show you I have been busy some way.

Not that I don’t write; I do daily but nothing pleases me enough to submit. Perhaps, upon seeing each other, we might find one to include.

Thank you for the offer. And hope it can be made again sometime. To edit is a fine job and I wish you all good luck in it, knowing that you will have same.

With all best wishes and Love,
Jawn Wieners

Irving Rosenthal
June 29, 1962
[Milton, MA]

Dear Irving:

Could you put up with me as a house guest some time next week? Wednesday on? Or maybe Thursday. Will arrive early evening with something under two hundred dollars for journey far West which I anticipate and yet almost dont make as I could live in New York two months on what it takes to get out there alone; penniless and looking for work.

Would you be so kind as to let me know if your answer is negative; or just call Oxford 6-2421. Collect.

Do keep on and your faith up as I love you and want you to be as happy as I am now and forever, lost in the love of that eternal god which rules our day and night.

John

Robert Duncan
June 29, 1962
[Milton, MA]

Dear Robert:

It is so hard to write. Just back from Gloucester with Creeley and Olson. Bobbie showed me pictures of you to keep me amused until Charles and Robert returned from Boston for a recording date. At three in the morning they returned.

I too am disappointed that Jess was not in Measure. But still have in mind his suggestion or ours that he do a road map for the Country issue #4. Your poem I will not use as I do not think it is your best, the last two lines a tone or idiom I never heard you use before. And so thought you lost by it. Even tho the title haunts one. And the procession of ghosts or personae at the bar in the 2nd second stanza is successful, forceful and bright.
Your kind words re my own poem and verse are most encouraging. I was glad to see your photo in the New York Times. Just to exchange greetings of a different order. It is so hard as I say to know just what to say. But that there is more joy in writing, I can say, and more words from peers strengthens the time when one is not writing.

To return to your poem: it is not the second stanza that attention focuses on the four men but in the fourth from the last. It is only the last (2) two lines I object to. That they almost seem sacrilege compared to the hallowness of the other devotions and observations. Especially the reference to “our lord” which makes one seem to think the author is saying: let’s move on to another church,

“we’ve been in this joint before.”

Just what are you trying to say:
that these reflections are proved unworthy when they do deal with such reverences, that they could not be. I feel an impiety has been done.

Forgive me for taking on this mantle to instruct or criticize you. But you would want to know the truth and why I didn’t print it. 4 is a long way away and there will be many good poems before then. That I feel you submitted it not so much as to its own value but that it would appeal to me, those last two lines. The sacredness of the thing I cannot remove and how those last two lines abuse it, what has gone before, I want to make clear.

I miss you and your classes come to mind often, how they were a testing ground for us. And if I ever had any comparative chance for them again, I would fly to it.

The material in Measure 3 was collected and promised to print as long as 4 years ago and its loss of brio is only mine. I wanted a sedate or more formal issue as I felt the other one #2 overstepped its bounds with such loose headings and scattered, disorganized titles. But the subject matter of those poems of yours is still a joy.

Until I see you again which I hope will be soon, love to you both,

John

Enclosed find 2 Measure 3 as I did not have your address to send them before. And thank you; which shall not reach you with the same force I write it. Alas, our problem and journey.
In the late summer of 1962, Wieners was able to get out of his parents’ house and back in New York, living with Ed Marshall on the Lower East Side and working at the Wilentz brothers’ Eighth Street Bookshop. “I am young, and writing again,” he tells Dave Haselwood. In New York he continued to make friends among the avant garde and underground arts scenes, spending time with poet/translator David Rattray and Beat hero Herbert Huncke, habitués of Warhol’s Factory, and other artists and activists in downtown Manhattan. The poetry culture at this time was intensely focused on the live reading experience, as documented in Daniel Kane’s indispensable All Poets Welcome: The Lower East Side Poetry Scene in the 1960s. Concentrated around such spaces as Café Le Metro and Les Deux Megots, and later the Poetry Project at St. Mark’s Church In-the-Bowery, the Lower East Side offered a sociality that Wieners craved after more than two years of living in institutions and the suburbs.

---

**Allen Ginsberg**

7.14-16.62
[New York City]

*Cocaine* 66

For I have seen Love
and his face is choice Heart of Hearts,
a flesh of pure fire, fusing from the center
where all Motion are One.

And I have known
despair, that the Face has ceased to stare
at me with the Rose of the World,
but lies furled

in an artificial Paradise
it is hell to get into. If I knew
you were there, I would fall upon my knees
and plead to God

To deliver you once again in my arms.
But it is senseless to try.
One can only take means to reduce misery,
confuse the sensations

---

66 “Cocaine” was published in *Ace of Pentacles*, with several changes, notably a very different sequence of line breaks that alters the prosody considerably. Also, the poem as published ends with “infinite longing,” rather than “unutterable longing.”
so that this face,
which aches in the heart, and makes each new
start

less close to the source of desire,
fade

from the flesh that fires the Night,
with dreams and unutterable longing.\textsuperscript{67}
in the years to come.

\textit{Love, to you}
John Wieners
153 Avenue C #8

Ed Dorn \hspace{1cm} Wednesday July 25\textsuperscript{th} [1962]
[New York City]

Dear Ed:
Can you send some money? I am literally starving “to death”. Whatever you can afford. I dont start my job until next Monday and have 5 pennies on the table to see me through next week.
Charles and Bette have gone back to Gloucester.
Each day I rush downstairs but no you. I know nothing has happened to misfortune you. It is us who are bereft and left.
Until I hear from you I remain
Your friend
With love,
John Wieners

Nothing can change that.
Love to Helene and the boys and Shawn

I’m going to try and sleep now and forget about the whole thing.

Gary Snyder \hspace{1cm} August 22, 1962
[New York City]

THE EIGHTH STREET BOOKSHOP, INC.
“Greenwich Village’s Famous Bookshop”
32 West 8\textsuperscript{th} Street., New York 11, N.Y.

Dear Gary,
Ted Wilentz\textsuperscript{68} is tied up right now, but wants me to write to ask if you have seen THE SIXTIES (Spring 1962) which has an essay on: The Work of Gary Snyder. If not, he

\textsuperscript{67} A line goes from below “less” to below “with,” bracketing those last three lines on the left.
\textsuperscript{68} Brothers Eli and Theodore Wilentz opened the Eighth Street Bookshop in 1947 on the southeast corner of 8\textsuperscript{th} and Macdougal Streets; in addition to carrying the largest poetry
Joanne is much in my thoughts, as I dreamt of her and Nemi at the seashore last night, along with Jan Balas. It was very harrowing, and filled with green and white waves crashing on the shore. We were dressed in turn of the century bathing outfits, I believe. Give her my love, and remember her among the roses at the hospital, where we would sit out in the garden all afternoon. This is really a letter to Joanne, and not for one moment have I stopped loving her. Russ Fitzgerald is in New York and we spend long hours, nights and dawn talking of San Francisco and what it all meant, knowing Miss Kids at that time. I see her going away and bending down in tears after this letter. Also Mike Rumaker is out of the hospital, and lives in upstate New York, not too far, as he is able to come down to the city and see us. His book is doing very well; at last count 4000 copies sold. MEASURE 3 has also appeared. Allen sent photos from India, and one of Peter Orlovsky in a human hair wig made me think it was Joanne at first sipping tea with Bengali poets. Have her forgive me.

Thru inter-com Ted sends his best and regards from Eli who is on vacation. I am now playing Miss Kids to his Miss Specht at 8th Street. But all is well, and please have Joanne write, if she can tear herself. There is a magnificent munificent smile on someone’s Buddha lips.

“I’m an Occidental woman in an Oriental mood for love,
And I feel the thrill of China when I see the yellow
Buddha moon above.”

Mae West.

Love to you both,
Pip

---

**Dave Haselwood**

**[n.d. 1962]**

**[New York City]**

Dear Andrew and Dave:

As you may know by now I have a job in New York City. It all started on my way to San Francisco with Ed Dorn and his wife, when we got to talking, and LeRoi said Ted Wilentz needed help and I could get a job as bookkeeper, part-time. Partly because I

selection in the city, it was a community center for New York writers and artists of the 1950s and 60s, and the Wilentzes would frequently help out struggling poets (like the just-out-of-hospital John Wieners) with extra money or work. The store closed in 1979, and Eli and Ted passed away in 1995 and 2001, respectively.

69 *The Sixties* was published by Robert Bly, who also did magazines called *The Fifties* and *The Seventies*. Its Spring 1962 issue featured a James Wright essay on Gary Snyder.

70 *Burning Deck* was founded by Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop in 1961, and focuses on experimental poetry and prose. Begun as a periodical, it evolved into a book press. The magazine’s original four-issue run, published between 1962 and 1965, featured many of the same poets as Wieners’ *Measure*, including Creeley, Baraka, Guest, and Duncan, and is available as one volume through Burning Deck Press’s website.

71 Miss Specht was Joanne Kyger’s supervisor at the City of Paris Brentano’s bookstore (mentioned in his letter to Kyger on May 15, 1965).
was disappointed in the book as it stands, and wanted more time, knowing I would not have
it out there, with no money and job, no reasonable place to stay where I would be content,
or secure, more secure, afraid it would start all over again: walking the streets, when I was
offered this apartment the first day I hit town, for 43 dollars a month, 5 flights up, or more
reasonably four, or even three. Anyway it is 4 rooms, and Ed Marshall is my roommate, and
the lease does not run out until next July.

And when I am 30 I will have a book ready. That is two years, or are you mad? I can
send you the mss. now which may be beautiful but what good would it do if in 6 months
time I could not bear to read the book itself. And what about the young? who still write
letters telling me they love me because of the Hotel Wentley; and who come over and ask
me are you queer?

All of which I love because it shows the book is still alive and vital. And let me die
with that. If I have to die, as we all do young. He died, with a smile on his mouth.

Anyway, I am young, and writing again, yesterday, the Housewife’s Lament. But let’s
go easy on the book. I will be interested to know what you think. I know you will be
disappointed I am not there, as promised, as I am too; think longingly of the West. But you
will be here before I am there. Stay with me: 153 Avenue C, Apartment 8, but we lost the
key to the mailbox. Gr3-7064.

Try to forgive me, or at least write. In care of the bookstore if you have to. And who
knows maybe I will be there before you know it. But what will we do about the book?
Which is announced, and which will be disappointing to some, at least to me, that it does not
appear as promised. Simply explain that it is the author’s fault, not the press, as I will and
have, to those interested.

Love to you both, and dying to hear,
John

Thank you Andrew for sending the catalogues. And the Destroyed Works II have seen from
Howard, and Jonathan’s book here at the bookstore, and the Paul Reps. All of which shows
how very much in earnest and industrious you both are.

---

Dear Dave and Andrew:

God willing, enclosed you will find a mss. copy of FOR WHAT TIME SLAYS. It is
very slight and I would like the poems to follow after one another, if even on the same page,
like Chinese style, or Poems from The Greek Anthology. So that sometimes slight little
poems, or images wd. follow right after the other.

Do let me know how your publishing schedule. IS. If you would rather re-consider
and do the poems later, I will understand; but the last few days and excitement has grown

Philip Lamantia’s Destroyed Works, bound in black cloth with a frontispiece by Bruce Conner,
was published by Auerhahn Press in 1962.
that maybe it could be a good book; an honest book about love, and some torments of the human mind. Not abstract, or poetical, lacking in myth, yet possessing same, relating ordinary facts but investing them with dignity as do the Chinese (viz: White pony) and the Greek Anthology; only in Loeb Library I guess.

Anyway, do let me know what you think. And if there is any money from Measure, do send it; deducting your expenses and trouble for distributing them to the bookshops. Rather I could use it. And if you could mail back the remaining Measures COLLECT, they would sell in New York. Eighth Street is out. And I have none left.

This is all trouble and a burden to you, in your busy schedule. But don’t do it, if you can’t. And I will be there someday. I know it. But let’s do the book. It sounds fun and exciting.

Anyway this is how I think now. And now to work on the manuscript.

I don’t want to stop writing. If any of the order disturbs you, or individual poems, don’t hesitate to let me know,

---

**Philip Whalen**
Friday December 7, ’62
[New York City]

Dear Phil:

Ted is busy with Christmas season, and wants me to tell you he called Paetel and gave him your address and your message. He says that even if he can’t write it with your fine calligraphic style, he still wishes you the best of Christmas and the happiest of New Years.

As I do too.

Faithfully, with love,

John Wieners

Also would you please send 10 FOOT or have your representative send 10 for the bookshop to sell?

---

**Robert Duncan**
December 11, 1962
[New York City]

Dear Robert:

I do want you to know I had no part in the disposing of your inscribed copy to me of LETTERS. It left my possession without my knowledge and evidently has gone through a good many dealers’ hands. I wrote to Mr. Romans’ when I saw it listed in his catalogue for sale, in an attempt to buy the copy back, but it had been sold; still he made a long distance telephone call and obtained the book back for me, either to buy or trade manuscripts for it. I am sorry it has received such harsh treatment, but it was, and I hope, will be again, a prized possession.

---

73 Wieners is possibly referring to Karl Otto Paetel (1906-1975), a German émigré to New York, a political journalist, and activist who was also an early admirer of Beat writers like Kerouac. He published a German-language collection of Beat writing and criticism in 1962, *Beat: Eine Anthologie.*
I did not want you to think, in case you saw the catalogue, that I had sold it, this
generous and devoted gift on your part.

Thank you again for it, and best wishes to you and Jess both in this holiday season.

John Wieners

Wallace Berman
February 8, 1963
[New York City]

Dear Wallace:

Here is something to go on. Wrote last night, and this morning. It was great to hear
your voice. Thank you for calling. Jarry is here and staying with me on Avenue C.
Use below if you like. If not, O.K. Will send something else. Was on radio Monday
night, a re-broadcast of New School reading but didn’t get to hear it.
Getting new rags, and it is a gas, at Saks Fifth Avenue, lots of money and expensive
silk lapels. Silk Italian raincoats, elegante, with herring-bone topcoats. And polyester suits.

The night is cold.74
I lie abed,
drugged.

The gas heater is on.
I would it were
off

And snuff out my life.

Le Chariot75

A flame burns in the morning.
It is the empty bag of horse

That carries the sun across the sky
And lights the love that blinds your eye.

And turns the night to infinite noon.
Changes the course of the unearthly moon

To ride in your heart instead of heaven.
This is the card that reads as seven.

Love,

John

74 “The night is cold…”
75 “Le Chariot”
Irving Rosenthal  
April 29th 1963  
[New York City]

My soul I gave without my knowing  
Yes more than life I gave to Love  
And never knew the price I paid.

I stole for Love to ease the pain  
And for this theft am paying more  
and all to keep his soul from going.

No knock now on the door, no step –  
upon the stair,    I paid the price  
that Love was asking and for this theft

To Hell am paying. He’s gone, will come  
no more and left a memory that’s too poor.  
I cannot tell the day from dreaming; he’s gone  
and left my heart so sore.

Denise Levertov  
Wednesday May 21, 1963  
[New York City]

Dear Denise:

Thank you for the lively evening at your home Thursday last. I enjoyed meeting  
Betty Kray and Jim Mosely and seeing Jerome Rothenberg again, not to mention hearing the  
fine African poetry.

The real point of this is I am a patient at Bellevue Hospital and will be for 2 to 5  
weeks, with hepatitis. And to come direct to the point, This way I will have no money to be out  
and pay my rent this month, that is, from June to July and wonder, if at all possible, I could  
take you up on your kind offer to forward the money to my landlord until I can get out and  
pay you back. The rent is $37.49 and payable to Mr. Edward Pious, 261 Broadway, New  
York 7, NY. If this is an inconvenience, just say so and I will understand. I know it is an  
imposition and I feel cheap to have to ask you; what with Nik going away to school, etc., I  
am sure you have more than your share of expenses.

If I was outside, of course, I could use my wits and wangle the money out of the wind  
somehow. But this way, I am helpless to do anything but remain in isolation.

Would you let me know however you decide, and I will be most grateful. As if you  
hadn’t done enough already …

76 “My soul I gave without my knowing…”
77 Elizabeth Kray was the first executive director for the Academy of American Poets, hired in 1963; in 1985 she co-founded New York’s Poets House with Stanley Kunitz. Jerome Rothenberg (b. 1931), American poet and translator best known for his opening of the field of ethnopoetics, a term he coined while working in the 1960s on his book *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania*, which he published in 1968.
Yours,
John

If you and Mitch decide its alright, the money could go direct before June 1st to Mr. Pious, in my name or in care of it. Apt 4A, 225 East 5th Street, NYC 3, NY. If you can’t please don’t hesitate, as I will understand perfectly. And please forgive the imposition. Address here is WARD A6, Bellevue General Hospital, NYC, NY – 1st Ave at 27th Street. Thank you, whatever way you decide.

---

**Denise Levertov**

**Monday May 27, 1963**

[New York City]

My dear Denise:

I am writing an immediate response to your letter. How my heart leaps up and it is a joy to be beneath the light on the East River. We have a high ceilinged ward, with tall windows, and glorious sunrises, I have never been up so early before, regularly, in my life (red as the Yangtze) and hope to continue the habit. Van Wyck Brooks I read, learned acquired his habits of early rising from the years spent in sanatoriums.

No, I am not depressed. In fact glad to be here, what with the regular food and bed rest (180 hours so far). I am also reading William James’ Principles of Psychology, only the chapters he recommended for the neophyte and I find it quite enlightening, in fact find it awakening areas of information I was not aware of, awareness.

My mother is arriving for two days this evening from Boston with my sister, who has just finished her finals for a Master’s in Nursing and I am sure they will satisfy present wants, which were great for a while until a few friends arrived. The first week was the most difficult and I felt most desolate. Thank you for asking.

But all that has passed and would be most happy to have visitors who, and I say this knowing how you must be gathering things like a woodchuck, into its nest for your summer in Maine, are allowed even tho you must not feel obliged to come. I would be delighted to see you,

You are right. How the centers of contact have been diminished, human, over the century.

We are almost isolate beings, with the machine –

Thank you for your kind words of encouragement.

Love to you both, and Nik,
John

Just spent a few moments reading again the poems at the end of Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies* and for a true New England poet, despite naivete of form, give me Marsden

---

78 Mitch Goodman (1923–1997), American writer, teacher, and anti-Vietnam War activist along with his wife Denise Levertov. Because of his leadership in the draft resistance movement, he was prosecuted by the federal government as part of an alleged criminal conspiracy along with Dr. Benjamin Spock, Marcus Raskin, Reverend William Coffin, and Michael Farber, the so-called “Boston Five.”

79 Published in 1959, Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies* marked a dramatic turn in Lowell’s verse, towards autobiographical subject matter and a loosened meter, that fostered the beginning of the confessional movement in American poetry.
Hartley anywhere, with his delicacy of feeling. He has written lovely things about Maine: Penobscot Bay, Kennebec, Lewiston, Andro-Scoggin River etc.

He has nowhere the sophistication, nor self-expression of Lowell, but he was a true cosmopolitan, in that he could write equally well of Central Park, Park Avenue, and his English ancestors and their parlors in Maine. One gets spleen in his mouth, variation between his teeth at Lowell’s apt expression of his New England condition, (psychosis? no, rather his neurosis,) his neurotic New England heritage. Forgive these terms. Where Hartley is only full of gentleness and reverence for his.

“The finest people in the world are those who act in the right way;
My mother and father were among them.”

---

**Charles Olson**  
**May 31, 1963**  
**[New York City]**

Dear Charles:

I was given this poem tonight and I liked it so much I wanted you to see it.

It is a treat to be with you again.

And the summer night drifts in the window.

I am one day out of the hospital and feeling great/weak.

It is translated by David Rattray, a young man here in Manhattan, whose mother owns a newspaper in East Hampton, L.I. The Lower East Side Neighborhood Association (LENA!) at St. Mark’s in the Bowery on a Tuesday: June 11 with Taylor Mead and others. It is an arts festival.  

I wish I could be in Vancouver with you. I wrote to Creeley but I don’t think I can manage it. David says he would like to be able to go. So much has happened. Denise is a good friend and a lifesaver. Diane di Prima has returned yesterday to NYC.

---

80 In his poem “Family Album in Red Plush,” Hartley writes that his father “was clean-mouthed, clean-souled, proud of being honest, avoided being conspicuous in any other way / The finest people in the world are those who act in the right way; / My mother and father were among them” (280).

81 David Rattray (1936-1993), American poet and translator known for his work on Artaud and Roger Gilbert-Lecompte, as well as his own collections of poetry (Opening the Eyelid, 1990) and memoir (How I Became One of the Invisible, 1992). He was good friends with Wieners during the latter’s time in New York City; in his essay “Van” (about poet Alden Van Buskirk), Rattray describes reading The Hotel Wentley Poems to Van Buskirk on his deathbed. The Lower East Side Neighborhoods Association (1955-1973), originally formed to combat juvenile delinquency and gang activity, but evolved into a quality-of-life advocacy group. Taylor Mead (1924-2013), poet and performer known for his star turns in Andy Warhol’s films, especially 1964’s Taylor Mead’s Ass. He lived in the Lower East Side, giving weekly readings at the Bowery Poetry Club and fighting gentrifying landlords right up until his death.

82 In the summer of 1963 the University of British Columbia sponsored the Vancouver Poetry Conference, organized by Warren and Ellen Tallman, based out of their growing relationship with Robert Duncan and, out of that, the burgeoning affinity between Vancouver poets and scholars and the work being done by New American poets. Later Jack Spicer, who had not been invited to the original conference, would come and deliver his series of Vancouver
Charles Peter and Betty. I am sitting at a kitchen table with Herbert Huncke, and David and his girl, Lynn. They are smoking cigarettes and are very young and beautiful. You are with me and I feel beautiful because of you, what [illeg] you through [illeg] agony; the suffering, [illeg] is here with us and will not be [illeg] Am full of life and suffering and feel fine because of it, [illeg] of you, through the-[illeg] of the evening, [illeg]. It cannot do me wrong. On-[illeg] With the horrible-[illeg] of the fall as a mission, [illeg] therapist, what it suffers.

* * * *

By the Fall of 1963 Wieners was back in Milton, lying low and working on his planned book with Robert Wilson and James Carr’s Phoenix Book Shop, and another with Dave Haselwood that was never completed. He continued visiting New York regularly, though, staying with different friends from the downtown art communities; in Recollections Diane di Prima remembers specifically a Winter Solstice 1963 dinner at her Cooper Square loft that included Freddie Herko, Merce Cunningham, Jimmy Waring, and John Wieners, who had “come out from his hermitage” at Warhol Factory habitué John Daley’s apartment down the street. “We drank wine together in the candlelight,” di Prima remembers, “talking and laughing, the light from the fireplace in the living room throwing long shadows among us.”

Back at home he started work in earnest on his first full-length book – “64 pages!” he writes Levertov – for Robert Wilson’s Phoenix Bookshop imprint. The project inspires many title suggestions fired off to Wilson, along with new poems – one lovely poem in this stretch of letters is “The Suicide,” his poem for Sylvia Plath. The publication of Ace of Pentacles brought Wieners a new level of respect beyond the in-the-know crowds which had cherished Hotel Wentley, and helped create new opportunities in 1965, including invitations to the Spoleto and the Berkeley Poetry Festivals and a graduate teaching assistantship at the University of Buffalo.

* * * *

lectures in the Tallmans’ home; they were published as The House That Jack Built in 1998. The New American-Vancouver connection has remained strong in the decades since, after Robin Blaser and Stan Persky, among others, relocated to British Columbia in the 1960s and 70s.

83 Diane di Prima and new husband Alan Marlowe, desperately needing a break from New York pressures, moved to California in September 1962, trying various living situations before giving up and moving back to New York in May 1963, moving into an enormous loft at 35 Cooper Square (on the same block as LeRoi and Hettie Jones) in the East Village. Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen of di Prima’s Recollections of My Life as a Woman give a thrilling account of this time in their lives.

84 370.
Dear Denise:

Please forgive the delay in writing. I have moved back to Milton for the winter, and am preparing a book of poems for Bob Wilson and Jim Carr to publish in January. They want to do it; I have to have the mss. turned in by Thanksgiving. 64 pages!

I received a letter from Mexico, that they awarded only one fellowship to an American this year, and it was to Gina Berriault in San Francisco; for her novel. They said that it might be small consolation to me, but that I came in “second place” and that if they could have awarded a fellowship to an American poet, etc. They wanted to include one, etc. and in case the funds do appear, they are keeping my manuscript. So I was very happy to get this word and know that the labor was not in vain, if any labor ever is.

I thank you for your interest, Denise, and care in recommending me. And do think something positive might show up. I do think though that they shouldn’t go around, advertising fellowships, if they haven’t got the money to give any but one. But of course, they have to look out for their own first.

I think of you often, and the Maine woods much. It is so good to be back here in Milton, and have the leaves around. They are a great consolation, to see their orange and gold. I know that if you stop in Boston, or even go through on your way down, I would be most happy to see you, and Mitch. I look forward to it, as a possibility. The number here is Oxford 6-2421. And listed under Albert Wieners in the book. You even could stay overnight if you are tired from the trip. We have a spare front room, and my mother and father would be very happy to have you, as guests, for as long as you want.

I would send the letter from Mexico, if I could find it; but in the welter of moving, I cannot. It is so good to be on new ground again, and yet, with familiar terms. I cannot stand stress, and in New York, everywhere I found it, except at your house, and a few others. It is so good to have you as a friend, both you and Mitchell. I appreciate it. All the generosity you offer. It is the spirit that sustains one, and you have it in plentitude.

Love to you both,

John

Somehow I doubt that you go through here, but just in case you do.

85 Wieners is referring to *Ace of Pentacles*, the virtuosic collection released by Robert Wilson’s Phoenix Bookshop in 1964.
86 In 1963, San Francisco novelist and short story writer Gina Berriault (1926-1999) won a fellowship from the Centro Mexicano de Escritores in Mexico City.
Alan Marlowe

October 24, 1963
[Milton, MA]

Dear Alan:

It is just after noon, and I am getting up. The mail held your letter from Holiday Inn! What a great movie that was! and I am grateful for it. It lifted my heart.

Tonight we go to open house at Metropolitan State Hospital, tomorrow night an Insulin party at Kline Hall of the hospital, where I will read my poems after a musical comedy, and Betty Carter, soprano, sings. Then Saturday to The Statler for a small luncheon with Governor Peabody. But first I must go into town and pick up my glasses, have my hair cut (there are no razor cuts in Boston) and spend some of the $100 an anonymous patron sent through Denise Levertov… “an admirer of your work who prefers to remain anonymous”…

Yes, love is coming and I am becoming full and ripe for it; even though my cock slants to the left, a fact which has always kept me from feeling full and totally loved. I have thought I would get an operation on it, just have the tissue cut at the base, so it would hang, or stand up straight and full. It hangs all right, but when hard, erect, stands up to the left. It has always been an embarrassment, but I try to cloak it, and most people do not notice. Also there is [redacted in original], a prominent person in the poetry world, who has the same problem.? (charm) but I fear to give you his name, or divulge it, for fear you will go back and tell him, as I did about the stars. I only know it because I slept with him one night, and he stepped out of bed in the morning with a hard-on.

Here is a poem I wrote:

The Suicide

Yes, I put her away –
But now life flares up
As sure as China in a cup
You hear the droppings
of her heart.

Leaves rustle on the window pane.
Three o’clock turns round again.
The man in the moon grows full
off her death, while earth waits
patient beneath
To receive her ashes on the wind.

Yes, earth owns the wind
As I owned her life

88 The previous paragraph is bracketed, and written in the margin: “This is for you and not for them”
89 “The Suicide,” Wieners’ poem for Sylvia Plath (1932-1963), was published in his 1964 collection Ace of Pentacles.
Whom I have never seen
Nor been with

Still within our hearts there lies
this unity of

[----------------------all that dies
we hold in common
because without it

we become more common than the dust.

2.

Clay cannot create her features
nor mirror reveal her mouth.

Photograph not show her face,
full with blood, so put away

her picture from the shelf
And turn instead to living

women on the couch, decked with flowers
as if it were she laid out,

and not Sylvia, in the woods,

3.  
Address to the Woman

Tell her that may not rise again
She sings still in our breath

Tell her that may not breathe again
She moves yet beneath the moon

Tell her that may not wave again
Her hands are dawns within our eyes

Tell her that may not speak again
Her words are warnings in the wood.

10.23

A poem is enclosed, and a small personal note to you.
Saw: Lady Finger?? rather Lady Killer
with James Cagney and Mae Clark, 1934
and Love Me Forever
with Grace Moore and Leo Carillo, 1934.

Am trying to plot the stars, and spiritual atmosphere at time of my birth, 1934. These movies have an influence upon the spiritual climate of the times.

Hate to hear about those damn hoods. Come to Boston and we will walk the Charles, where there are only bushes stirring in the wind, and small lagoons, and mouths slurping at the bushes, and ducks falling off the rocks at dawn, into the water. Also the Public Garden is fun, and we can sit in the trunks of great trees all night./ I did one night, my only night in Boston since I got home, before Diane’s reading and it was ecstatic.

Thank you for your kind words, Alan, I treasure them and use your strength to guide me, take me over the streets.

Howard will last one month with Irving, if he goes, and then disappear into the back streets of Paris, or Tangiers, or wherever the dope is, all over the world. And reappear only when he sees our names in the back pages of a newspaper, to share in the ‘gloria’, and say, ‘I knew them’ like Papa Yiddisher. Of course we will be very kind, and then he’ll realize how desperate we are, and turn away again, to feed his own monkey.

Take it easy, and rest up, and put on weight, and get lots of vitamin pills, and all that, but come to Boston however you are. Don’t let them eat you away. I know there are egos and politics there, and it is very debilitating to compete on that level. Forgive me for saying this. I love you both

John

Robert Wilson October 24, 1963
[Milton, MA]

Tell the printer that everything in the book is as it should be. Mistakes in grammar, punctuation and spelling (surrendered, for surrendered) are intentional, or absolute as this is what the poem demanded. The only, etc.

Dear Bob:

I leave the title up to you. I can think of none to save my soul. This is a very special night in my life, for 11 years ago tonight, I met Dana for our first drive into the country. And it is a hallowed spot in my mind. I didn’t realize this until I typed the date at the top of this letter. It was 11:30 when we met and just about now we were coming in each other’s arms. I will never forget as long as I live, and I am not sad about it, but joyful as only a lover can be.

A picture of Robert Creeley is attached with a handwritten note reading, “That is our audience as I see it.”
I have celebrated it every year that I remembered. And so it is only fitting that I should be sending this manuscript off tonight, or rather finishing it. Oh I love you for doing this, resolving in my mind and life the fact of fate in our existence.

Here are some titles to try on:

The Industry of Your Soul

That is all I can think of, and I know it far from adequate.

The Acts of Youth I decided to use as title for a section in the book. The book is divided into three parts: First Poems, The Acts of Youth, and Autumn in New York, which I like best as a title. Could this be the Title?!! Yes.

Here are some instructions as I see them:

[redacted by Wieners] correcting it myself often four or five, maybe six times, copying poems over and over until I got them right. That is true to the experience of them poem. The punctuation is right, as is the spelling, viz: surrendered for surrendered; a comma at the end of a poem instead of a period; poems with no titles; or sentences beginning with small, lowercase letters. I hope this doesn’t offend you, and you can publish them as they are. But I am open to your suggestions, whatever they may be, [redacted]. Am I being pompous. You must forgive and remember this is my first book, and so I try to be pompous, But am not, dead, in fact can’t believe it is happening to all of us. Do go on and let me know. The night is here, and delightful and of all the examples I use above: mostly they occur only in one or two poems. I know you might like them or think them unorthodox. But remember we have a highly sophisticated audience to deal with, and nothing is done for its own sake, but only as the poems are, written in and outside partaking of the universe as they do, as we are right now, existing in the flux of stars. God bless them and you.

Love,
John

Diane di Prima
11-6-63
[Milton, MA]

Dear Diane:

I wonder if it is too late to take up remarks re McClure, Burroughs from review of Rechy. I wonder now in doubt whether it be wise to create or even show dissension among our thin and thinning ranks. Not that I doubt the veracity of the remarks but I fear hostility. And also do not remember the accuracy of words. Please do honor this.

Unless you feel the remarks have accuracy – and substance, but I feel damage the whole — I shudder in doubt. Do go easy with yourself and remember I love you. John

91 The book was titled Ace of Pentacles, divided into three sections. The first is untitled, followed by “Ages of Youth” (taken from Olson’s misprint of “The Acts of Youth”) and “Autumn in New York.”
Dave Haselwood

[November 12, 1963]

[Milton, MA]

Dear David:

That is A DEATH BOOK. And more is to come. Here is the suicide. It can encompass: For What Time Slays, which can be used as a smaller part of this larger book: THE DEATHBOOK.

Feel free to use any part of this poem, or the others in the catalogue as preface. OK. And all good luck to you.

The Suicide

Yes I put her away.
But now life flares
As safe as China in a cup
You hear the droppings
of her heart.

Leaves rustle on the window pane.
Three o’clock turns round again.
The man in the moon grows full
Off her death, while earth awaits
beneath
To receive her ashes on the wind.

Yes, earth owns the wind
As I her life
Whom I have never seen
Nor been with there
Still within our hearts lies
this unity of
all that dies
we hold in common
because without it
we become more common than the dust.

2.

Clay cannot create her features
nor mirror reveal her mouth

Photograph not show her form
full with blood, so put it away

her picture from the shelf
And turn instead to living
woman on the couch, decked with flowers
as if she were laid out,

and not Sylvia, in the woods.

3.

Address To The Woman

Tell her that may not rise again
She sings still in our breath

Tell her that may not breathe again
She moves yet beneath the moon

Tell her that may not wave again
Her hands are dawns within our eyes

Tell her that may not speak again
Her words are warnings in the wood.

And the final one:

Now there are other poems to go with this, but I have not collected them yet, and will wait your final OK.

There will be fifteen or so in all. Maybe fewer. As I am busy as all hell until The New Year. God, may it come, soon, within our hearts.

Where Fled or Whither?

Despair is given me92 as others’ daily bread. What wish is this? or this stuff fed. Does desperate faith bring on incarnation?

The night nurtures faith in dawn. But let one creep of light disappear from the afternoon and all murmur: too soon the darkness falls.

Does doom come on? We continue on walking

92 “Despair is Given Me”
on. The walls. Are fled by whom.
The moon? She breaks through the blood
and clouds.

Love to you, John

Dave Haselwood

November 14, 1963
[Milton, MA]

Dear Dave:

I got a job today in Jordan’s for the Christmas season and used you as a reference. I
will be working in the Book Dept but said I had been employed by the Auerhahn Press,
eluding from 9.57 to 12.61 and earned a salary of $85 a week. Do you earn $85 a week? How
does this sound on you. OK? I don’t see any risk and will use it in the future for reference if
necessary – if it meets your OK. But I will always notify you first in advance.

Love,
John

Let this rest easily on
your conscience. And if not, & you disapprove of the whole thing, don’t hesitate to let me
know. But I do appreciate getting a job. And find this necessary to fill in the gaps. You are in
no way accountable.

The reference is addressed to you personally.
I gave reason for leaving as illness in the family.

Diane di Prima

November 20, 1963
[Milton, MA]

Love to you and Alan and the children
John

Dear Diane:

Cant find a postcard, so this short note. I have not received the Floating Bear yet, and each
night I come home anxious from work, not to find it there.

The book is finished. And I talked to Bob Wilson yesterday on the phone, and he won’t
need me until after he’s read it and Kim whoosey passes on it. So I will come down then.
And not this Saturday, as I have no money and am so tired.

Denise Levertov

November 20, 1963
[Milton, MA]

Denise:

Here is a poem to make up for the last one. It is from the book which is finished. I
will keep sending them until I hear from you, as I find I have a good many that have not
been published, and I did not know I had until I went through old mss.

Love to you
and Mitch and Nik. Am working in Jordan’s amid Children’s Books, and see all the Beatrix Potter and the Oz books. Will send you some, dear.

John

Kept thinking of poems you would like. And one led to another. Sent the “sonnet” again as the change is from so poor to too poor. Won’t feel any. Please don’t waste any time writing over these. As they are just random from the book. And I love you.

If love be dark, and a compulsion in the mind.93
Confusion, if love be blind.
Then let me go, compelled and blind
Over the highway to your soul

Where love is kind.

---

Robert Wilson  11/27/63  
[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

The title I have chosen for the book is:

THE NEW VANITY  
(poems 1954-63) ?
the part in parenthesis is tentative according to your wishes.

Please let me know if this is alright

Love,  
John

---

Robert Wilson  December 20th 1963  
[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

I know you will hate this but please be patient with me: Entering The World I Made A Sty: is the title I have chosen for the book. Will it go? is what I want to know. all I have done for weeks creatively is think of titles for the book: from Boston Common to ? Boston Common-er.

Now that I have put it down on paper I lose faith with it. But intrinsically I feel it is right. Denise wrote me 16 pages of constructive criticism on 5 poems I sent her. So I see one or two words I want to change.

In answer to your letter: Acts of Youth is best but why use it, it’s so obvious. Let’s aim at failure, then success will be a surprise.

93 “If love be dark, and a compulsion in the mind”
My own experience declares this to be true. “It is the story of my life” and I want it to be the title to be of this order, true to the poems and (to the story of my life) as it will be a long time before another one if ever.

I love you again. And Denise also. For taking time.

In answer to your questions, again:

1) The play is out. It is too long. But I send a copy. And you will agree. The only in existence. Play following. So take care. As the poems too are the only copy in existence. I have none but a memory & some re-writes And all the originals. Forgive this handwriting, as I am sitting up in bed, past midnight, and can't sleep and write this to you.

The owl's watch.

That's another good title.

2) Nothing on the President. Even tho I weep for it.

3) The poem's don't make sense. Some of them. I wish they did. If I could rewrite them, they would. Of course, we are open to attack, printing them as they are (illeg) of this current issue of The New Yorker (p. 90, by Brendan Gill reviewing Kerouac & Adolfas Mekas Hallelujah The Hills). It is unfashionable to be spontaneous and first impressionistic. But I am disjointed and discontinuous, as this handwriting tells. Love again.

December 21st issue of the New Yorker, that is. See it.

The Winter Solstice.

And Alan Marlowe is having a party.

I will be there the 29th to give a reading at the Central Plaza.

and see you if you are not on vacation. Send word if so and I will not plan on it seeing you for talk. Love, John. (I am not high) This is “just” “nerves”.

If my apologizing and complaining ever gets out of the way, I might be able to write someday again.

3) a) Windows of Waltham:

It should be Wong as this is a nuthouse poem and Wong is what I heard.

b) It was written as mightly but meant to be mighty although mightly connotes the mysterious to me, though nightly is a nice twist too. I leave it to you. MIGHTY should be the obvious answer. I think tho overreading your sentence that mightly sticks in your unconscious too. New words have that trick to them. Leave it at what your pen decides.

Mysterious influence that that is.

Don't let Denise see the manuscript. I'm afraid she might sway your mind. She is so observant.

---

94 In a December 1963 New Yorker issue, film critic Brendan Gill reviews Adolfas Mekas’ Hallelujah The Hills, calling the avant-garde classic “conscientiously evanescent… the characters are hard pressed to achieve even one dimension.” He sneaks in his commentary on Kerouac and the Beats at the end of the review:

Mr. Mekas and company appear to believe in improvising movies much as Jack Kerouac and company appear to believe in improvising novels; first thoughts strike them as purer and therefore better than second thoughts, but in following this principle they run the risk that what amounts to certain success to them may be set down as self-indulgent failure by the outside world (90).
4. The significance of the decimals in a Series is simply the dates in May they were written – you see an extra one was put in for that reason i.e. poem.
5. No photo of course. Even that poem?
6. Could we omit the “sub-title” in “You Talk of Going” and call it simply as it was meant to be:

   **A Series of Repetitions.**

   “You Talk of Going But Don’t Even Have a Suitcase – was an after thought / where the
   faults are glaring please don’t hesitate to advance theories on what is against good taste, or
   the obvious.
7) I think The Ladies should go or be omitted. It is in poor taste, and thematically contrived. The Theory of it is wrong, to use such an obvious (again) and contrived rhyme-form.

   Yes, Acts of Youth sings – But Entering The World I Made a Sty is true as well as having
   something of The Styx in it.

   John

   Please dont hesitate to say anything about the book. I have doubts about The Poem for
   Marlene Dietrich even tho I love the idea: Act #2.
   We could say
   “to faced on a cot”
   I worry over it. All the time. *and get away with it.*

   Also the Suicide Poem:

   “this is what made you jump”
   not The Suicide, which is OK? and appeared in Set #2.
   Happiness is Just A
   Thing
   (Called Joe?) could be worked in, in place of The Ladies (or whatever you choose to omit
   Let me know. I would love to work on it
   For Erin Black, alone.
   It appears in C #4 no
   number 5, the last one
   Love.

   This letter on second reading makes sense. Please
   bear with it and read over a second time. If
   you will be that kind and fair to me.

   12/20

   Dear Bob:

   Waking up this morning I found this on the front page of the Boston Globe; wouldn’t it make a lovely cover – with the title in the upper left hand corner: **Boston**

---

95 Gerrit Lansing published two issues of the poetry magazine *Set* in 1961 and 1963, with striking covers by Harry Martin, printing many of the same poets that appeared in *Measure*, such as Wieners, Duncan, Jonas, and Olson, with some notable additions including Aleister Crowley pieces, published under one of his pseudonyms, Fra. Perdurabo.
Common : or On A Common Fountain, whatever you prefer – as this is the fountain I wrote the poem about – Ode on a Common Fountain.\footnote{“Ode on a Common Fountain,” an elegant, formal blank verse poem, was written while Wieners was an undergraduate, and first published in Boston College’s literary magazine \textit{Stylus} in 1954. It opens \textit{Ace of Pentacles}, its unabashed romanticism and formal precision setting a strange and auspicious tone for the wildly different poems that follow it.}

And we would win
the graphics prize then.

John

---

\textbf{Robert Wilson} \hspace{1cm} January 30, 1964
\textit{[Milton, MA]}

Dear Bob:

Please forgive my delay. Things get so pressing that I revert to long-distance love and no action. Now paralysis has passed and I enclose

1) The Ginsberg letter
2) Holograph of Measure poem: The Imperatrice
3) Typed copies of:
   A Poem For Trapped Things and
   Where Fled – which I hope you can insert in the manuscript. Where Fled at the end and A Poem For Trapped Things after the poem: Louise in the table of contents.


Also would you omit “If love be dark, and a compulsion in the mind” if you didn't take it out before \textit{[Milton, MA]}. I hate to bother you with all this, but it won’t take long.

I enclose a blue page for your amusement. It is a list of titles. \textbf{But But PENTACLE} is the one I really favor \textit{want}. It has an excellent definition in any dictionary: the pent (five) and the \textit{acle} from OSCULUM – OSCULUS – dim – five dim (years – from 1958-1963 when the majority of poems were written. Also it is a part of THE TAROT deck. The Ace of Pentacles a girl showed me when I said the word. PENTACLE she exclaimed with joy.

Also you could use your sister’s collage for the cover. Love,

John –

Write and let me know all the details –

how many? etc – title, list and price.

Love JAWN

---

\textbf{Robert Wilson} \hspace{1cm} February 14, 1964
\textit{[Milton, MA]}

Dear Bob:

Would like to say that the Ace of Pentacles is the final title: if you do \textit{want like} it that way, or \textit{then} Ace of Pentacles alone would do it. \textit{For me} That way we can call the first section, which you objected to as having no title, \textit{simply} Pentacle (1954-1959). Then followed by Ages of Youth \textit{for second section}. The poem is to stay Acts of Youth but I figured...
Ages would include more, as not all the poems are Acts of Youth, in that section. Autumn in New York is the last title as per before. O.K. I promise you this will be the last revision.

Thank you for going along with Pentacle—it gave me great courage and joy.

I think

Ace of Pentacles is a good title. There are so many definite articles around, I would like to do away with ours. Still I am sure it will be referred to as

The Ace of Pentacles.

What do you think? definite article or no? definite article

I have a mailing list of about 300 friends who would be interested in the book: if you want to send out a flyer or something I would be happy to send their get together their addresses.

Could we put on the inside front page or somewhere:

Also by the same author:
The Hotel Wentley Poems (1958)

You probably will get orders for that too, along with it. Grolier wants the book, of course.

Ace, I think would make Jim Carr happier. It makes me much happier.

And do we get royalties or what?

Forgive my sloppy language. It is the inexact Irish in me, or something.

It will end with age, I am sure?

My mother’s strainer has 5 pentacles on it to let the water strain come thru. It is a lovely one, and I will send it, when I can replace it. I also saw it, a drawing of Pentacles, on the cover of Buckminster Fuller’s book:

Nine Chains To The Moon

By the way could you set aside Sappho and Alcaeus

or send it to David Rattray

East Hampton,

Long Island, NY

and deduct it from University Bill also Ezra Pound book Also do deduct.

You have a copy of Edward or Richard Andersen’s

Thieves Like Us?, a novel published in the 1940s, his only one.

I would gladly pay for it, if you.

Yes I will sign the 100 copies if there’s something in it, either copies of the book or monies for me.

Also, Bob, do I get to see proofs?

Love,

John

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97 American architect, futurist, and scholar Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983), famous for developing the geodesic dome while teaching at Black Mountain College in the late 1940s, published his technological history – and theorization of “ephemeralization” – Nine Chains to the Moon in 1938. Its 1963 paperback edition, published by Southern Illinois University Press, features a geodesic globe on its cover, a sphere made up of innumerable pentacles.

98 Thieves Like Us, first published in 1937, the second novel by troubled writer Edward Anderson (1905-1969), written after several years spent riding the rails during the Great Depression. It has been reprinted in the Library of America’s anthology Crime Novels: American Noir of the 1930s and 1940s.
P.S.
Your play is a lovely one. I especially liked the tautness and crispness of the dialogue. It gives me hope that someone deals with mother’s from the inside. My mother was the only one to send me a Valentine, you may be sure. Did you get many?

Remember in school, we used to count them and tell everyone how many we got; if any we got.

I know you collect them. Antique valentines.

Forgive me Bob: it makes me very nervous to write. (this way, touching on matters underneath, I can’t say)

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Diane di Prima

2.19.64

[Milton, MA]

Dear Diane:
Could you bring, if it fits in your luggage, a large box of yeast? plus products. They don't have it in Boston and it really helps. I will pay when you arrive. I had $300 from The New Hope Foundation through Stanley Kunitz\(^9\) but it is all gone now on perfume and shoes. It is $4.50 and Saturday is payday. All they have here is Tiger's Milk, which is good, but... Of course, this is in code, CIA?

*John*

*Can you spare it till then? I hope this isn’t an imposition. I will not go back to New York until [illeg]*

---

Charles Olson

3.5.64

[Milton, MA]

Dear Charles:

Here is a rough manuscript of Ace of Pentacles, as it goes off to the printer’s. I know there are many missing, but I sent them off with revisions to Bob Wilson, to get before the type was set. It will be one of these letterset, with photooffset that, and they don’t like revisions, so I am told. But what you have here is a bare skeleton, tho still some of the favorites are in it.

Can you do anything with it, by way of an introduction, or blurb on the back of the book. It seems, Bob without my permission, asked Allen G. for one, and he never came across, tho he said he would, to Bob, and then never came around.\(^{10}\) Denise thought it was not a good idea. And I agree. Heard over the telephone and called Bob, and told him I would send you the manuscript, but he said you were too slow, and you probably are, but I

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\(^9\) The New Hope Foundation was formed by poet, writer, and peace activist Lenore Marshall (1897-1971) and her husband James, in the area of New Hope, Pennsylvania, with a mission to “support the arts and the cause of world peace.” The Marshalls invited poet Stanley Kunitz to help administer the Foundation’s artist grants, and soon after Marshall’s death they established the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize, which continues to administer awards to this day.

\(^{10}\) Olson did not write anything to introduce or promote *Ace of Pentacles.*
don’t care. IT IS AN IMPOSITION. And I want you to do it, eyeing enviously your postcard on *Ages of Youth*.

If you can not do it, it is alright. Use poems for kindling wood.

Love,

John

Love to Bette and Charles Peter, and Mr. Hooker.

PS:
Thank you for sending *Audit* to me. I got the letter from San Francisco and it is too late, but the poems I marked unpublished are, and they might want to use them. If you show them. These are the only copies typed, or I would show them myself.

I know you are frightfully busy, so let them gather dust, if you want to. Tho I don’t want to make the situation even harder by bringing it up, or dwelling on same.

Robert Wilson

March 5, 1964

[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

This is a new poem, to go right before Procrastination. It first appeared in Semina. I would like to include it as it gives form to the book and also replaces Black Sun, which I feel is too loose for the book; tho I love the title, I think we should omit it.

And use the title later. It seems I have a wealth of titles here, and no poems underneath them. But will have, as time goes on.

The other pages are to co-relate corrections I think essential to the book. Please agree with me, and put them in, if it is not too late. “I will not bother you again.” How goes it?

Love to you, John, let me know how it goes, if there are any unnecessary delays, and how I can help.

I don’t know where I will get a photograph. If you send some money, I will get one taken.

Love,

John

* * * *

Throughout 1963 and 1964 Wieners cultivated his friendship with Denise Levertov and Mitch Goodman, who were welcoming and stimulating company to Wieners. In the second half of the decade, as Levertov was conducting her provocative correspondence with Robert Duncan concerning

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activism and poetry, she and Goodman would attend many of the same anti-war poetry readings and fundraisers as Wieners. But from the beginning, as with Duncan, Levertov’s friendship with Wieners was based entirely in poetry, and she proved among the most astute readers of his verse, in her letters as well as her 1965 review for *The Nation* of *Ace of Pentacles*. Wieners’ letter prior to this one, containing the poems on which she offers feedback here, is not among Levertov’s papers, but Wieners’ quotes make it clear which poems he’s discussing. Her assistance would continue off the page, as well, through a letter of recommendation to study at Buffalo with Olson at their new poetics department, and indirectly – as he mentions in a late-summer letter, it was Levertov’s decision to forego matriculation and scholarship at Buffalo that opened up a place for him. “The check was made out in your name; and was sent back to the Treasurer’s office for a new name… I believe in chance. But how blind can it be? Is it fortuitous?”

Levertov and old friend Robert Duncan were equally exhilarated by *Ace of Pentacles*, both writing rave reviews. In one letter to her, Duncan wrote:

> The poems assert the validity of a great unhappiness and have such authenticity I am ashamed to come back with any criticism that he ought to live a different life. Then I find the pleasure in rimes rung out loud when there’s a song to it and it dances.  

* * * * *

**Denise Levertov**  
March 6, 1964  
[Milton, MA]

Love to Mitch, always.  
Dear Denise:

The moon goes into Capricorn this morning at 6:16 A.M. And so I wanted to write to you and speak of the poems you mentioned in your letter of December 4th.  
1) There should be no period after pleasures but rather a semi-colon after due; which does mean “lot” and also obligation or burden. The poem was written under heroin so perhaps that explains its confused character. “Always been my due” is a new sentence, in the sense of continuum of thought, but not period-wise, grammatically.  
2) Answer itself, in what is above.  
3) To inhabit the depth of ocean at mid-stream means simply the height of ocean, its depth, in the middle of it.  

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102 Quoted in Jarnot 236.  
103 Wieners refers to his poem “For Jan,” an ode to his stripper friend Jan Minsk. In its published form, the poem ends  
> Offend not the ancestral gods, by this sale  

> Of love, or tasting of unknown secret pleasures  
> Always been our due, to inhabit at the river bank  
> The depth of ocean in mid-stream.
4. I’m glad you spoke of Sonnet. You’re right. It does seem right in context of book, but lost on its own. And rather slight, really; a bit of fluff after reading Christina Rossetti.

In “Let the heart’s pain slack off” I changed the pronouns back to the first personal pronoun — after your reading — as that is the way they were in the original.

(3) (I repeat this (3) again as you have two in your letter. The quotation marks didn’t close. I was thinking of Olson’s “There is no way to end a parenthesis” or something like that and I mistook them. The means he used for the way.

(4) Yes, it’s doors that are open (My sister’s and my door were open)

(5) I don’t think there’s any relationship between the 2nd and 3rd stanzas. The poem was dictated to me home on a weekend from the hospital. And I was under medication and in a confused state of mind And I had in the poem

“Open only like doors to love.”

For Marion.

But I left that out.

That about answers the questions. I was looking for an old letter of yours today, p.2. of it to hand on the title of the George MacDonald novel you were reading in Maine.

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104 “Sonnet” appears on the same page as “For Jan.” It is one of several poems in the collection that experiment with a traditional form (although this sonnet has only thirteen lines) and meter; “Sonnet” is written in a relatively strict iambic tetrameter, spiked with rhymes of greater or less slant which reinforce the haunted, stoned feel of the lament for a lost junkie lover: “He’s gone, will come / no more and left a memory that’s too poor. / I cannot tell the day from dreaming, he’s gone / and left my heart so sore.” The folksy tone of “so sore” is undercut by the barely-there dissonance of the near-rhyme with “poor,” and in between is one of Wieners’ loveliest lines: “I cannot tell the day from dreaming.” What seems on the surface to be “a bit of fluff,” as Wieners says (underselling his own poem, as was his wont), is a great play of prosody working with and against its narrative of an abject (and unapologetic) gay drug user pining for his lover.

105 The three points listed below are all referencing “Let the heart’s pain slack off,” which opens in a manner reminiscent of Robert Duncan, evoking “that secret place we go to in time / Without rhyme’s safety to assure us, / All gift is, that perfect joy.” The rhyme in the poem is primarily internal, the strong single-syllable rhymes that often lend the poems of this period an archaic feeling that clashes against the Olson tenor of language like “symptoms / of yesterday. The past equal to now,” talk of historic “debris.” The stanzas he mentions to Levertov are the second and third of the three-stanza poem:

No book I turn to but I hear
An inner voice so dear say
“Pass over the commands today; forget
What is allowed, and what is not.
What youth has got. The bizarre symptoms
Of yesterday. The past equal to now.”

No words here fit for print, no worlds either disclose themselves, just debris solid enough to erect a wall against all mentioned above; open only like doors to love. (SP 60)
Phantasies: when I came across this letter: and realized the questions were never answered, you ask.

I know this is an unfair advantage to relate to something written by you 4 months ago or 3, when you dont have a copy of the letter there. But I take the risk.

Love to you,

John

I read tonight the first chapter of Swann’s Classical World of HD.\textsuperscript{106}

I long to hear from you: BUT YOUR POEMS ARE ENOUGH!

---

Robert Wilson

March 13, 1964

[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

Sorry to bother you again, but can you make copy of Song (for Diane di Prima’s new musical) for Kirby Congdon? He is doing an article on “avant-garde” work, and would like to include related to NY scene in Argentinian magazine.\textsuperscript{107} I would appreciate this very much, in fact feel it imperative, as the poem is perfect for this end, if not others. Sent a copy, the one you made for me before, to Olson. Let me know if this goes allright. He asked for it, I realize, to my horror, by March 15\textsuperscript{th}. And here it is, March 13\textsuperscript{th}, Jack Micheline’s\textsuperscript{108} wedding day, my mother’s birthday, the Ides of March.

Love to you,

John

---

Robert Wilson

March 14, 1964

[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

Just wrote to Ann today and realize belatedly she might want to transfer my printing of the word Pentacle onto the cover. This I dont want. I thought she meant a drawing for the book. As The Publisher, you must decide the cover of the book, or approve the one

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\textsuperscript{106} The Classical World of H.D., a 1962 book by American poet and writer Thomas Burnett Swann (1928-1976), was a treatment of Greek antiquity’s influences upon H.D.’s poetry.

\textsuperscript{107} Kirby Congdon (b. 1926), American poet, writer, and artist, active in the post-war avant-garde scenes. With his longtime partner Ralph Simmons, Jr., he established Cycle Press, and in the 1960s published Magazine (a storehouse for ammunition). The first issue was billed as “a One-Shit Periodical of the current independent movement for poets who have not had the benefit of any group, clique, or literary connection and who deserve more attention than they are getting,” but there were ultimately six issues (with issue five coming out in ten parts).

\textsuperscript{108} Jack Micheline (1929-1998), American poet and painter. After starting out as a Greenwich Village troubadour, he moved to San Francisco and became central to the outlaw poetry and art scenes. He was married twice in the 1960s, to Patricia Cherkin and to Mimi Redding. His first book, published the same year as Wieners’ Hotel Wentley Poems in 1958, featured an introduction by Jack Kerouac and was well reviewed in Esquire by Dorothy Parker. His last book, Sixty-Seven Poems for Downtrodden Saints, was published in 1997. In 2008 Ugly Duckling Presse published a reclamation project of Micheline’s archival art and writing, One of a Kind.
submitted by the printer. I think writing on the cover would be a mistake, an unprofessional look.

It should be bold, commercial.
Dont you think?
It should be bold, printed.
If any is to appear.

This refers to the printing alone, nothing to do with the painting, etching therein, etc.

2). Ask for Library of Congress Catalog Card No. This also gives the book a professional look. And will be used by librarians when ordering the book. And also will get the book listed in The Publisher’s Index which will brings in a lot of orders. Otherwise it will be a mongrel, and get messed. [illeg] will order from the Library of Congress. They check through it and order systematically. They publish reproductions of the card in Large Library of Congress books, which will be get used all over the country in reputable institutions. Let the collectors come afterwards. It is enough to get established as a publisher.

Love,
John

Wrote to Charles. Sent manuscript for his consideration. Dinner tonight with Bruce Conner. Will ask him to take picture and we’ll see.

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Denise Levertov  Mar 19, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Denise:
Just wanted to send you some word: about my life, and whatever happens it is. But cannot really do it. Only send you this salutation. Will see you April 16th.
I hope it is enough.

Love,
Love
John John

I have tried so often to write, and just cannot do it. If I did not respect you so much, or feel so close to you, as a guiding spirit in life, then I could do it. All I can say, for the first time in four years, I am off medication. That means totally. And no one knows it but you. I have told one but you. So you see, it is an occasion. Those last words are sloppy, forgive me.

I didn’t tell the doctor or anything. I just stopped taking pills, and my mind is working again. Not revolving in circles, as it used to be, but flying off, into circles. Since Leroi was here, February 19th, or so.
It is wonderful. I hope you feel so, too.

---

Denise Levertov  March 24, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Denise:
I just want to get this off. It is 4 o’clock in the morning, or after.
Read Poem First

I know there are flaws in the poem, enclosed. First, “mood” does not sat what is happening. Nor is “fountain” the right word to express the depths of sources “source” or place, do you think, Don’t answer.

Whatever, I sometimes believe it is better to leave well enough alone. And not tamper with it. Leave it for the next time to maturer thought. Of course, there is no next time.

This I take it would explain “growling.” As I have no copy I can find, even tho I typed one up for re-writing, I cannot say. It is a dim spot, I believe, in the poem, thrown up from a weak place. (I will check on that, tho.)

Too often I let the first word stand, out of doggedness, tiredness, laziness, or just plain I don’t care. Simply – things which cannot be tolerated in poetry – that is why I sometimes wonder whether I am a poet (at all) – or just one who wants to let steam off into print – who wants “to use poetry for his own ends.”

Morning will dissolve these thoughts.

I must close now as morning is here. And I have not slept. I like to rest a couple of hours after coming in from work, and then start writing. But it gets quite late in the morning by the time this happens. And then one gets anxious, over whether he’ll get to sleep at all, or when he’ll wake up tomorrow, etc. then.

I read THE WAVES every night before I go to sleep, 28 pages each night. I love the idea (another weak phrase), noun, anyway; thought; that you’ll be at Harvard, Cambridge Square next year – One has to struggle for language. To be exact, precise.

Enough for now.

I bought also at Harvard, Cambridge Square today With Eyes At The Back Of Our Heads and The Jacob’s Ladder. I meant to, anyway. Today but then your letter came, and I had to. I scoured the shops for With Eyes and knew I would find it finally at Mandrake. I owned it once before when I was in the hospital, the only book I had then, besides Jung’s AION which the doctor didn’t think was a good idea. But I kept it anyway.110

So glad to hear you went to New Mexico. I visited the grave, yes? too in 1957 with Dana. We looked into the blue box underneath his typewriter. I was terrified to see his blue denims folded up in there. I don’t see why, now.

I looked loved Freida’s picture on the stone, and the turnstyle, and the evergreen pines around the window, the sun streaming in the stained glass.111

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109 The Waves (1931), experimental novel by Virginia Woolf.
110 With Eyes At The Back Of Our Heads, Denise Levertov’s second American book, published in 1959 by New Directions which also published her 1961 follow-up, The Jacob’s Ladder. Mandrake Books, a Cambridge shop specializing in esoteric volumes, was a “salon-style refuge with a throw rug, parlor lamps and cloth- and leather-backed books,” owned by Irwin Rosen from 1951 until his death in 1997 (“Irwin Rosen” n.p.).
111 The D.H. Lawrence Ranch in Taos, New Mexico, is the estate where he and wife Frieda lived for two years while he wrote his Mexican novel The Plumed Serpent. After his death in France in 1930, Frieda had his ashes disinterred and brought back to New Mexico, and put into the shrine. According to Frieda, he is literally in the shrine; she said that she poured his ashes into the cement altarpiece. The altar is enormous, white stone with DHL carved onto the front, and beside it sit Lawrence’s denim shirt, cowboy hat, and typewriter. The altar is
It was good for Bob to live there for a summer, don’t you think. I liked Bobbie Creeley, very much in Gloucester. She talked a lot, but everything she said was very human: pertaining to her. And she probably agonizes others because one cannot keep ahead of her, or keep up with her. I liked her for that, too.

Goodnight, Denise. Thank you for your letter. It was very lovely, is very lovely in my mind. I think of you often, more than I can say. The battle goes on. But you mustn’t get tired over it. Let those people go hang. Homer Da Vinci exists on a spiritual level, too. I think that’s where he can do such harm, you mustn’t be damaged by it, or them, or them. Forgive for this advice.

I will send the poems from a notebook, soon, tomorrow.

Love,
John

Have read
Muriel Sparks’ Girls of Slender Means (Good to Stay Away From)
Anna McHugh’s A Banner With a Strange Device (Awful)
Genet’s Our Lady of the Flowers (!)

Am on:
Hud (Larry McMurtry)
Nigger of the Narcissus (don’t think I’ll finish
but want to –
Konrad Heiden (Der Fuehrer) excellent.
Braine’s (Room At the Top) but awful – the Kenyon Review
10 pages double issue

Robert Wilson 4.7.64
[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:
If you use a flyer, please do not have any quote of Allen Ginsberg’s on it.113
Will see you the 16th or before.114

squarely under a round sunburst-design window, and above it on the roof sits a phoenix, avatar of immortality. Frieda lived at the ranch with her third husband until her death in 1956; she is buried near the chapel, off to the side.

112 Bobbie Louise Hawkins (b. 1930), American poet, writer, painter, and monologist, originally from Texas, who has long taught and read at Naropa University and Naropa’s Summer Writing Program. She was married to Robert Creeley rom 1957 to 1975, and had two children with him. Creeley’s 1962 breakthrough collection, For Love, is dedicated to Bobbie.

113 Wieners repeatedly resisted using Ginsberg in promotion of Ace of Pentacles. Wilson wrote back, ‘I agreed to omitting a preface by Ginsberg and then to omitting a statement on the jacket. But I don’t see why we should have to omit anything on a flier… a statement from Allen WILL attract people who might not otherwise even hear about the book or want to read it. And I think you will agree that you do want people to read it. (April 11, 1964, R.A. Wilson Papers, Lilly Library)

114 On April 16, 1964, Duncan and Levertov gave a reading sponsored by the Guggenheim Foundation, with an after-party and Levertov and Goodman’s Manhattan apartment. The
Love,  
John

Charles Olson  
May 8, 1964  
[Milton, MA]

Dear Charles:

I send a poem to show where I am. If at all. I send it to you because there is no one else. I am reading Paterson tonight, for the first time, with quiet eyes. Also Maximus. I was delighted to see Psychedelic Review. And of course, we are all sending for The Niagara Frontier Review. This is the only news that reaches us. The rest I send in the poem.

Saw Gerrit yesterday, in Cambridge and Boston. Keep me on, you said once, maybe seven years ago. And now I ask you.

Love,
John

[below is Olson’s reply, handwritten. Arrows from Paterson and Maximus slash down to “fathers,” below]

Dear John (I don’t know, but I think it is the fathers who characterize this poem – and it isn’t good enough. That is, she speaks to our mother (my brother my sister – he the unkown, & foreign, slave of the system – when, in fact, the author – authority is the drone who labors up the hill: yr great question here is: the measure does hold more – setting the sound of the words. Nature is allowed
to have a special case: Harbinger of death no/oh god no one side the system

[Wieners’ typed poem enclosed with letter]

next night, Robert Wilson remembers, “the party seemed to continue at the Phoenix, with a large group of the previous night’s attendees converging on my shop; this time Robert Kelly and his wife Jobyna… Barbara Joseph, John Wieners, Gerard Malanga… Over tea and cookies the conversation continued until two a.m.” (quoted in Jarnot 232).

115 A poem from The Maximus Poems, first line “A century or so before 2000 BC,” was published in issue number 3 (1964) of the Psychedelic Review, a serious-minded magazine edited by Ralph Metzner between 1963 and 1971. The Niagara Frontier Review was a small magazine edited by Olson, Harvey Brown, and Charles Boer in Buffalo from 1964 to 1966. Its three issues published the Black Mountain and San Francisco poets, among many others, including Wieners, Herbert Huncke, Dorn, Baraka, and Ezra Pound’s Cantos CX and CXVI.
9pm.
A voice on the radio. The baseball game
booms in the night. **The Red Sox have**
2 runs, no hits. **The Redskins have**
no runs

   a scuffling of feet on the street

a roaring of cars past the window.
   **Planes in the sky.**
Is reality equal to the measure we hold in our heart?

The night is alive with music
I cannot hear. The night is hear
when you no longer will be here.
Old man on the front porch.
Where I have dreamed many dreams away
beside you, rocking in the chair.

The traffic has increased thru the years.

Silence now.
The radio switched off.

My sister reaches thru the night.
Her fresh voice bubbles up to the open windows
where I sit,
writing.
It is quiet.
The whole valley lies, sweating under the humid clouds
pressed down upon the river.

   “Mommy, sweets, I’m going out,”
my brother whispers on the back porch.
He crosses the house and goes out the front door.

Is this reality enough to the music in the heart?
The re-telling of it. A sound
equal to the desire behind words.

Along the esplanade couples walk,
in Boston, city of return, beside the Hatch Shell.
A car door slams.

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116 “Of the family”
Adios, amigos!
my brother whispers as he drives off.

Setting the scene, the mind is active to be the scene.
We walk, we sweat.
Beside this river, not the Charles
with its cool breeze.

The Cambridge lights must be bright against the sky.

Not here,
with one 100 watt glowing wanly.

II
The car door slams.
My sister comes in.
She speaks to her mother.
Harbinger of death, who brought life into the world,
they whisper of death along the stairs.
No one cares,
so they attend wakes, together,
in the night.
Officiating, saying prayers, taking time to bury
the dead, who bring life into the world,
before us.

The front door opens again.
He comes in, groaning
and muttering over the pain.

Mowing the grass, carrying gas
for the motor – there is a poetry in natural things,
the way they are said –

upon the page.

He enters old age.
Cutting grass, plowing branches back off the trees.
Narrowing hedges, drawing things up the hill.

All is still.
For an instant peace descended.
The river emptied in the sea.

Past the flats of Neponset Tidal Basin
over the mud, by the broken reeds
the river rushes to the sea,

as this house, shelters the arms of its long family tree.
Robert Wilson  
May 20, 1964  
[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

I am so excited, I can’t tell you. It is like a fire at the end of my fingertips. I am enclosing the proofs, as corrected. They are minor corrections, and serve only to smooth off the rough edges, that difference between an unfinished work, and a truly elegant one. Thank you so much.

I think first thing, there should be some division between the poems with no titles, and the end of preceding ones. So I have marked this in the manuscript, or proof. Perhaps the first word of the untitled ones should be emphasized, or capitalized, although that is old hat.

I like the cover page very much, the type used, and the vertical printing. I think it is a stroke of genius. And will provide the book with a good reception, even before reading. But I do think the print used on the title page is old-fashioned. Ace of Pentacles, I mean. It looks like a vanity-press work. The script I mean. Could this be avoided? This is also true in the printing of Ages of Youth, and Autumn in New York. It makes it look too sentimental, harts and flowers. I think a bolder-type, looking print on the page would be better. Not script, but flat black. Printed, not written. It diminishes it, but perhaps that is because we are accustomed to newspaper-type headlines. I think an up and down print, would be better, not a slanted written one. As I say, it looks too old-fashioned Emily Post.

As you see, I have omitted the last poem. And include an auto-biographical statement instead. Could you use this? instead. I think the last poem diminishes the book. So I want you to leave it out. If you will. Instead use the biographical piece. Or whatever. I have stolen your title Mother, and want to use it on the next book of poems. This is the one promised Auerhahn Press. Love to you, and let me know how it goes. I want to hold onto you, your arms for a long time.

To think what we have done together, gives me thrills.

Really, my heart is beating, too fast. And this is the day after.

Love,

John

Robert Wilson  
June 8, 1964  
[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob: my mind is not free. I am so unclear, when I am tired,

Dear Bob:

I think that if you took the word “By” off the title page, it would look more sleek. I think that was the main thing wrong. If you could get the words “life is sweet together” put in italics, in the poem Wrapped Up In An Indian Blanket, I would appreciate it. For you see, that is a quote, from the silver cup bought in Venice. Not an original thought, but the inscription on the cup.

I was down in New York, May 30th, but you were out of town. I called at the shop, when we landed at the airport, Friday night, but there was no answer. I imagine you were on Fire Island. We stayed only until 9:30 the next morning and then flew out of Newark. I would have liked to have seen you.
I thought I would not be down to New York until next year, but I want to sign the books for you, and also to rest up here, so I am torn in between. It takes a long time to recuperate; as you know. It is going well, though.

Not much to say. My sister is sleeping in the next room, so I must close. I am tired from working today, and seeing Ron Loewinsohn in Gloucester yesterday until late this morning.

Love to you, and Jim Carr. I am glad you are working together again. I am sending the Duncan letters down this week. Do not feel you must buy them. I am just as glad you take the $30 off the royalties. But feel free to. I don't think he would like them on the common market.

I would like a copy of any George Stanley book you have, also Michael McClure's Dark Brown, and Jack Spicer items. I will pay for this out of royalties. I could ask Auerhahn for them but I hate to ask them, until I get the book to them. And I can't work on it, as I could for you, as you see, you were close, and a definite thing, while they are not, I feel. I never know but they will be closed down tomorrow. And Andrew is different from Dave. Who worked on it before, and was a personal friend. Dave will work on this book, I suppose. It is his baby, as you say. Jack's Heads Of The Town Up To The Aether, And Holy Grail, if you have it. Also that other thing of his, from White Rabbit. Of course, they will not send them East. What we need is an agent on the West Coast. Gordon Cairnie has some rare Creeley items here: The Immoral Proposition; And The Kind of Act of: but he won't sell them, as he knows they're valuable now, from Roman. He also ruined, as well as created a market. Cairnie also has 10 copies of Broadsides, the Olson, Duncan poems THIS; & SONG OF THE BORDERGUARD. 10 altogether. He will sell them, but not just yet. He says they're too valuable. These are the Black Mountain Workshop Broadsides. All mint. I found them, lying in dust in his back room. Maybe you can come in disguise.

though,

I am the man for the job, I think.

I would like to see copies of the publicity you use on the book, if you would send them same. I keep copies of all those things, you know. As who doesn't.

---


119 Black Mountain College had its own print shop, first set up at the campus in the 1930s by Joseph Albers, and published several broadsides during Olson’s tenure as rector, including Robert Duncan’s “Song of the Border Guard,” with illustration by Cy Twombly. Before Duncan ever met Wiener, Robin Blaser had reported back to him in 1956 that the young poet had “Song of the Border Guard” nailed to his apartment wall along with Pound quotes that had been written up and then framed on the wall (Jarnot 158).
Also, by Feltrinelli, I take it, you mean Greenburger. What poems did Bob Kelly take? It doesn’t matter, if you’re too busy, to answer this.

4th of July has never been too lucky active for me. I hope this time it will. I wish it could have been the week of June, the 21st, when the MidSummer Eve is over our heads, and The Hotel Wentley Poems were written, and the Marlene Dietrich Act #2 was written, my favorite poem, by the way, and heaven is near; and the Witches Sabbath/St. John’s Eve

when fires break out for no apparent reason

Love,
John

Robert Wilson 6.17.64 [Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

This stuff is not so important and should not be sold – But since I owe you $30, here it is. Do what you wish. Hold it for me for whatever.

There is an important letter of Duncan’s missing: that appeared in Measure 2 – that is missing. I think before this small collection is announced or discussed, it should be found. I have a typescript but hesitate in sending, pending the arrival or discover of the original. O.K.

Please do me one favor. The title Mother and other poems should not appear in Ace of Pentacles. PLEASE. It would be very bad. As I am not using it anymore. And there is a magazine out West called Mother.120 And Allen’s mother poem: Kaddish and your play. I do not have any good poems on the subject. So See if you can squash the title before publication. I know it will be very hard at this late date. But try and do so.

I am writing a series of poems about eternal snow and using the dates of Wentley Poems as guide. This is the week. And I am very happy.

Love,
John

Write when you can. I miss you so.

Dave Haselwood June 20, 1964 [Milton, MA]

MidSummer Eve

120 Mother, a Journal of New Literature, New York-focused poetry and art magazine edited by a rotating group of editors (including Lewis MacAdams and Duncan McNaughton) from a variety of locations (Minnesota, Illinois, New York City, and Buffalo) from 1964 through 1969. The final two volumes of the 10-issue series were issued as sound recordings, one featuring a lengthy reading by Wieners. After Mother finished its run, McNaughton continued on with his magazine Fatbar, edited in Bolinas, California, and also frequently featuring Wieners, for seven issues from 1970 through 1975.
The book is coming along. Do not despair. It is growing within me. I am reading Valery’s *Art of Poetry*[^1] and this cycle of poetry I am passing thru, that is passing thru me, I must obey its commands.

Is Jesse Sharp[^2] still in town? My nephew is dreaming, down the bed, next to mine. He is three years old. Are you coming thru allright?

I am still the same. Are you the same. I know you are. It is time that passes thru us and takes away the toll, but not the essence. It is there, as essential as the air we breathe in.

Time takes away the time between us but not the time we shared we have.

Love to you to come.

Will you send Andrew’s book? John

---

**Denise Levertov**

July 31, 1964

[Milton, MA]

Dear Denise:

It was so nice of you to write today. It really made my whole day “Like all things concerned with her, she was magic, and her letters hidden in the mail box until the proper moment”.

I really can’t say much more than this: the blue flowers on the dresser, the red comforter on the bed. It is all I have, and the wind rustling through the trees outside. It is more than enough, and to have the pen in my hand is more than joy; it is thrilling moments just these – that direct one’s whole life. And make him see what things are to be avoided and what fostered to preserve these things or moments to be a permanent part of one’s life: Working “alone”.

I do try to be a comfort and song in the night for others – but this cannot be done.

It is only ourselves that reveal the rapture. We may be able to share it but one has to find it for himself before he can share it or even believe in it. For others. That they come to

[^1]: Paul Valery’s *The Art of Poetry*, first published in 1958, is his major collection of essays on poetics, in which he famously defines the poet as a “cool scientist, almost an algebraist, in the service of a subtle dreamer.”

[^2]: Jesse Sharp, painter in the 1960s San Francisco art scene around Robert LaVigne and Dave Haselwood’s circles; he showed at Michael Agron’s Batman Gallery on Fillmore Street. In his memoir piece “The Artist’s Life as a Work in Progress,” LaVigne describes Sharp as “a coal-miner, then painter, adventurer… half-Apache, an impassioned double of the part Peruvian Gaugin.” LaVigne notes a connection between Sharp and Wiener:

Jesse Sharp, when he spoke, spoke suddenly out of his dark fuming silences like a mad oracle, ideas coming in spurts followed by parenthetic remarks. Unlike Kerouac's parentheses, which make archway upon archway into unmeasured spaces of other times and places, Jesse would make a title of a line he'd just spoken by subtitling it with an aside to himself, a generous offering to his hearer of another way to think the thought, but this time, with a new stress! This unique diction was recorded by John Wiener in "A Poem for Early Risers", in lines perpendicular to the main body of the text. Oh, how I wish I could hear, again, Wiener's unique Boston voice doing Jesse's (nearly) inimitable rhythm (12).
the rapture only in what is given them. Can I be that fatalistic? And yet one has to believe in
that. If you take our plane trip as proof. How can one explain it any other way. That it was
blind accident or chance. I don’t believe that two people can meet like that in blind chance.
It is too much. Of all the people in New England; why us two to take that plane?

And it was you who “cancelled out” of Buffalo and so gave me the chance to be
there. The check was made out in your name; and was sent back to the Treasurer’s office for
a new name, and I haven’t received it yet. The wheels or machinery of the state grind that
slow. I believe in chance. But how blind can it be? Is it fortuitous?

“Hard chance and blind sure change” I think it is of Lionel Johnson.

And your “Who is at the window, who? Who?” is also the theme first stanza of a
poemwritten in 1958 in Joanne Kyger’s apartment in San Francisco. I should send it but it is
so bad I hesitate. Tho I do quote the same stanza at the beginning of the poem and with
variations at the end.

I do not equate us, you are too good for that, but there are similarities in spirit I can
feel. But yet this is True of other poets, too. Where we can feel for from them identities of
spirit. And yet I think back of what you said: that “Hymn To Ishtar” is your “favorite”
poem, and mine too. That I knew that night if a poet woman could write this, then there was
hope for me.

And the way you bent over to pick up a piece of paper from the stage, with your
backside to the audience, made me see that you were not afraid to deny grace.

For only by denying it, may we possess it.

Love to you, Denise

John

The stewardess said to me after you got off,

Was that your

“Lost your fiancé?”

I said, “She’s married”.

“You’re married!” she said.

“She’s married”, I said. “We met by chance

at the airport.” “Oh”

she said.

thinking we had made a casual pickup.

Charles Olson		 August 4, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Charles:

Forgive me for saying Shakespeare : it was more than Shakespeare you said looked to
me : it was more than words : although Chaucer approximated it. It was back in that era ; of
heroic proportions.

Forgive us all,

John
Dear Charles:

Let me talk off the top of my head. I am so tired: but the real doesn’t involve me, it’s what exhausts me. It’s the dreams* that nurture me, yet that isn’t true, because they don’t exist. It’s the possibility of them coming true, and what does that give me, but pleasure. It’s not enough: delight in the senses, lazily hazing the scene. It leads to agony; and the only real satisfaction is the scene: BY THAT, I MEAN WORK, I mean really, that’s the only pleasure, being able to give oneself to the scene, and by scene, I mean the reality around in one in the terms of oneself giving himself to work. Which is simply this (typing,) this activity of mind, which involves the muscles, and senses, contracts the forehead. Am I wrong here? Behind the words, lies the deeds.

The only real enjoyment of my life is typing here: the real (what I take it you mean by the explicit) is this an echo of your words? I seem to hear your words on this paper. My God, Charles, I owe so much to you. You have sustained me for ten full years.

And yet I am so confused. I open Maximus yesterday to:

(refering to Kate)

She wears her own face
as we do not.
until we cease to wear
the clouds
of all confusion,

Maximus Poems, p.58

And yet there are other real pleasures: the time with you.

I went up there and said too much, to believe in it. It was merely getting the cream off the top, or the skim off the milk. The sour bits that plague the mind.

*By dreams, I think I mean wishes, fantasy (not as you use it) wish-fulfillment, day-dreaming, you call it: which makes a man turn sour.

I find this is your quote of Jung: “The symbolic process is an experience in the image and of the image”

“The process, in its unfolding, reveals an enantiodromal arrangement like that in the text of the I*Ching, and so presents a rhythm of destruction and creation, of error and truth, of loss and gain, of depth and height.” — in letter to Mike May 1957

123 As Wieners indicates, this quote – as well as the Jung quote before it – is from a letter Olson had sent to Michael Rumaker May 19, 1957. Writing in response to Rumaker’s essay “The Use of the Unconscious in Writing,” which Olson called “an ex. of true magick.” Olson compares Rumaker’s observations regarding the symbolic process in composition,
What I am put off in the real, is that it so distracts and irritates me, that I want nothing to do with it. All day long I see the faces pass by, and the voices at night, heard, in the corridor, repeat over, and over again, the same words, tho the subject matter continues to change. There is nothing here real in that. I take it that the real explicit lies under these images: that these curtains, these winds, flowing in the night, these voices heard in the corridor are just that: real and nothing else? I feel better much than that. But if one stops working, they return, and sinks one into bitterness: sour the heart, and who wants that? I'm not living for that. So one wants to run away from that reality: if only he could keep this instant, when he flowed with the undercurrent.

“Make it last” a man said to me once.

So some run away for sex, and drugs, “love,” etc. And yet what else? Where is it, Charles? Is it in daydreaming? Seeing the map and thinking of Rangoon, Mandalay, “where the Ten Commandments are forgot.” How funny to think of that? Reading that Mottram again, and being confused and bitter about the scene, again. The same with Wild Dog. If only one could put his whole self into the work, and contribute: that would be better. And yet someone could say: that too is escape, from the trolley running in the night. And yet there is peace. Let us find them: those who contain it. But where? if only the words of others: it is enough. The irritation of life: I should accept by now. And yet it is necessary.

One needs strength: the phylo-

Again I find: (looking how to spell that word: “One will get nowhere IN CATCHING THE TRAFFIC OF THE HUMAN UNIVERSE IF ONE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE THAT A MAN IS AT ONCE SUBJECT AND OBJECT. IS AT ONCE AND ALWAYS GOING IN TWO DIRECTIONS” (in many, of course, as he is a sphere, but two at every essential intersection- at every point of action or decision a man is binary, is involved in choosing one of two):

Yours

And yet, I want to be with you. That is the cause of dissatisfaction. And so, I must accept it, that I cannot.

where “beauty, like the sacred, is dangerous,” with Jung’s, concluding that “the process is symbolic (good enough, no need to argue—transfer of force ‘a throwing together’) but the material of the process is image. Which is what, as you know, I have always felt had to be insisted upon” (Olson Selected Letters 247).

124 Eric Mottram (1924-1995), British scholar, a founder of American Studies outside of the United States. In the early sixties Mottram published widely on the poetics of the Beats, especially engaged in defending the British critics of Burroughs (in the Times Literary Supplement, John Willet gave one Burroughs review the simple title “Ugh.”), and so Wieners could be referring to any number of articles. His brief writings on Wieners are filled with insight.

125 Charles Olson’s 1951 essay “Human Universe,” in which he declares that “Art does not seek to describe, but to enact,” was first published in Origin, Winter 1951-52, and was reprinted in Evergreen Review in Spring 1958. In 1965, the Auerhahn Society published Human Universe and Other Essays, edited by Donald Allen.
And what can I do without it? Of course, every dissatisfaction is present in the moment, but being together, banishes thinking of that sort. That is what I am objecting to: that I can do without you; but do what. When with you is joy.

All love of every sort,
John

185 Eliot St
I am too wise to learn of everything; for I will be with you, but life is of such terrible sort, (that I cannot do everything I want to) It takes such terrible turns and unexpected conditions. But yet I can do neither: for I accept it. What other choice? do we have?

(from Mona Watson’s LIFE of BLAKE)

Also read THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL last night, and found it exciting. It is asymmetrical Blake, do you think?

NIAGARA
I
Within the town of Buffalo
Are prosy men with leaden eyes.
Like ants they worry to and fro
(Important men, in Buffalo).
But only twenty miles away
A deathless glory is at play:
Niagara, Niagara.

The women buy their lace and cry: --
“O such a delicate design,”
And over ostrich feathers sigh,
By counters there, in Buffalo.
The children haunt the trinket shops,
They buy false-faces, bells, and tops,
Forgetting giant Niagara.

126 In Mona Wilson’s *The Life of William Blake* (first published in 1927), she describes the inward and mystical life of the visionary artist, “alone from first to last,” writing that “The tares of obscurity flourish in intellectual solitude” (56).

127 “Niagara,” by Vachel Lindsay, American poet known as the “Prairie Troubador,” one of the most popular poets of his time. He was an entirely original performance poet, and wrote his verse to be sung or chanted – his own performances were said to be spectacularly unrestrained. After great fame, and the pleasure of mentoring young poets like Langston Hughes, Lindsay sunk into a deep depression and finally committed suicide by drinking a bottle of lye. His last words were “They tried to get me – I got them first!” Wieners sent this poem to Olson in Buffalo, where his old teacher was heading their new poetics department, and within a few months of this letter Wieners would join the “Important men, in Buffalo,” studying again with Olson and teaching freshman composition.
Within the town of Buffalo
Are stores with garnets, sapphires, pearls.
Rubies, emeralds aglow, --
Opal charms in Buffalo,
Cherished symbols of success.
They value not your rainbow dress: --
Niagara, Niagara.

The shaggy meaning of her name
This Buffalo, this recreant town,
Sharps and lawyers prune and tame;
Few pioneers in Buffalo;
Except young lovers flushed and fleet
And winds hallooing down the street:
“Niagara, Niagara.”

The journalists are sick of ink:
Boy prodigals are lost in wine.
By night where white and red lights blink
The eyes of death, in Buffalo.
And only twenty miles away
Are starlit rocks and healing spray:
Niagara, Niagara.

Above the town a tiny bird,
A shining speck at sleepy dawn,
Forgets the ant-hill so absurd,
This self-important Buffalo.
Descending twenty miles away
He bathes his wings at break of day --
Niagara, Niagara.

II  (Italics)

What marching men of Buffalo
Flood the streets in rash crusade?
Fools-to-free-the-world, they go,
Primeval hearts from Buffalo.
Red cataracts of France today
Awake, three thousand miles away
An echo of Niagara,
The cataract of Niagara.

Vachel Lindsay
Don Allen
August 28, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Don:

Here is a copy of Acts of Youth, as it appears in the book:\footnote{On August 26, 1964, Allen had written Wieners asking if he could use “Acts of Youth” in an upcoming anthology for Penguin, but also asking, based off the manuscript he had obtained, “should there not be ‘from’ inserted in the second line of the 6th stanza also of part I??”, which would make the line read “is my mind being taken away from me.” It is interesting that with Allen’s suggested revision the line would end with “me” receiving the final stress of the line, while in Wieners’ original, “me” is unstressed, a “feminine” ending at the end of a string of anapests. In her review of \textit{Ace of Pentacles} Denise Levertov notes the importance of such “peculiarities” in Wieners’ verse, the “anachronistic” or “odd… syntactical loose ends.” As she explains, these moments are “not carelessnesses, just the contrary; change them and you change a note of a chord.” She warns that the book “will disturb anyone looking for preconceived benefits, whether ‘cooked’ or ‘raw’; it attempts to fulfill no such expectations, only to testify to inner voices” (229).}

THE ACTS OF YOUTH

And with great fear I inhabit the middle of the night
What wrecks of the mind await me, what drugs
to dull the senses, what little I have left,
what more can be taken away?

The fear of travelling, of the future without hope
or buoy. I must get away from this place and see
that there is no fear without me: that it is within
unless it be some sudden act or calamity
to land me in the hospital, a total wreck, without
memory again; or worse still, behind bars. If
I could just get out of the country. Some place
where one can eat the lotus in peace.

For in this country it is terror, poverty awaits; or
am I a marked man, my life to be a lesson
or experience to those young who would trod
the same path, without God

unless he be one of justice, to wreak vengeance
on the acts committed while young under un-
due influence or circumstance. Oh I have
always seen my life as drama, patterned

after those who met with disaster or doom.
Is my mind being taken away me.
I have been over the abyss before. What
is that ringing in my ears that tells me

all is nigh, is naught but the roaring of the winter wind.
Woe to those homeless who are out on this night.
Woe to those crimes committed from which we
can walk away unharmed.

So I turn on the light
And smoke rings rise in the air.
Do not think of the future; there is none.
But the formula all great art is made of.

Pain and suffering. Give me the strength
to bear it, to enter those places where the
great animals are caged. And we can live
at peace by their side. A bride to the burden

that no god imposes but knows we have the means
to sustain its force unto the end of our days.
For that it is what we are made for; for that
we are created. Until the dark hours are done.

And we rise again in the dawn.
Infinite particles of the divine sun, now
worshipped in the pitches of the night.

That’s how it goes, as far as I see it. It is from
the second section of the book: Ages of Youth. And then the mother poem is enclosed.\textsuperscript{129}

The publishers (James Carr & Robert Wilson) have sole use of the copyright, since
it’s in the book; the Acts of Youth, that is, but the copyright is in my name. \textit{And I give you
permission to use it}. I will split the royalties with them 50-50 as per our contract. But send
the royalties to me. The book’s name, by the way, is \textit{Ace of Pentacles}, and should be out this
September.

The mother poem is free and clear. I wish you would use this title on it, if you do
decide to use it. And go by the version here-inclosed.

Diane di Prima has the complete manuscript of the Journal of the First Night, \textit{parts of
which} she used without permission in The Floating Bear \textit{#28}. I send you the copy as printed
there.\textsuperscript{130} But I do not like it; cut up this way. I asked her for a photostat of the original
manuscript, last July, but she has yet to come through with it. So I could send it to you. That

\textsuperscript{129} “My Mother,” printed in the “Ages of Youth” section of \textit{Ace of Pentacles}.
\textsuperscript{130} “Journal of the First Night” remains unpublished, except for the lengthy fragments
published in the 1963 Christmas Issue of \textit{Floating Bear}. As presented there, it is a dark, lyric
prose piece, taking up two and a half pages (the rest of the third page is taken by Frank
O’Hara’s “Pistachio Tree at Chateau Noir”).
is what held up my answer to yours of last month. Anyway, it is too long to use. And all the
best parts are cut out.

I will be at this address for quite a long time, I hope. So do send Writing. I got the
notice from Wah, but never followed it up. I am planning a book for Auerhahn, to be
called Drag.

Oh yes, Bob Kelly is using Acts of Youth in his Doubleday Anthology. Does that make a
difference? Since Penguin will be on the other side of the Atlantic. Let me know if it does. I
don’t know, enough jazz.

I send the copy of Floating Bear, with the First Night in it. Will you send it back? It is the
only copy I have. And I also enclose a small section of journal.

Love,
John

I am anxious to see the Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn by Charles that you are doing. Love again.

Denise Levertov
August 28, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Denise:

This is a small review that appeared in Harper’s Bazaar; I am not sure that you would
have seen it, although I’m sure your publisher would send it to you, sooner or later.

Last night I happened to read Wordsworth; after looking up a sonnet Charles had
quoted to me, on the “cliffs” of Gloucester:

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131 Fred Wah (b. 1939), Canadian poet, scholar, and publisher. After co-founding the influential
poetry newsletter TISH in 1961 while still an undergraduate, he went on to study with
Robert Creeley at the University of New Mexico and Charles Olson at Buffalo, and for the
past four decades has taught and edited (notably Open Letter and West Coast Line). In 2011 he
was appointed Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate.

132 Drag was never published; according to Haselwood, Wieners never submitted a manuscript.
The only book Wieners published with Auerhahn was 1958’s Hotel Wentley Poems, the press’s
first release.

133 In 1965, Doubleday released A Controversy of Poets, an anthology edited by Paris Leary and
Robert Kelly. Kelly (b. 1935) is a “Deep Image” poet from New York City who was deeply
influenced by Robert Duncan and Charles Olson, and so the Black Mountain poets and their
friends are heavily represented, including John Wieners and the scandalously under-
anthologized Gerrit Lansing.

134 Olson wrote “A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn” in 1955, after Dorn told his
teacher at Black Mountain that he “wanted to read about the West.” In response to this
vague request Olson wrote the “Bibliography” overnight, a document that does contain
many suggested readings but, as Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander note, “much more
an essay on methodology than a list of books” (CP 435).
XXX
It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,\textsuperscript{135}
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquility;
The gentleness of heaven broods o’er the Sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that waketh with me
 here,
If thou appeared untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham’s bosom all the year;
And worshipst at the Temple’s inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

And so, reading that, want on to read “The world is too much with us”; and thinking over this morning, thought of you and wanted to send this review: tho it is inadequate. I think Charles used this poetry to sustain him at the hour of Bet’s death;\textsuperscript{136} as he read “verbatim” the Shakespeare sonnet: “When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,”
from his heart: and I know he went to Whitman

When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d\textsuperscript{137} and found it wanting. He told me that myself himself
I think it is wonderful that a man goes to poetry to sustain him at the hour of someone’s death.

Then one knows what it is for, rather than an exercise of verbal powers, or expression of truth, actually a sustaining of life.
An actual consolation. But more than that.
Not a sentimental outpouring, but the only

\textsuperscript{135} This sonnet by Wordsworth was written in 1802.
\textsuperscript{136} On March 28, 1964, thirty-nine year old Betty Kaiser Olson was killed in a car crash on an icy road in upstate New York. After her death, Pater Anastas writes, Olson returned to Gloucester, to complete the poems, describing in the last book of \textit{Maximus} his loneliness in the apartment at 28 Fort Square after Betty died, his plunge into what he called the “subterranean lake” of himself to try to fathom his own depths, just as he had attempted to sound Melville’s in \textit{Call Me Ishmael} (n.p.)
\textsuperscript{137} “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryards Bloom’d,” one of Walt Whitman’s elegies for President Abraham Lincoln.
place one could go to find truth, so that
life can go on. I think it’s a beautiful thing

So often we are sidetracked by the art, and
forget what it is for. I love you so much, for
the your books, Denise. I also read ‘Tintern Abbey’ and find it one of the best poems I have ever
read. I should have been a copyist in a mon-
astery, I get such joy from copying other men’s
poems. I write ‘I love you, Denise’ etc. be-
cause I did not want you to think I was criti-
zing other poems. I love you, for yourself,
and the poems, too.

To know this, that men use poetry this way,
gives one direction in his aims.

Love,

John

I feel I may been offensive here. Please
forgive me.
I will get over this sensitivity some day
And lose something along the way. / neuroticism

Robert Wilson  Sept 20, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

I am very pleased with the book. It is a beautiful job. Even tho I have re-written
some of the poems and made it more a craftsman’s job – something that I am interested in
and I know you are too. Eliminating definite articles for one thing. I think we are open to
criticism here more than anywhere else. Please let me know the reviews, if any. And keep me
informed on publicity. I will do anything to help I can.

I have written to Jim Carr today to tell him I would copy out 12 poems longhand only
if I get one of the special limited edition – and how many of the bound and regular limited
am I to get? I will wait for his answer before I start. Love, John

I would very much like to see you but have no money. I have not been in New York since
July 4th and feel like an absolute tourist.

138 William Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting
the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798.”
139 James Carr and Robert Wilson released Ace of Pentacles in two editions: a signed and
numbered series of 75 faux-leather gilt-stamped hardbacks which included a tipped-in
holograph page from the original manuscript, also signed, and a white paperback.
Really, you have given me a great deal of joy and I can die now – with the rewrites, of course. Also The Hotel Bentley I have revised – and depend on those original manuscripts you have to fill me in on some of the omissions of from the original work. (If you no longer have them, because I could consult them sometime)

Love, and write,

John

if only a few words
to tell me how you are.

---

Robert Wilson  
9.23.64  
[Milton, MA]

Bob:

Send the order care of Shig Murrayo at City Lights. I used to work for him at the store and he’s apt to respond more quickly than ferlinghetti or the other one. He’s the mgr. He used to edit a thing called Shig’s Review a one-shot periodical. Am very interested in getting a hold of the last issue of Semina – before the McClure/Dallas piece; the one with the bow on it. Love, John

---

Diane di Prima  
September 24, 1964  
[Milton, MA]

Dear Diane:

I came across this, while looking for an old poem to send to Audit. It was written while you were out in California, before I even knew you well, or that you had married Alan. In fact, I had only seen you and Alan together once. It might not have anything to do with you or Alan; or with you even. But I found it the night your letter arrived, with the heart, and the 20 dollar note. How lovely. I wonder if its good. I bet it is, in heaven. Or wherever old revolutionaries go. Anyway, here is the dream.

Every acid is a ring, every ring is a nail,
every nail is a grate on which I lie here naked,
waiting.

“Prosody is the articulation of the total sound of the poem.”

I fell to the ground a few moments ago which turned

---

In 1960, City Lights store-clerk Shigeyoshi "Shig" Murao (1926-1999) published the one-shot poetry magazine that he resurrected in 1983 as a way of keeping active after suffering a stroke and leaving City Lights over a dispute with Ferlinghetti. Richard Reynolds has created a fascinating online biography (with innumerable multi-media enhancements) at shigmurao.org. Wallace Berman published the art magazine Semina for nine issues, from 1955-1964.

In 1917 Ezra Pound reviewed T.S. Eliot’s Prufrock and Other Observations for Poetry, later reprinted in his book Literary Essay. In a footnote added for the latter edition, Pound famously wrote that “prosody is the articulation of the total sound of the poem.”
to a grate; behind the bushes on the grass where
I lost my clothes.

A girl came down the street, a blonde girl
in a beige raincoat. It may sound corny but its true;
one of those girls you see around New York with a big
leather handbag, and her hair done up in braids around
her head. I can still see her, blonde and divine, in
trousers and one knee bent; she was looking and
waiting, walking down this hill, looking for someone
who whispered, Diane, out of the hills beside the house
on the driveway.

He was standing there, with his friends trying to
hold him back but he came down the road with the tiny
snout of a gun in his hand and said something as if
I can’t have her nobody can, Diane, Diane. And we all
fell to the ground, having seen her, standing there
shimmering, we lost our clothes and stood, pressing
our knuckles into the grate.

Well, it’s nothing, but a very vivid dream, which
appeared to me, under heroin I believe, and which I never associated with you, until now.
And which may have nothing to do with you anyway. It is very badly written, but there
anyway, as a dream.

Just finished the Joe Gould Profiles in the New Yorker, one this week, and one last. The
New Yorker has changed its heading on Leroi to read from “a most promising dramatist” to
a “promising dramatist”. So I wonder what that means. Have you seen the Audit with his*
poems in it? I will be in the third one, if I ever get the manuscript together.

*Frank O’Hara’s

My family is fighting furiously about the car, which has just blown a carburetor. My brother
called my father, “You stupid shit”. They are now fighting arguing in the kitchen. Of course,
my mother provokes all this, by her stupid tension. Strange echoes of childhood. And how
we dwell curiously in this backwater of emotion. Oh well, it probably keeps them alive. But it
does prohibit a great deal of life on my part, and brings the blood to my head, not
unpleasantly.

The shouts bring back a violence that is needed in my life, since I was bred on it. I know
it is not over yet, tho the house is quiet. All a matter of unrest, drinking (on my brother’s
part, night after night, day after day, lunch after lunch, cocktail after cocktail). And my
mother doesn’t eat, trying to lose weight, and overworks, at nothing, and my father is a poor
match on the waves of childhood misery, poverty and insanity. It all runs in the family. Well,

142 1964 was the breakout year for LeRoi Jones as a playwright; his first two plays, Dutchman
and The Slave, were both published and performed in 1964. The former was a sensation Off-
Broadway, where it won the Obie Award for Best American Play.
enough for now. But I am afraid to stop, as there is nothing else to do, but be silent witness, or spectator to the sports.

Love for now, and please write,
John

Diane:
Thank you for the nice words about the book. Please review it for the Bear. And send me something to do. That excites me.
Apathy increases with the day,
starling listlessly at the fire.

[On seal of envelope:] I don’t know what I wrote in this. It’s been sealed for a week. But love. And don’t worry. Will get type.

Charles Olson
Sept 25, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Charles:
Thght you might like to see this in the new home. Sorry to cut it up so. But that was all that was interesting. The rest offensive on Christ’s face.

Love,
John

[enclosed clipping from uncited newspaper:] The exhibition consisted of fifteen oils and ten water-colours. Resurrection, painted at the Villa Mirenda in 1927, was one of them. Writing to E.H. Brewster from the Villa on 28 May 1927, Lawrence mentioned the painting: ‘I finished my “Resurrection” picture, and like it. It’s Jesus stepping up, rather grey in the face, from the tomb, with his old ma helping him from behind, and Mary Magdalen easing him up towards her bosom in front.’ As a conception the painting is clearly related to Lawrence’s short novel The Escaped Cock (also called The Man Who Died) which was published in 1929. By the time this picture was painted Lawrence had already written the story. He wrote to Brewster on 3 May 1927: “I wrote a story of the Resurrection, where Jesus gets up and feels very sick about everything, and can’t stand the old crowd any more – so cuts out – and as he heals up, he begins to find what an astonishing place the phenomenal world is, far more marvellous than any salvation or heaven – and thanks his stars he needn’t have a “mission” any more.”

Robert Wilson
9.30.64
[Milton, MA]

Bob,
You might be interested in this if you have a moment. Has nothing about us in it, but might be a good market. Chicago, an untapped source.
Cut out the thing about Chet Baker.
Did everything that Carr asked me to.

Love,
John
Wish someone else besides Malanga would do review for Kulchur. Leroi or Frank O’Hara – Someone with more authority.

**Charles Olson**

[Oct 1964]

[Milton, MA]

**STEVE**

Black magician of the night
dive into the secrets of the sea
and come up with some golden fish
to perch on our mantels
through these long winter months
so that we may know
the currents of the inky storm
to come.

[written on the inside envelope flap:]
to go with the other one
I sent to you in
Buffalo. Hope
you got it. Love,
Your Son,
John

---

**To Charles Olson**

[Oct 2, 1964]

[Milton, MA]

**To Define Myself**

My love is a solitary thing.
It resides in the night, throbbing between my fingers.

It is not my prick. Its darkness discloses
No mirror, only an attempt

To pick up pieces and put them together.
I hate jig saw puzzles

but this is a different thing:
what the eye beholds: what the heart holds

---

143 This poem was published with no alterations as “Steve Magellanstraits” in Wieners’ *Cultural Affairs in Boston*, with the addition of “[Winter Solstice, 1964],” although this letter indicates it was written by October of that year.

144 “To Define Myself”
Sacred. Nothing. Carole Lombard said
and Dick Powell. (starred together in death.

But it is more than that.
More than a solid pounding in the night.

It is desire and an attempt at definition.
But that is too easy, like the preface of a book.

Panic of error is the death of progress, Whitehead said
and I am afraid

of error; what I have to say

is wrong.
still this attempt to define
what holds the attention;

and the manifestation of what lies
below these attentions

is the truth, and all I have to say.

2.
Let the heart come out. Let this page
be its resting place. Let not sickness interfere. Or death.

Let the mind move forward,
let syllables unroll; may there be no honor
nor friends from far places.

Let the night hold secrets; and the mind magic
Let there unravel what I know is nothing.
How the emptiness awaits.

For Billy Donahue

cold night, clear road
smooth shoulders all around

“Many a man I said goodbye to
            in this fuckin’ train station”
Over Mystic River Bridge
    rose-light on the horizon
(duck the poetry, the guy will see you
Orange, mauve and smoke-stacks on the horizon
Sagaholm in the harbor, Chelsea Naval
    and ships at dock,
three lights beam in the
    radar wave,
radiogram, the North of Boston will endure.
Smooth road, clear night
soft shoulders all around.
But still unfolds the scroll on which is
written these words; and the mind does not wander
And the night holds wonder.
And the mountains thunder.
And in ceaseless valleys hush falls
That I know is the answer.

Dear Charles:

Yesterday’s product. I don’t know, but the last one is an easy out, the ending. The
definition is not there. The attempt at ending is a pat answer. The first one has a second
section, which gives “body” or substance to the night. An attempt at that, anyway. But it
remains description of the night, what we passed on the road.

Anyway, it was a nice ride.

Talked to Gerrit today. He is off to New York for a week, and a day at Robert Kelly’s.

Love to you, and please do keep in touch. Am trying to get together a manuscript for Audit,
but it is a job, it will be unconventional, to say the least, with letters and such. JIVE
shoelaces.

Love to you always,

John
Robert Wilson
October 4, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

I am writing you a funny, sad letter. I wonder if you could advance me $25.00 on royalties (I am writing the same letter to Jim Carr) as my sister is expecting a box spring on Wednesday, for which she gave me the money, $67.07, part of which I spent. It is coming C.O.D. and I only have $40.00. Will you do this, and send me the money so I will have it Wednesday, otherwise the box-spring goes back, and I am held in dishonor in the house. This is very important to me, and I will not bother you again this way./ I just went over my head, and bought my friends in Chinatown a big dinner, and now I have no money to pay for this Beautyrest; it is coming, but they don’t know it is C.O.D. I know this is unfortunate, and I will not get into this mess, again. Please be a good boy and do this for me. I think I will be able to pay you back on royalties, if the book sells. Which it will, given a little time.

Can you let me know right away, otherwise, I will have to go out and steal, pass bad checks, and maybe land up in jail. All of which, I do not want to do.

Love,
John

The other money will go to my mother’s charge account, on which I owe $30, for beauty preparations.

Robert Duncan
October 30, 1964
[Milton, MA]

Dear Robert:

The enclosed is a result of your essay in Kulchur, which Gerrit Lansing sent to me; this morning: it is a riff, or take-off, not an answer, rebuttal, or extension Explanation, etc.

It should not have your name on it, but it would not be written without your essay.

Thank you for it. The days are nice, here. Indian Summer, as they say. I am hungry for breakfast. The book is here, and beyond words. Yours, I mean.

The politicians’ voices blast off in the hills.

I am trying to come back, but it is a slow way coming.

Turning towards the woods, often, and getting lost in the trees.

I like simple ways, best, and your glamour is the best consolation. What does that happen to be? simple being.

146 Duncan’s essay in Kulchur, 1964
Nothing is being done here, so I might as well close. Joe Dunn is still in Bridgewater, and I haven’t seen him. But I will soon.

Love,

John

But the main impression of your book is one of glamour, or romantic imagination. That is what sustains me best. All the things which you have included; I worship best. Or I think so now. It is not romantic imagination, but “hymns to the romantic imagination.” I have already given the book away. I “liked” it so much that (I have only read it once, & fragments over again,) I must buy it again; the hardcover one. And read it again. My mother said to me, “That will give you something to do for tonight” when she saw the book. And I thought to myself: That will give me something to do for a lifetime. I have already given the book away. I “liked” it so much that (I have only read it once, & fragments over again,) I must buy it again; the hardcover one. And read it again. My mother said to me, “That will give you something to do for tonight” when she saw the book. And I thought to myself: That will give me something to do for a lifetime.147

For the underlining. I regret it now.

It didn’t come out that way, but only as an ordinary thought.

After Reading Robert Duncan’s Ideas Of The Meaning Of Form148

Make me part of the process, not its goal.
Render me as the wave washes upon its shore,
Stephen Crane’s Open Boat.

A broken thing laid upon the bed:
Do you actually think will come re-birth?
    The morning lays its light wing
    upon the dead.

A blue ball glistens among the real;
    but the real is not the only palace
    of events.

    The daisy inhabits there, too;
        its purple petals an aster to my mind.

Do not mention mental illness; madness or institutions.
They exist only as examples for the failing mind
    Did To correct all those who would try the unknown
darknesses; or weakness.

Events become treacherous; illustrious minds seem to become so.

Fear is a way of living, or happening.

147 Wieners is possibly referring to Duncan’s 1964 volume of poetry (his second), Roots and Branches.
148 “After Reading Robert Duncan’s ‘Ideas of the Meaning of Forms’”
Dear Bob:

I can’t seem to get much done. I am working FULL-TIME until January – and getting paid about $40 a week; still at Jordan Marsh. This Monday I am reading at Paine Hall with Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovskee for the Harvard Advocate and we are selling copies of the book –

The ones that Grolier Bookshop has – so it doesn’t do me much good. I never thanked you for the quick response with the check and the long letter you sent. Both stick in my heart, especially the part about the cat. Even though I am allergic to them, I love them very much and once stepped on one, accidentally; backwards with Mexican huaraches on and it broke its neck and Keith Gibbs had to rush and drown it in the kitchen sink. It was a baby kitten and I went insane soon afterwards, seeing blood among the flowers.

I hope the same does not happen with you. Do not let it. You can see I am much better as my handwriting has improved. Am listening to Marlene Dietrich sing: I have a trunk somewhere in Berlin.

Will you write to me and let me know how it goes. I have seen nothing about the book. No Herald-Tribune; nothing. I have not asked Allen about a review for the Village Voice. Let it happen naturally if it is to happen at all. Well, enough for now. I am tired and my arm aches.

“Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt.”

I wonder if Denise ever got to Cambridge. Have you heard from her? I will hope to resume communications on all levels after Christmas.

Love
John

PS: I had seen your poem in Intrepid before – you spoke of it – and I loved admired it for its technical excellence plus maintaining simplicity, with care.

1st stanza esp.
“fighting off a hundred thousand ghosts who nightly appear here”!!

---

149 Keith Gibbs was the boyfriend of Elise Cowen in the late 1950s; they moved to San Francisco together and planned to go to Mexico, but Cowen returned to New York and committed suicide. In 1959 Wieners wrote about hanging out with the two in San Francisco: My room. Elise drunk at the end of the bed. I watch like a hawk as she staggers from bed to table with Jim Beam in her hand. She holds it high to the male guests who ignore her. Keith has the needle in his left hand. They are shooting sleepers. Elise talks of Gertrude Lawrence singing When My Ship Comes In and Lotte Lenya of a different ship that comes in to do the whole town in. She flexes her muscles. (707 38)

150 Creative spelling of the German title for “Falling in Love Again (Can’t Help It),” the 1930 German song that became Marlene Dietrich’s signature.

Robert Wilson

December 9, 1964

[Milton, MA]

Dear Bob:

I wanted to get this off to you right away: about the book and its progress on as to sales and reviews. Ted Wilentz has one copy of the book which he has hidden in the has-beens file of the bookshop on the top shelf in the basement. Could you do anything about this? Perhaps send him a reminder to reorder? Allen of course is too busy to review it, or lacks the concentration, at this time. He read one poem from it off the balcony of the Harvard School of Architecture which I hear was very successful. He also mentioned it at his Lowell House reading & within one week 15 copies were sold, when before sales had lagged after the initial buying spurt of 20 copies the first week.

Now Duncan is slow, Denise says, at lunch last month in Boston at Jake Wirth’s, and will probably turn up w/ a review next year, if at all. She says he will do it. But I doubt it. Charles is pushing it and it is required reading for his course, or someone’s course at Buffalo. It sells well there, with Charles using it as text, the only one, they say, in his class. I will read there in February, it is planned; also in Toronto. But don’t plan on it. If so, ask Victor Coleman of ISLAND to order a few beforehand.

Couldn’t you get Paperback Booksmith to order it? on a nation-wide distribution basis. I wish you would send me all catalogs in which it is listed. Also the listing in Publisher’s Weekly or was it NY Review of Books? I read the Christmas Issue and didn’t see it. I mean your own catalogs, which you have never sent me. I am working 40 hrs a week now until January and so can afford to buy some: books.

I have sent a copy to Phil Whalen, who asked for one via Clark Coolidge. Couldn’t get it in San Francisco. I have not sent any to Creeley. I thought you were going to. Also sent hard-bound copies to Ed Dorn, who responded w/ one of his own, soft-back; that’s all -- I have heard nothing re [illeg] from Corinth: but favorable comments abt the book, and feel sad that already it is slipping into obscurity.

Do I get a royalty statement soon this month? if ever only to say that I owe you money; I would like to know how many copies are sold or out at bookstores, even if they remain unpaid for. Love to you, always

John

We should have more Olsons.

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152 Delaware. Written on stationery from the JORDAN MARSH COMPANY (a Boston-based regional department store), Boston 7, Massachusetts.

153 Jake Wirth’s, restaurant near Boston Common.

154 Victor Coleman (b. 1944), Canadian poet and publisher. In 1964 he founded Island Press with Michael Spivack; he later went on edit the avant-garde Canadian poetry magazine Coach House Press for over three decades.

155 Clark Coolidge (b. 1939), iconoclastic American poet associated at various times with the New York and Language schools of poetry, but whose prodigious output resists categorization.

156 Corinth Books, the publishing operation that Ted and Eli Wilentz ran out of their Eighth Street Bookshop.
Also, do you think an ad in the Evergreen Review would be too expensive?
I want you to be popular, not myself. I already am. w/ All these dolls walking by the
newsstand.

---

Denise Levertov

December 27, 1964

[Milton, MA]

Dear Denise:

I wonder if I could ask you to write a few words of recommendation to the State
University of New York at Buffalo, where I am planning to take a master’s degree, starting
this January, if all goes well. I would go as a teaching fellow, and study under Charles Olson,
plus teaching one class a week, and get paid something like $1200 a semester. It would take
2½ years, but I really would like it, after Boston and Jordan Marsh Co. What do you think? I
hate to impose on you, knowing how you feel about these things (I think we talked about it
once) but it would take only a few words, and should be sent directly to:

Professor Thomas E. Connolly
Teaching Fellow Selection Committee
Dept. of English
SUNYAB, 21 Library Circle
Buffalo 14, New York (addressed envelope enclosed).

I would only be able to study under Charles one semester (two seminars) so it will
not be as Brancusi feared, when offered the chance to study under Rodin, as a pupil and
refused; saying: “nothing grows under big trees”. Still there is a chance that something may
grow. I hope so, and this will give me the chance to continue my studies, get an academic
background, and be able to teach in the future.

Please, Denise, don’t worry about this, or give it too much thought, as I know you
are busy; and I would want only a few words, or maybe even a copy or selection of the
review would be enough. The thing is almost assured me; that is, if they get enough funds, as
Mexico didn’t, or are able to take me on, with my marks (some in the 60’s, from ethics and
scholastic philosophy). Otherwise, next year, I have to take a graduate record exam, and that
would be impossible, scholastically, with this time-lag, so it’s now or nothing. I enclose a
transcript of marks, so you can see what I am made up of? and if you could return that to
me, I would be most appreciative. I suppose I am only or just showing off. Love to you, and
Mitch in this holiday season. I will never forget last New Year’s at your house, and hope
that the candles burn bright for us this year, as they did last, because you snuffed them at
exactly the right time. Love to you again,

John

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157 Sculptor Constantin Brâncuși (1876-1957) studied briefly under Auguste Rodin at the
latter’s studio but left because, as he famously said, “Nothing grows under big trees.” His
work was to a large extent a reaction to Rodin’s, and Brancusi later said, “Without the
discoveries of Rodin, my work would have been impossible” (Galenson 115). And indeed
Wiener would only have one semester of study with his old teacher Olson before the latter
left Buffalo, first for Italy and Berkeley with Wiener and then back to Gloucester, leaving
Wiener to continue his studies at Buffalo without the shade cast by Olson’s pedagogical
“big tree.”
In January 1965, Wieners began graduate work at Buffalo, where he remained through 1969. Olson was the first director of this new poetics program in 1963 but only stayed there through May 1965; Betty had died in a car wreck on March 28, 1964, and after a period of recovery Olson taught one final semester as a university professor, Wieners’ first semester at the school. Just as they had at Black Mountain a decade earlier, Wieners and Olson just barely overlapped at Buffalo.

In these final years of the 1960s, Wieners taught undergraduates and was a student again himself. As his letters show, Buffalo was a tough fit for Wieners from the start; rather than the solidly bohemian or working class enclaves he was used to, Buffalo was something altogether, and his life became split between his parents’ house in the suburbs, “the tomb of middle-class America,” and his scholarly life in Buffalo, “the residue of radical America.”

* * * * *

Denise Levertov
Feb 26, 1965
Buffalo
Friday-Saturday
Midnight

Dear Denise:

All settled in now. And grown accustomed to the change, not his face, any longer. Will be in New York Sunday March 14th for reading at East End Theatre and have 2 tickets reserved for you at the door – and paid for if you want to come. Anyway, I hope to see you then, if just for a moment. Possibly for brunch, maybe, Monday, at the Nation if you are uptown. I would like to see their offices and New Directions’. If only to fill the mental picture. But not as a guest, only as a passing observer outside the door. I like to see where things come out of.

Classes meet here Mon Wed Fri at 1 & 3 PM. These I teach. Freshman English. Poetry 5 weeks; short story 3 or 4; drama, what’s left. David is here, in fact right above me. He got me this room, and is very kind.158

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158 David Posner (1921-1985), American poet and teacher. After studying at the Sorbonne, followed by several years as a journalist specializing in archaeological digs, he returned to the
His opera premiered here last week and was much fun. Next week the Arts Festival, and “those literary people” as Charles says. He is in Tufts right now on a conference. I take his course Myth and Literature Thursday Wednesday afternoons. Robert Graves' Greek Myths is the text, but we never use it. Instead, monographs and fascicles on Ancient Mycenae: the Late Halladic and Middle Halladic, etc. Then his Mod. Poetry which I audit Tuesday afternoons, for no credit. Rather more than audit, as a paper is due. On Ezra Pound and his Cantos which I chose as my term paper.

For my class, I started them with H.D. which I enclose and which I am sure hope you will love.

Forgive that poem I sent. It does

Love to you, and Mitch

John

3262 Main Str.
Buffalo, N.Y

Would love to hear from you. Just finished a “prose” piece for David Shaff, called Heroes (for Michael McClure.) Wrote it tonight and sent it off, too. Am still shaking. (Am writing a lot. And reading more than ever before. Tho I haven’t started on Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship, which I will do right now. Love.

[written across the envelope’s seal:] Pray for the poor souls, lost in the night.

Robert Wilson
3.2.65
[Buffalo]

Dear Bob:

-- Send new catalog!

In great pool of Gloucester, where Leroi Jones has gone swimming as the guest (for a little while!) of the late John Hammond, whose father “employed 10,000 Zulus in South Africa” with Cecil Rhodes, and made his money in diamonds, then organs, I think. Gay as a lark, Jack was, until died last month. Love to you, Ed Dorn is reviewing A of P in Wild Dog #15, next issue. Will see Creeley day after tomorrow. Di Prima also said she is doing it for the Village Voice. see if you can press her on it. In place of Allen.

United States and taught English at the University of Buffalo, where he was also “Assistant Curator of Poetry,” from 1957-1969.

159 David Schaff was editor of Bay Area poetry magazine Cassiopeia, which became Ephemeres. He published many of Wiener’s San Francisco peers, including Joanne Kyger, George Stanley, and Jack Spicer. Schaff’s own book of poetry, The Moon By Day (1971, Four Seasons Foundation), contains “Dedications” to many different poets, including Wiener.

160 Goethe’s second novel Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship, a Bildungsroman, was published in 1795-96.

161 John Hayes Hammond (1888-1965), American inventor. He founded the Hammond Radio Research Laboratory in Gloucester, on his father’s land, and developed more inventions than any other American besides Thomas Edison; he became known as the “Father of the Remote Control.” Between 1926 and 1929 he built Hammond Castle, a beautiful medieval-style castle that houses his collections of art.

162 Ed Dorn founded the underground magazine Wild Dog in 1963, while teaching at Idaho State University.
Charles here great. Am going to San Francisco for conference this summer, I think. They called but not actually confirmed. Will go anyway. Looking forward to reading. So thin & emaciated, send money.       John 3262 Main Str. Buffalo, N.Y. 14214

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Diane di Prima

3.9.65
[Buffalo]

Tuesday

Dear Diane:

I better get the train fare before Friday or Saturday morning, or else I can’t come. Sitting in the grey morning smoking bad pot. It gives me a headache.
Charles’ class this afternoon, and of course, we’ll talk or rather I’ll listen until dawn.
I would like to stay till Tuesday morning: Do you think there’s someplace I could stay over Sunday and Monday nights without cats —
Not far over on The East Side,
unless it’s nice and organized.

Love,
3262 Main Str.                John
Buffalo 14214

Also, Diane, save 4 tickets at door in my name.163

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Denise Levertov

3.9.65
[Buffalo]

Wow Denise:

That’s quite a review. I am pacing the room like a caged lion. It’s your own review.
Bob Wilson wrote, “Her review is like a poem in itself”.
I am so happy. I can die. I have read it three times now (more than anyone else will do, except the girl who wrote it and the man to whom it is written.) And Orpheus, of course, what will happen to him?164

He will go on living – and choosing others to inhabit. On the force that produced Orpheus we likewise are inhabited by. Did 49 pages on Wilhelm Meister. Love,

John

---

163 Written on the seal of the envelope.
164 Denise Levertov’s rapturous review of Wiener’s Ace of Pentacles, “To Write is to Listen,” appeared in the February 1965 issue of Poetry, and was reprinted in Levertov’s essay collection the poet in the world (New Directions). In it she distinguishes his work from the “confessional” with whom it’s so easy to align him:
The things various confessional poets describe have happened to him too – drug addiction, the pain and loneliness of homosexual love, the mental breakdown… but in his case they are not autobiographically written about, they are conditions out of which it happens that the songs arise. There is never any sense that he capitalizes on dramatic events or is dependent upon them for his poetry; he doesn’t see them as dramatic. What moves us is not the darkness of the world in which the poems were written, but the pity and terror and joy that is beauty in the poems themselves (227-8).
Charles Olson

[March 12 1965]
[New York City]

full moon
3:13 P.M.

Charles: I am in bus station now awaiting departure for Boston, was at St. Patrick’s Day, thousand streaming by, saw the parade!
got MICHAUX at Gotham, with Kerry marching by the door. No luck on W-BEBS. No more [aequa?].
No more Brooklyn. Alan Marlowe has chauffered cars & butlers – Ed Sanders has Time & Life
Jack Smith has William Burroughs is a viper.

Diane di Prima

3.30.65
[Buffalo]

Dear Diane:
Please save 4 more tickets at the box-office in the name of
Hogg (2)
Crozier (2)

Thanks, John
3262 Main Str., Buffalo 14214

Irving Rosenthal

April 17, 1965
[Buffalo]
Holy Saturday
Passover

Dear Irving:

I have been wanting to write you for a long time. You said we should correspond.
But I know you are busy. And not a good correspondent, as they say. It sounds like a man in a divorce case.

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165 Postcard of the Empire State Building.
166 Henry Michaux (1899-1984), Belgian-French poet, writer, and artist known for his esoteric writings and experiments with drugs.
167 Postcard of “WOODLAND CINEMA by Racey Helps,” from London (postmarked Buffalo); Wiener’s has crossed out “CINEMA” and written in “Please see other side –” – a kitschy illustration of forest animals going to “Cinema de Luxe” in a tree trunk.
I must have Arlene Dahlberg’s address, so I can return to her Edward’s writing desk. Did you find out about The Flea of Sodom, or was it Do (Can) These Bones Live? I believe it was Bones, but I don’t know. Charles is not the easiest man in the world to understand. i.e. the book Charles said he helped on. But it is not important. I am reading his Alms for Oblivion, and liking it very much. I am also reading Jenny Gerhardt by Theodore Drieser/Do you think it’s true what Dahlberg says about Dreiser in that first essay? There is a new book out on him, very handsome at $10, with beautiful photographs. I am going to get it soon. And also going to Istanbul, when I get my master’s here. I am reviewing a book called Orchard Park and Istanbul, by Lyle Glazier, poems, and reading all the travel information I can get about the place. It’s only about 423 dollars to fly there, economy. Just think of it. Maybe at 42, when Charles dies, if ever, God forbid. I am having good luck writing poems for the last two days. Wrote two good ones. Also read in Princeton last week. Send you enclosed photograph, so you can have it. All my love,

John

Alan Marlowe has the writing desk, and the nighttable. But wont give them up, unless I tell him to, in person as they are part of his study. Tell Arlene that, if she wants him to, I will get them for her. It will be no trouble. Allen is in Moscow, as you probably know, and Gregory left for Italy last night, with Paulo Leone, so Huncke told Harvey Brown over the phone this morning. Read in the Voice this week, that Daryl Zanuck saw Flaming Creatures in a

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169 Edward Dahlberg praised his friend Charles Olson in both Do These Bones Live (1941) and The Flea of Sodom (1950). The two writers were staying together at the home of Olson’s mother in Gloucester in 1940 when Olson was working on the Melville project that would become Call Me Ishmael and Dahlberg was writing Do These Bones Live, which Olson had a hand in shaping (Butterick 299).

170 Edward Dahlberg’s 1964 essay collection was published as Alms for Oblivion.

171 Orchard Park and Istanbul, published by Colorado publishers Big Mountain Press in 1965, was written by American poet Lyle Glazier. Raised in poverty – his parents both committed suicide because of it – Glazier taught American Studies at Buffalo for many years.

172 In March 1965 Ginsberg traveled to Moscow in order to connect with his ancestry, and to visit relatives of his late mother Naomi and some notable Russian poets. He returned west via Prague, where he was crowned “King of May” – a parade he would later memorialize in his poem “Kraj Majales.”

173 Flaming Creatures, experimental film by New York artist Jack Smith which filmed in the summer of 1962 and premiered the following April. According to Village Voice critic J Hoberman’s account of the production, Flaming Creatures was “initially conceived as a vehicle for Marian Zazeela,” the Lower East Side muse of photographer Smith, though she bowed out of the film due to personal conflicts; Zazeela did paint the movie’s “spidery credits,” and appeared briefly in the film with Rosenthal. After seeing the film in a private screening, champion of avant-garde cinema Jonas Mekas wrote that it was “so beautiful that I feel ashamed even to sit through the current Hollywood and European movies... a most
bedroom. Just think, the eyes that saw Jennifer Jones saw you, and no, she’s married to David O. Selznick, not Zanuck. Oh, well. Do write to me, dear, and give Peter my best. The snow is on the trees here, and it’s the day before Easter. I want to go to Istanbul with you very much, and my heart is with you. Can you give me Peter Orlovsky’s address just for reference? Allen also got his Guggenheim, as you must know. And will be in Warsaw soon, I think. Give me the news on New York, and your heart, too. Huncke has 3 stories in the forthcoming Niagara Frontier Review, and got paid for them, too.

Robert Wilson 4.17.65 [Buffalo]

Dear Bobbie:

I know this is a horrible thing to ask, now that you’re going away, but could I have photostats (have your boy go to some machine) of the Hotel Wentley Manuscripts, so I could revise them for future publication. I’m hot on this now, and know I could do good work on them, if I could just get them in my hands. The future might benefit, and your kindness would make it possible. I know it’s difficult, but it’s all I can do, right now. If I waited until you came back, I would lose enthusiasm. Love,

John

John

Denise Levertov 4.21.65 [Buffalo]

Dear Denise:

Just finished the new issue of poetry and it’s so good to see your name and mine together. I really feel proud. Liked Carol Berge’s new book and told her so, in letter. Now, when does that Duncan review come out, if ever? I look every week and find nothing. I live in anticipation of every week. Are you waiting for an apt time? or has the editor given you trouble? Forgive me for pestering you this way but I cannot contain myself any longer. Charles and I are going to Spoleto, for a week, before San Francisco. Are you going? We are very excited as he has never been out of the country since 17, 1927 and I have never been. Love to you, and Mitch. Your friend, John

lips, the new Alexandra de Markoff emollient lipstick, ever, under or without your favorite lipstick. I’m going to get some.

luxurious outpouring of imagination, of imagery, of poetry, of movie artistry, comparable only to the work of the greatest.” Mekas distributed the film through his Filmmakers’ Cooperative from 1963-1968 (n.p).

174 Wieners must be referring again to Levertov’s review of Ace of Pentacles in February 1965; other issues of Poetry from that year do not contain poems by Wieners, though the April/May double issue does have Levertov’s “Olga Poems.”

Love,
John

* * * * *

The Festival of the Two Worlds, performance event in Spoleto, near Rome, was founded in 1958 by composer Gian Carlo Menotti. Its eighth annual festival, from June 24-July 18, 1965, featured a “Poetry Week” with a lineup of legendary poets from around the world, with the wizened Ezra Pound at the center. Menotti consulted with Frank O’Hara on the poet list; O’Hara could not attend because of work at the Museum of Modern Art, but Menotti invited many New York and Beat poets on his recommendation, including Wiener and Olson, Barbara Guest, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, John Ashbery, and Bill Berkson. Performances included LeRoi Jones’ play The Dutchman and several ballets by George Ballanchine, produced by the New York City Ballet. Menotti tried to avoid controversy by leaving out the increasingly notorious performers Ginsberg and Corso, but wound up courting more by giving a prominent slot to Pound, prompting the USSR to protest Pound’s collaboration with Fascist Italy during World War II; Soviet poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko was prevented from appearing until the last minute. When Pound did perform, it was from a chair in Menotti’s box in the theater. As Robert Neville described the event in the New York Times:

When his turn came to read, the spectators thus had to turn around in their seats to catch a glimpse of the poet. Pound read with voice so soft and so cracked that it was difficult to distinguish all his words. He read not his own works but 10 poems, most of them quite short, written by such others as Marianne Moore, Robert Lowell, a fifth-century Chinese poet, a French poet and an Italian poet. The weak voice of Pound suggested that the rebel in him, although not the artist, had vanished… At the end of his few minutes of reading, Ezra Pound received a long and hearty ovation from an audience that stood and turned toward him.

From Europe Wiener traveled back to the Bay Area for the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference, legendary conclave of poets assembled by the University of California Extension Programs from July 12-24, 1965, featuring readings by Wiener, Lew Welch, Joanne Kyger, and many others, and lectures by Dorn, Ginsberg, Creeley, Olson, Spicer, Snyder, Duncan, and Olson. The conference capped off the summer tour that Wiener and Olson began together in Spoleto, and the latter’s reading/lecture was an epic drunken performance, fueled by liquor Lew Welch provided from the audience. Jeff Boruszak describes the recorded (and since transcribed and published) result:

Part performance, part address, part conversation, part autobiography, and part drunken rant… Olson is introduced

176 Neville 27.
by Robert Duncan (who leaves halfway through the lengthy reading), and talks to Allen Ginsberg, Ed Sanders, and Robert Creeley, among others (most often responding to their repeated requests to continue reading poems). Olson talks about everything from his life in Worcester, Massachusetts, to his travels in Rome, presidents, politics, writing, publishing, performance, how many women he’s had in bed with him at one time, and the different terms for “cod” in Portuguese and Italian. Despite his constant attempts to continue the reading, Olson is eventually told that the building the reading is held in will close in 20 minutes — the recording continues for another 30 minutes and cuts out after Olson has declared the reading over, but continues to read poems and tell stories.177

By the end of the summer, Wieners will be relaxing with old friends Wallace and Shirley Berman and their children in LA’s Topanga Canyon, a time Wieners captured beautifully in his journal “Blaauwildebeestefontein.” He describes sitting in the garden while Berman works on his collages and the Bermans’ cat stalks Wieners, who relaxes smoking and looking at the stars above Beverly Hills. Wieners was back in Buffalo in the Fall, after a brief visit with his parents in Milton, resuming his studies, collaborating with Harvey Brown and other poet-publishers, and working towards his next series of books, which Ginsberg would call “three magisterial books of poetry that stand among the few truthful monuments of the late 1960s era.”178

* * * *

Wallace Berman

April 21, 1965

[Buffalo]

Dear Wallace and Shirley:

As you might know, I am going out to San Francisco this summer, for a reading at the Berkeley Poetry Conference, supposedly the first week of July, after I come back from Italy with Charles Olson. We are reading there at the Spoleto poetry week. It is a festival of music and drama, sponsored by Gian Carlo Menotti, etc. Baronessa Alphonse de Rothschild, etc. Mrs. Henry Heinz III (the can heiress, I believe) etc. This is the first year they have had poetry. And we will read with 18 other poets from all over the world. Quasimodo, the Nobel Prize Winner, etc. Some fag in heaven must be working for me. We will read 5 days a week there, one poem a day, 9 miles north of Rome, and then fly around the world, back to San Francisco. What a trip! My heart is in my mouth. The Berkeley one will allow me to visit you, if you will have me. I will take that business train to L.A. The Berkeley one also offers $125 so that will be my fare to L.A. etc. But the Spoleto offers nothing, but the prestige. Except room and accommodations at a modern, comfortable hotel. We will leave June 1st. He also has been invited. 20 poets from all over the world, and we are two. It is called The Festival

178 “Foreward,” SP 15.
of Two Worlds (I wonder what that is means?) and we are very excited. Do you want me to collect poems for you for No. 10 Semina. I hope so, if one from him, nothing else. Meaning Charles. We are very excited, as I say, and I can hardly keep my mind in order. Will you write to me, and ask me what you want from Italy. We will be there about a month. Spoleto is between Rome and Florence and we'll see the Giotto in Florence, and you'll see, the sky will light up. The final appearance will be in The Piazza del Duomo, and they hope to televise it. The theatre will be the Cato Melisso. What a ball. I hope I can keep my cool. Will you pray for me? I will be thinking of you all the way, and wishing you were with me. After the reading I will see you, and we will be together again.

Classes here are fine. Here is a poem, I wrote:

**Goodnight, Jenny Gerhardt**

I'm scared of the rain.
It's like an invisible hand tapping on my shoulder.
The lightening makes me shudder too.
I hate to turn my back on it.

Love to you and your child. I have his picture with one of Hedy Lamarr as I go out the door, standing on the table. Will you write me? I want to hear from you, if only a word. Yeah, Buffalo is about 500 miles from NY (on the Canadian Border, across from line cropped by microfilm)

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**Ed Sanders**

April 26, 1965

[Buffalo]

Dear Ed:

I am writing this, now, to save until the end of the week, when I can put $10 in it, and pay you back the money I owe. The Orgasm Oil is alright with me, tho I think we should be careful in revealing its contents, as FDA will come down on it, if they can, of course, and take it off the market, like morning glory seeds, Charles says (I showed him your letter, I hope you don't mind). You are a lovely person, Ed, and it was a pleasure to have you here, for all concerned, David and myself, Oscar Silverman and Charles. Please come again, before we go to Spoleto. Charles and I both have been invited. My letter came late, as it was addressed to Univ. of Buffalo, Buffalo, and I imagine returned. March 20th. We will fly out, I hope June 1st or so, Charles says, and I am (we are) trying to raise the money for flight. But we will make it. The American Council of Learned Societies, or something like that. Any way Chas. has no doubts. Will you come again? Take Wheat Germ oil and see. Here is the label.

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179 “Goodnight, Jenny Gerhardt”

180 Oscar Silverman (1903-1977), American professor who taught for decades at the University of Buffalo, where he chaired the English department (1956-63) and acted as “director of libraries.”
3 Fluid Ounces

It’s absolutely guaranteed. I bathe in buckets of sperm, because of it. On only one teaspoon a day. Will you say “We cannot supply partners” but they are recommended for healthy outpouring. Comparable to Herman Melville’s dream, when he saw angels in a row, with their hands plunged in jars of spermaceti. I get it from Dahlberg’s essay “Moby Dick, a Hamitic Novel.” Read it in his Alms for Oblivion, just out this year, 1964 or 65. Love to you, Ed and we are sailing. We also got manuscripts for you, if you want them. Enclosed find one Just finished Hesiod for the first time, last night’s dawn, and it was so beautiful I read (wrote) this poem. I would omit all that stuff about seasoning, people will get so (too) confused, and it’s not necessary as the stuff is so sweet, anyway, on its own! But only take one teaspoonful. You do not need more, and allow 3 days at the most to feel full results. There is no need to miss an orgasm at all this way. Just take it straight, and see!

Yours,

Mad
Madison Avenue (Harpers Torch)

Also recommend, in Edwin Panonsky’s Studies in Iconology, plate XXV, fig. 46 an illustration for your translation of Hesiod.

Even Charles didn’t know of it. So use them.

Joanne Kyger
May 15, 1965
[Buffalo]

Dear Joanne, Kids:

As you know, I am truly delighted to hear from you, and to know that I may stay with you. But I am allergic to cats, as you must remember. Even though I have an inhaler to take against them, their pollen permeates the air. Could we do something to screen out the pollution and I don’t mean keres. I have nothing against Crooked Tail or Straight Tail themselves, but tell me, how can I breathe? Maybe in the guest room, they haven’t been, and I could go in there, after you have vacuumed it out, and hung the bedspreads and curtains and rugs out in the air, their dander, that which clings to their fur, gets in my lungs, and wont let me breathe. Poor dear, Michael’s address is 112 River Rd. Grand View, N.Y. And he is fine, finishing his new novel, which he tentatively calls: The Other Side of the Night.

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182 An icon of a torch is the logo for publisher Harper & Row, which became HarperCollins in 1990.

183 Erwin Panonsky (1892-1968), German art historian whose Studies in Iconology: Humanist Themes in the Art of the Renaissance was published in 1939.

184 If the Michael Rumaker novel described here, The Other Side of the Night, was finished, it was never published.
Don’t tell anyone, as he’s not sure if that’s what he should call it. I don’t know what it’s about. But he might be able to come out for his vacation. Wouldn’t that be wonderful.

Ask him.

But if I use just the guest room, where will I eat? Wouldn’t that be awful, to take meals in a bedroom. But we could use the kitchen, because there’s very little fabric there, I imagine, for their fur to cling to. And of course, there’s Nemi, but she’s got cats, too. Alan has become a minister in the Ruggles Street Baptist Church, and Jan is one of their zealots, singing in the choir with the men because she has such a deep voice, and writing letters to my mother, trying to convert her, enclosing pamphlets about renegade Catholic priests. And of course, you know, my family is staunch Roman Catholic, with just a trace of Roman paganism thrown in. But Jan Minsk is not it. They have two children. Linus and Emily. Yes! And the church is black, my dear.¹⁸⁵

Well, so we go. I’m trying not to be philosophic. Don’t show this letter to anyone, as I feel so silly, just talking to you, again, after all these times. Remember Dennis Murphy.¹⁸⁶

Jerome of course is in Boston, with a boy, of all things, and still paints, sort of, I don’t know what. You know, nothing goes on, in Boston, but he’s moving to New York. People keep coming up to me at readings and saying, Jerome sent me, and he’s got no lights. Or he’s living in the basement, etc. Who does he think he is, John Wieners. I don’t think Gregory Coarso and I inhabit the same universe. What does Don Allen mean, even comparing me to him. I want to be compared to Henry Miller, living in a rat-infested cellar, under a bare light bulb. But I’m not Henry Miller, I’m just John Wieners, and that’s enough for me. And you’re Joanne Kyger, and that’s enough for me, until the day I die. Don’t go to black stockings you never did. But go I. Magnin. Strictly Mainbocher,¹⁸⁷ my dear. Right down the line. I don’t have Jerome’s address, or else we could get him, too. As you might know, Charles and I are going to Spoleto first for a reading there at the Festival of Two Worlds, where we will read every day of the week, one poem an afternoon, on the June 28th-July 2nd stage of the Caio Melissa Theatre with Stephen Spender, Ungaretti, the old queen, Salvatore Quasimodo, the Nobel Prize winner, Ted Hughes, the late Sylvia Plath’s husband, whose work, Sylvia’s, I like very much.¹⁸⁸ By the way, I loved every word of your poem, on the death of your father, in

¹⁸⁵ Until 1970, Ruggles Street Baptist Church was located in working-class Roxbury, an area that had recently changed dramatically due to the “white flight” of the 1940s and 50s; by this time many of its neighboring buildings were slated for “urban renewal” (“Our History” n.p.)
¹⁸⁶ Dennis Murphy (1932-2005), American writer whose first novel, The Sergeant, was a bestseller in 1958, later made into a movie starring Rod Steiger.
¹⁸⁷ The House of Mainbocher, haute couture fashion line designed by Main Rousseau Bocher, designed most of Wallis Simpson’s wardrobe.
¹⁸⁸ The Teatro Caio Melisso, small chamber opera theater in Spoleto, Italy, which hosted the poetry readings at the 1965 Festival of Two Worlds. Stephen Spender (1909-1995), English poet and writer who was intensely concerned with social justice issues in his writing. Giuseppe Ungaretti (1888-1970), Italian poet and writer. Salvatore Quasimodo (1901-1968), Italian lyric poet and writer who was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1959. Ted Hughes (1930-1998), English poet and writer who was married to American poet Sylvia Plath.
I am very proud of you, Joanne, that I even know you, despite the fact that you went to Japan, with that man. I forgive me, I'm sorry I didn't print those poems in Measure, but it was too late then. And as you know, it was a very small issue, with only excerpts of the most imperative. And I could have put one in, I guess, and I don't know why I didn't. I didn't even think of it. Please forgive me. All this human stuff. I must go out and get a soda. I wish we were in San Francisco, together, now, and not all this planning, and talking and deodorizing the air, etc. I live in a room, and David Posner, lives over head, padding around in footsteps, taking sl……..p…… I'm not, taking anything. Isn't it wonderful. Not a thing. I sound like the reformed alcoholic, Sophie, who takes drugs in Somerset Maugham’s novel The Razor’s Edge, and sleeps under the cross, and finally throws herself in the Seine. Played by Anne Baxter, in the film, with poor sad late Tyrone Power, who had to shave between his eyebrows. You should never have asked me, but I’m not going to say no. I'm really a very simple person, and only trying to build up a myth about myself. Fuck Stan Persky, who doesn’t know how to do it, as Jeanne Eagels says.“Never Explain, never deny, say nothing and become a legend”. Those damn movie stars, and drug addicts. They knew nothing and yet tell everything. Also Gary Snyder was asked and had to refuse because he didn’t have the money. Neither do I, but I'm going anyway. And Robert Lowell, and Yevtushenko, and Rene Char have also been invited, but we don’t know if they’re going or not. 20 poets in all, from all over the world/And we happen to be two of them. Isn’t it exciting. Will you come too. In spirit anyway. I will carry you between pages of my favorite book. I hope you're not too outdoorsy now. I remember you used to sunbathe, and love to sit in gardens. I hope that phase is not all over now. I will consent to go for a walk with you. Remember when you used to throw me out of the office of the City of Paris. How is Miss Specht? and Larry Ferlinghetti. Two of a kind? I think so. Rafael Alberti is also going. Then we go to Bled, Yugoslavia, to the summer home of the Communist government. Stephen is trying to arrange that, too. And then back to Buffalo, and then to SF. And you.

Love, dear,
John

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189 12 Poets 1 Painter, 1964 anthology edited by Don Allen for the Four Seasons Foundation, featuring Kyger alongside Snyder, Levertov, Creeley, and others, with six drawings by Jess.
190 Joanne Kyger went to Japan with Gary Snyder in 1960; her witty, illuminating notebooks from the period were published in 2000 by North Atlantic Books as Strange Big Moon: The Japan and India Journals, 1960-1964.
191 Stan Persky (b. 1941), American-Canadian poet and publisher, a part of the late-fifties San Francisco poetry scenes whose magazine Open Space was “a curious mixture of humor and high literary seriousness,” publishing fifteen issues in 1964; in 1972 he expatriated to Canada and became a renowned professor, writer, and public intellectual in Vancouver. Jeanne Eagles (1890-1929), Broadway and film actress and Ziegfeld Follies Girl who was immortalized by Kim Novak in the fictionalized 1957 film Jeanne Eagles (Golden 29).
192 Yevgeny Yevtushenko (b. 1933), controversial Russian poet, writer, actor, director, and publisher. His visit to the Spoleto Festival was at a time of great upheaval for the Soviet artist, coming at the end of a two-year ban on travel outside the USSR, and a very public imbroglio after signing a letter of protest against the trial of Joseph Brodsky in 1965.
193 Rafael Alberti (1902-1996), Spanish poet, a Marxist who was a leading voice of the left during the Spanish Civil War and a member of the “Generation of ’27.”
John

Will you write to me?

Just anything I'm so happy to be

with you again.

I'm not a good poet, I'm just a bad poet who had good

breaks.

---

Joanne Kyger

5.17.65

[Buffalo]

Dear Joanne

Are you going to all the lectures and readings and

seminars? As I want to. And that means early to bed early to
rise. And we must arrange for transportation over to Berkeley
everyday. If you are not going, let me know and I must think

about it. How to get over. We shouldn't miss the Duncan and

Spicer, Creeley, LeRoi Jones, etc

O.K. Let me know.

All love,

John

I don't think we should have to pay, do you?

---

Robert Wilson

6.29.65

[Spoleto, Italy]

Dear Bob:

Forgive all this.

This is where we read from. Met Ferlinghetti, heard Neruda, talked to Yevtesenko

Cesare Valenti, Miroslav Holub, Ingeborg Bachman, Allen Tate, Babs Guest → Lunched,
drank, danced with, supped, Jane Wilson, John Ashberry, Waldo Rasmussen, Joe Brainerd,
Kenward; Quasimodo a dwarf Alberte nodded & read, Ted Hughes a giant, Stephen Spender,
lovely, Isabella Gardner, Menotti, lunch today at Lady Berkeley’s, Charles is here, Bill

Berkson & Ezra Pound arrives tomorrow after Ferlinghetti leaves. Love, John

194 Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), Chilean poet and Nobel Laureate, socialist who is thought to have been murdered by the Pinochet junta after the dictator’s coup d’état. Miroslav Holub (1923-1998), Czech poet and entomologist who used his scientific knowledge to illuminate his poetics (and vice-versa). Ingeborg Bachmann (1926-1973), Austrian poet and writer, a member of the post-War German literary circle Gruppe 47; a bilingual US edition of her Collected Poems, called Darkness Spoken, was released by Zephyr Press in 2006. Allen Tate (1899-1979), American poet, editor, and teacher, a founding member of the Southern Agrarian Fugitives and a dominant voice in mainstream post-War American poetry. Jane

Wilson (b. 1924), American painter renowned for her expressionist landscapes; in the 1950s

she was at the heart of the New York School of painters and poets. John Ashberry (b. 1927),
American poet associated with the New York School whose difficult poetry has greatly

shaped 20th-century American verse. Waldo Rasmussen (b. 1928), American art historian,
curator for many years at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He joined the staff in
1954, and became Director of its International Program in 1969. Joe Brainard (1941-1994),
Joanne Kyger  
6.29.65  
[Spoleto, Italy]

Dear Joanne

This is where we are at every day. In the boxes. Friday I read. Mr Pound arrives tomorrow (Thursday) for his opera. At 5 are the readings and they are lovely with Stephen Spender presiding, next year’s Librarian of Congress. Can you imagine. An Englishman. Babs Guest is furious John Ashberry is here Quasimodo, Yevtushenko left yesterday after reading Semina 9 I gave him. Neruda read, Alberti, Allen Tate, Ted Hughes! all read. Kenward Elmslie, Bill Berkson, etc. Jane Wilson is here and Waldo Rasmussen, Frank’s boss at the Museum. Cocktails last night w/ Menotti & lunch today with Lady Berkeley. (Barkley?) for a swim   Love John

Robert Wilson  
7.8.65  
[Rome]

Dear Robert:

We are finally here in Rome, at the Albergo Nazionale. Charles is in Yugoslavia until tonight when I expect him back or at least to hear. We had a lovely week in Spoleto and met Ezra Pound. I have pictures to prove it. Which I shall bring with me next week. Visited the Vatican Museums all morning and the Keats-Shelley Memorial this afternoon. Dinner this evening with Toby and Bice McCormick, the Italian translators of Charles into Italian (Rizzoli); also Patrick Bury, the grandson of J.M. Bury; (History of Greece)? and a Tarocchi reader I can’t pronounce his name. friend of Fellini’s. Also met Caresse Crosby at Rocca Sinibaldi & Bill Barker.196 Will see you soon.   Love – John

what a change for me – thank you.

American artist and poet, member of the New York School who was the longtime lover of American poet, playwright, and performer Kenward Elmslie (b. 1929), who published the second-generation New York School house organs Z Magazine and Z Press in the 1970s. Isabella Gardner (1915-1981), American poet, great-niece of Boston arts patron Isabella Stuart Gardner, co-editor of Poetry in the mid-1950s. Bill Berkson (b. 1939), American poet, writer, artist, critic, and curator, a New York native at the center of the New York School, with friends Frank O’Hara, Joe Brainard, and Anne Waldman. With Joe LeSueur he edited Homage to Frank O’Hara, which included Wieners’ memoir piece “Chop House Memories.”

195 Tarot.

196 Rocca Sinibalda, a town fifty miles outside of Rome, home to the stunning medieval Castello di Rocca Sinibalda. Caresse Crosby fell in love with the castle and its luminous frescoes in a 1949 visit, and rented and then purchased it with the intention of creating a sanctuary for artists. When she obtained electricity for the castle, she also electrified the nearby town. Crosby owned the Castello di Rocca Sinibalda until shortly before her death in 1970.
Robert Duncan 7.8.65

[Rome]

Dear Robert:

We are finally here in Rome, at the Albergo Nazionale. Charles is in Yugoslavia until tonight when I expect him back or at least to hear. We had a lovely week in Spoletto and met Ezra Pound. I have pictures to prove it. Which I shall bring with me next week. Visited the Vatican Museums all morning and the Keats-Shelley Memorial this afternoon. Dinner this evening with Toby and Bice McCormick, the Italian translators of Charles into Italian (Rizzoli); also Patrick Bury, the grandson of J.M. Bury; (History of Greece)? and a Tarocchi reader I can’t pronounce his name. friend of Fellini's. Also met Caresse Crosby at Rocca Sinibaldi & Bill Barker. Will see you soon. Love – John

what a change for me – thank you.

Robert Wilson 7-9-65

[Rome]

Dear Bob: (Reading there July 14th)

I gotta have money to get to San Francisco next Monday or Tuesday when I land in New York. If I do? Can you be prepared to forward me this or royalties where I see you then? I would appreciate it much. My money has into books, etc. And Harvey BROWN whom I am calling now has to forward the fare from here to New York. If I am to get back at all. I dont know how I’m going to do it. Chas in Yugoslavia. Got 10 good photos of the poets you can copy here. also more coming. Love, John And lots of other things. Also more shots of this beauty – more intimate.

Dave Haselwood 7.9.65

[Rome]

Dear David:

Did see this weird statue today, people snapping snapshots of its genitalia. Hope to see you Tuesday if not before. Am bringing home lots of Olympia Press (De Sade, etc. Charles Henri Ford). Chas is in Yugoslavia but I didn’t go. Met Ezra Pound and have photographs of the meeting.

c/o Albergo Nazionale

Love to you, John

---

197 This postcard features the ancient sculpture Sleeping Hermaphroditus from National Museum of Rome.

In early Fall 1965, Wieners was coming off his whirlwind poetry tour with Olson, having spent the summer with the great poets of the mid-twentieth century, first and Spoleto and then at the Berkeley Poetry Conference. Back to mundane academic life after a summer’s distraction from his wife’s death, Olson found Buffalo that fall unbearable, and left abruptly. Harvey Brown, an independently wealthy Cleveland poetry lover and aspiring publisher, had been spending a lot of time in Buffalo visiting friends in Olson’s poetics department like Jack Clarke and Al Cook, and he donated the money required for Olson to be able to write full-time, back in Gloucester on Fort Square. In Olson’s absence, this new generation of scholars like Albert Glover, Ralph Maud, and Fred Wah, continued the work Olson had begun at Black Mountain, eventually producing a sprawling series of commissioned essays and poetry pieces exploring Olson’s *Curriculum of the Soul*.

It bears remembering that after a decade of hand-to-mouth existence, the Buffalo grad fellowship – “sixty-five bucks a week,” according to classmate Duncan McNaughton – was a welcome constant in Wieners’ life now, one that kept him tethered there through 1969, living comfortably above the university book store. He was eventually relieved of his freshman comp teaching duties – his pedagogy was judged erratic – but allowed to keep his fellowship.\footnote{This information on the logistics of Wieners’ time at Buffalo is courtesy of Robert Dewhurst’s unpublished interview with Duncan McNaughton.} As one letter to Michael McClure shows in this next section, Wieners also relied on shady old ways of making ends meet on top of this meager stipend. But especially without Olson, Buffalo was an isolating place for Wieners, with what he saw as a stultifying lack of culture, not the kind he was used to from New York, San Francisco, and Boston. This time of educational institutionalization was, not coincidentally also Wieners’ time of greatest psychological distress, reflected in a number of disquieting letters to Creeley and Wilson throughout this section. Taken as a whole, this penultimate section of letters – from America’s most schizoid time, the late 1960s – show Wieners undergoing a profound and troubling transformation. In the ten years since graduating college he’d always been surrounded by lovers and intimate friends, but at Buffalo Wieners was suddenly surrounded by nothing but colleagues. The result – combined with other life factors – was a time of great confusion, suffering, and creative breakdowns and breakthroughs.
* * * * *

Don Allen

8.22.65

[On the Road]

Dear Don:

Been in Tucson 15 days               the window that is
with [illeg]                     Love, again

Flying over Las Vegas
and thinking of you. You
slick operator. For bus-

ciness reasons: Can you
send me a copy of The Ed
Sanders photograph –
taken by Gary Snyder the
same morning as he took
mine. I would appreciate it
as need it for
the window of Student Book
shop here. (Buffalo) Start
it TOMORROW. MONDAY.    Love, John

________________________________________

Wallace Berman

Aug 27 [1965]

[Milton, MA]

Milton

In the middle of the night, always
it returns to me, this beauty
of poetry, the moon flashing
across the wine-dark sea, like your eye,
the lights in it, at dinnertime.
When I smile at a particularly
pleasant memory, able to live it again.
And the joy of that transmits to you,
sitting across the table from me, my mother.

---

2 Postcard from Rome
3 “Milton”
Joanne Kyger

August 30, 1965

[Milton, MA]

Dear Joanne:

Today I saw Joe Dunn at the Mass. Correctional Institution in Bridgewater, Mass. where he has completed an 18-month sentence for possession of a hypodermic needle and some pills. He is still being held, although his sentence was up June 23, this year. I will find out why from his father tomorrow, and then go back and see him once again, before I go back to Buffalo next Sunday. And I can hardly wait. This house is the tomb of middle-class America. But Buffalo is as bad, the residue of radical America.

If possible, I would like to acquire from Robert, if he does not want to print it right away, Joe’s novel, so we may do it in Buffalo. It is so good to talk to you. These people do nothing but trudge from bed to board to work to TV set to bed. God, it is living death. I don’t like it at all. Give me anything to this. Poverty yes, but not homelessness. I need a roof over my head, no matter what, and the security of food. Something Spicer never allowed himself. I have some magazines from Berkeley 1949 and they were very prophetic. The Occident, and Berkeley Miscellany.

The print and negatives are still at that shop on Sutter and Polk and I don’t have the $10 to get them out. I will write Nemi, and ask her to get them out, and I will pay later, and she can hold the prints until then.

I will take care of myself. Enclosed find a print I saved for you since 1963, when I did not take care of myself, but now I will. Since you ask me. I think you will like it. It went through the travails of the world, as we both did. But still survives. As we do. And please continue. I want to see you with gray hair and new teeth. Give my love to John, and whoever else wants to. If he does. Give it to him anyway. And Bill and the cats. And Nem, of course. Love to her. I will write about the photographs which still reside safely on Polk.

Thank you for sending the clipping. Yes, the Zerox is fine. I will fix up Charles Olson. He called last Sat. nite from Gloucester, with Ellie Dorfman of all people. Tomorrow birthday party for Gordon Cairnie at the Grolier Bookshop in Cambridge. He is 70. Let’s be like him.

Love,
John

Send the photos, if you have same. I wouldn’t know if he’s thin or not.

---

4 No novel by Joe Dunn was ever published.
5 Jack Spicer died just a couple of weeks before this letter, on August 17, 1965.
Dave Haselwood  9.18.65
[Buffalo]
4:22 PM

Dear David:

Finally I can do this. I am so sorry for so many things. The large phone bill, which I
am going to pay you for as soon as I can. The delay in sending the manuscripts back, which
are so lovely. I got my glasses today and can really see them, and they are stunning. And last,
this most important thing. Which is the revising the poems back to their original positions. I
hope that is all right, as you now can see you will not REGRET it. They are lovely in this
version, and I send it to you, as the way I want it. Please observe, and let me say, I see with
you, too. Let me help you in any way I can. I will be anxious to see the rest, and can assure
you that they will not be re-cast this way; I think that last day was too much of a pressure on
me, and that my ‘music’ was disturbed. Now it is restored, and we are back on familiar
ground. I hope this does not mean too much work for you, but I think it is worth it.

Love,  John

Write soon, and let me know. Best to Glenn, and all others there, who help you and me
both.

The delay in eye-glasses kept me from working on them before

I think the ORIGINAL VERSIONS is best.

I enclose the typescript, so there will be no possibility of error.

Dave, the second page of A poem for museum goers I am keeping until I can see the thing in
whole. I can’t judge the stanza line breaks until I get the first page back, OK? Or just does
this hold up typesetting. I’m so glad you sent to LA for the type. It sounds fabulous and just
like you.

Love,
John

Michael McClure  September 20, 1965
[Buffalo]

Dear Michael:

On the eve of the autumn equinox, please forgive me. I cannot send you money now
as I do not have any. But I am working on it. So much so I am doing nothing else, but going
to school, studying and teaching. Trying to read tonight and I cannot, thinking of you. Please

________________________

6 Delaware.
7 Attached: thirteen racing slips ($10 each for the win, all from the eighth race) dated
September 1, 1965, from Rockingham Park in Salem, NH. On the back of one is written
“The ignorant multiply which [two words illegible].”
– forgive me. I am trying to get the money for you. Enclosed $130 in racing tickets a friend played trying to get the money. Also we played the N.E. Sweepstakes and lost. Also I was going to take a fall down the racetrack stairs to get $75 insurance money, but lost money courage at the end. What can I do? but wait until the money comes through which will be soon. It is such a relief even to get this letter off to you. I was paralyzed before.

I have a large display on you in the bookstore window opposite the main entrance to the university (18,000 students)! which should mean something to you.

The Mad Sonnets photograph opened up full size. On the blank side of the paper a run of Garland then under that an advertisement for Dark Brown published by Dave. Above it

Beside that Unto Caesar

Dark Brown, itself with the poem Wally printed – “I wanted to turn to electricity … I needed a pure catalyst. Promises are lies, etc. Work is death”

signed

Mike McClure.

Then on the board facing the window and viewer – passerby. Meat Science – Essays opened out on the cover. Below that Ghost Tantras (front cover) Above MSE the photograph Wally took of you for the reading at Cinema Theatre in Los Angeles. The 4 Naked Beasts – and above that the back cover of A New Book – The Book of Torture and beside The Ghost’s – Billy The Kid opened out

“I am not Guilty. I am a Living Creature” and then above that the back side of Beard. So it’s a good display. And I will pay you back as soon as possible.

Love,

John

I know it’s not money.

Then also there’s a run of Death of a 1000 Whales beside Mad Sonnets – and below that the picture of a sea-lion washed up on the beach at Malibu that Wally used in Semina IV great beneath Death of a 1000 Whales. Heard from Wally today and wrote to Dave Saturday.

Love,

John again

Write to me, if you will be so kind.
Michael McClure  September 25, 1965
[Buffalo]

Dear Michael:

The exhibit came down today in the window, so I am sending this in place, to make up for it. Soon, Michael, soon I shall will pay you back. Read this with understanding. It was written on marijuana, and all at one time, which you must see: what that fool, David Schaff, did not see, despite all his good work. Give my love to Dave and Joanne and Jane. I miss them all. Dean sent me the mirror image of you in the pool. I love you very much. John

The date of this would be about April or March of this year. Love again. John

It is bad writing you know. And I never want published. Charles is right. Each line negates the other.

I could try again, but not interested enough.
And the lust is over, for tonight, anyway

\(\text{at least}^8\)

Heroes

For Michael McClure

I have been in love with heroes all my life, knowing that I never can become one. Heroine; heroin is a different story.

It is the mark of weakness, dreams, not action, that I have been involved with.

Action, too, but that imposed on you. Not chosen. Whereas you, Michael McClure never go out of the house. Only when you are called.

And the action of my life stems not out of courage, tho courage is called for, but necessity.

Whereas your action is bold, would strike out against life, kick over the furniture, as I have seen you do.

I would never do such a thing; for fear of punishment and am punished far more for not doing it.

Thus, the difference, between you as hero and

---

8 “Anyway” and “at least” are bracketed with a question mark to the right.
myself as heroin, caught in the net of being.

You say, Strike out against the nets of being. Create new being, new forms.

I cannot do this, but suffer under the old.

I ask of you release. I ask poetry to do this. I ask Charles Olson for this. I ask love for it. But no dice. Only in poems comes the release. Not poetry of being. But being evolved through poetry, the poems.


Which manhood I have never had; which femininity is mine, you will never know.


Which thing you will never know. Being lost in another song. Which any Irishman will know.

I am not speaking to you, Michael McClure, but to the manhood which lies buried in me; in anyone. I am trying to assert the presence of the beloved, tho this must not be done. But should lie and wait for the low lights.

But this is making no sense, any longer.

And I am lost on a starry night. Lights glow. The presence of your Passage awakens as a sleeping lover and lays its warm hands on my arms, its dark face stares in the night. It resembles marijuana hidden in the jar; it resembles dark earth, straining to push dark shoots seeds to sprout, to bloom. It reminds me of Wallace Berman’s Semina. It returns me to myself, where I hold these things dear. And to heroes, where you are too, which is what this is about, not you Michael McClure.

Yet you are a hero, one that I have envied since childhood.
My love, lust, gleams in the night
of a pure order
no words can express, but these.

It is electricity, a current running red, orange
brown through the room.

That must be separate,
3000 miles apart.

Dave Haselwood          October 5th, 1965
[Buffalo]

Dear Dave:

Forgive all this delay. I want to be sure. So here is the finished text, all screwed up as usual. But at least yours, and finished the way I want it to be. Notice in the proof you sent me: Shadows reads Shabows. So change that. Also there should be a space before “Fishing”, even tho it’s on a different line. And no space before “Hell”. Even tho it’s dropped down now.

I hope all is fine with you. I know it is. There are so many creeps around here. I wish we were together somewhere, and will be sometime, you’ll see. Will you send me a photograph? There is talk here of doing a show by L Vigne, at the Bookshop, so if he could send the drawings, when Ed Budowski contacts him, that would be a favor. I have ordered his The Impossible Theatre. I hope you are not working too hard.

The photograph I sent you is to be used in the book, if you want to. I will get permission from Wally. Also I have sent off today a Special Delivery letter to Milan, asking for the drawing by Bob back. So let’s see if they respond.

Now work from the typed script, as the proof is too difficult to see. As you’ll see. No space before “Hell”. Even tho it’s dropped down now.

The rest of the book will not be as difficult as this. The main work is already done. And Bob’s copy of A poem for Vipers, I want to use. Rather than the one you have. But I think we spoke of this earlier. The prose one there, as much as possible. It seems there are many different forms contained within the book, small as it is. The 3rd edition is listed already in Who’s Who in America, although it won’t be out until 1966. Also Chinoiserie. Although they spell it Chinposerie. Which is right?

9 Edward Budowski owned the Student Book Shop on Main Street in Buffalo, across from the University’s South Campus, and edited an influential small magazine called Fubbalo in the late 1960s; he died in 1971.

10 In 1964, theatrical director and scholar Herbert Blau (1926-2013) published The Impossible Theatre: A Manifesto. The opening lines set the tone for not just the book but his whole career: “The purpose of this book is to talk up a revolution. Where there are rumblings already, I want to cheer them on. I intend to be incendiary and subversive, maybe even un-American.” He frequently collaborated with Robert Lavigne, who designed many of Blau’s productions in San Francisco, including a legendary King Lear in 1961.
Love,
John

And love to Glenn, and all there. Bill Deemer wrote, and sent poems, also love to Andrew, the doll. John. Is Pamela still there, the lucky dog. And Lillian Gish, her daughter. Jackie Kennedy indeed, taking them on a tour of the White House, when all I was doing was showing them the poor Hotel Wentley. Love again.

Do send the photograph, Dave.
I need it.

---

Dave Haselwood  
10.6.65  
[Buffalo]

Dear Dave:

Some people here are doing a bibliography on Charles¹¹ – to run in 3 consecutive issues of Kulchur. Could you send the name of the dealer who supplied you with the Olson “Sutter-Marshall Gold Lease Plan or at least a copy of the text? Photo-stat? Please!

John

---

Don Allen  
Oct. 17ᵗʰ, 1965  
[Buffalo]

Dear Don:

Trying very hard to do something for you on metrics.¹² Got one essay completed but it is very vague and mystical. Nevertheless will send it you after rewrites tomorrow. Cannot type now, as new boy next-door moved in, and nearly broke down the wall last night, after I started typing at two last AM. On a pillow, too.

Got a new poem for Jack Spicer in next issue of Fred Wah’s new magazine – “Hotel Blues” – I hope he sent you copy of first one with monster on it – not very good, the

---

¹¹ Wieners is referring to the Bibliography of Works by Charles Olson, edited by Albert Glover and George Butterick. In his essay “Charles Olson at Buffalo,” Glover remembers the project’s origins in his first semester studying with the great teacher in his second year at Buffalo’s new poetics program; young Glover was dizzied with dense layers of references, and turning to the Maximus Poems didn’t offer much help, so he continued searching. The resulting Bibliography was published in 1967 by Robert Wilson, but it began as Glover’s “way of trying to get a grip on class, to make Charles understandable” (n.p.). Throughout the letters of this period Wieners is helping generate ideas for the Bibliography. His wide-ranging list of Olson’s works of poetry and prose is a powerful indication of his continued study of his great teacher, remembering vividly – if spottily – not just the texts but where they appeared, illustrating again the great import of these small magazines to the geographically diffuse New American poets.

¹² In his previous letter, Allen had asked Wieners if he would like to contribute to an anthology on poetics that he was hoping to put together; Grove Press published The Poetics of the New American Poetry in 1974, but it does not contain any writing on metrics by Wieners.
magazine, that is the sum total being better than any of its parts, but at least it’s a start, towards something in process, as you have on The West Coast. Will have you sent each copy. “Alice O’Brien,” a poem Jack liked, will also include. First time printed. From old days in Boston, 1956. Not so very long ago. When we were on our own.

Charles in Gloucester, as you probably know. On leave of absence. Will be back I hope. Have kept in touch. Received two letters, of praise and love. He’s a good man, tho difficult; it’s worth it.

Your Human Universe is a master’s piece. As you know. On all your parts. Selling like hot-cakes in Buffalo.

Got Four Seasons Foundation listed in the new Who’s Who In America 1966 under name John Wieners, as having made a tape for me. Pretty good, huh? For us all of us. Enough vanity, now. Got your San Francisco Poetry Folio 1963, finally. After it having lain dormant at the post office for weeks. The bitches.

Two in Cook’s Executive Assistant’s administrator’s office (Phil’s and Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s) and one (Robin Blaser’s) in English Graduate Office. They look good against the stone walls.

Got your check for $24.80 from Grove Press book. It was good fine news.

The boy next door is starting to stir, so will close now.

Love,

John

Bringing out new book: Gardenias. “GARDENIAS”

dedication: “for Billie Holiday”

Seven poems of manly love, to be published here in Buffalo.

Dave Haselwood 10.17.65

[Buffalo]

Dear Dave:

I am connecting the third proofs now and will mail them back tomorrow. Just wanted you to know the drawing came in from Italy! Isn’t that wonderful. Yellow and a cigarette burn on the one shoulder, but OK. Love, John

---

13 Wieners wrote “Hotel Blues for Jack Spicer” while visiting Wallace Berman in Los Angeles, late summer 1965. The otherworldly elegy to his old friend begins “Pass by this room, stranger. / Heartbreak hides within it,” and builds to an image of Death on the hotel bed, “Stretching out her long hair into the moon.” This letter was written between the end of Wah’s magazine SUM and the beginning of his next editorial project, Open Letter, so it is unclear to which magazine Wieners is referring.

14 “Alice O’Brien”


16 In 1966, Harvey Brown’s Frontier Press published Wieners’ Gardenias for the Lady, containing a single poem entitled “What Are You Saying.”
Dave Haselwood

Dear Dave:

I would like to keep the same cover on the Hotel Wentley Poems as we had before. And to use the photograph by Berman on the outside back cover, full page size. No white showing around edges. Also, to put the new drawing which I am sending in place of the old one in the same place in the text. OK? Love, John –

Wallace Berman

The Gay Bar

The lamp lit in the corner,  
a Chinese girl talks to her lover  
at the bar, the saxophone blares –

blue music, while the boy in white/turtleneck sweater  
seduces the polka player from Poland,  
left over from The Union party

Janet sits beside me,  
Barbra Streis and sings on the juke box  
James tends bar

it is the same old scene  
whether in Buffalo or Boston  
the night mare begins –

the yen goes on, continues in the glare of moon, searching for its harbor,  
oh will we go,

where will we search  
between the potato chips and boys,  
for the impeccable one –  
that impossible lover

who does not come in  
with the fresh air and sea  
off Lake Erie

but stays home, hidden in the sheets  
with his wife and child  
alone, ah the awful ache,
as the cash register rings
and the bartender sweeps
the bottles off the bar.

John Wieners
The Eagle Bar
November 3, 1965

3 pages, Wallace?

Robert Wilson
November 24, 1965
[Buffalo]

[on envelope seal:] Think this over wisely before you answer too harshly or hastily.

Love, John
It is good for us all. You have not been betrayed.17

Dear Bob:
Received a card this week from David Rattray in Paris as follows quote:
“I told a publisher here, –
François Didio, of Soleil Noit,
Trice Notre-Dame-de-Lorette,
Paris 9° - about your work,
and quoted to him part of Juvenilia (called Tuesday 5PM in book)
by heart & then roughly translated
into French. I told him you were the
best young poet in the English language.
He would like Wilson to send him copies
of the Wentley poems & The Ace of
Pentacles, if you and Wilson were willing
to consider having them published here
in translation. I urge you to try

17 Wilson’s response was not as forgiving as Wieners hoped. Soon after receiving this letter, Wilson fired one off to Coyote Journal telling them to “be advised that [printing THE JOURNAL] is a breach of contract,” and with the content of the journal being potentially “libelous [or] an invasion of privacy,” if Coyote proceeded with the publication they would be met with legal steps including a lawsuit against Wieners, a legal injunction against the printing of the journal, and a lawsuit against Coyote and Wieners “for libel and/or invasion of privacy.” To Wiener he sent a tirade against these non-Phoenix Bookshop publications: “I am really amazed that you would go ahead with publishing not one but 3 books or pamphlets without even having the courtesy to ask us whether we minded, let alone the legal aspects of the situation” (December 3, 1965). Despite his threats to Coyote, he assures Wieners that “obviously Carr and I are not going to sue you.” He also tears apart Wieners’ claim to more royalties, reminding him that the advances and books he has been given far outweigh any potential royalties. By the end of the letter he is again threatening to sue Wieners “for libel and/or invasion of privacy” in regards to THE RECORD (December 3, 1965, R.A. Wilson Mss., Lilly Library).
it, because Didio’s books are
beautifully printed, widely circulated
in Europe & have a good reputation.”

Bob, would you do this? I don’t have copies anymore, except one limited which I am unwilling to send. McClure has the other in lieu of a debt. Now I would like David to translate and will write asking him to do so – also would like to wait until the 3rd edition of the Wentley comes out with its corrections. But do send him the other one until that does which won’t be until the beginning of the year, as I am still correcting proofs on it. It is very beautiful with large type and a new format. I am looking forward to it.

Now don’t look to this as betrayal. But I am printing a pamphlet here with six poems on 9 pages, called Gardenias (for Billie Holiday, which you will have the rights to include in the next book. It will do no harm, and will help the book! Also Coyote’s Journal has written asking for a book and I am sending THE RECORD, a journal written in 31 days in New York in 1963, when I was seeing you constantly and you are quite mentioned. I hope you don’t mind; as is David Rattray, much more harshly. But he will have to forgive me. The six poems include addenda;

Bob: don’t be upset by this. I know you will. The poems Gardenias are –

Preface – (Peyote Poem) Semina 1955
1. The Old Man- A Counting House (1965)
2. To H.B. (unpublished) 1965 Fubbalo No. 2
3. For Charles – 1965 – Niagara Frontier Rev. No. 2
4. Paul (unpublished) 1963 from RECORD, read
to Ezra Pound at Spoleto
5. For Huncke (1963) Niagara Frontier Review No. 2 Revised
6. Impasse 1965 – Niagara Frontier Review No. 3
Postface – 1965 Semina No. 10

6 poems on 9 pages

MAN LOVE POEMS
Because Billie Holiday said to me, ten years ago, Thanks for those Kind words.
some written as far back as 1958. I hope this is alright.

When we do reprint Ace of Pentacles, I want to call it PENTE – with a facsimile poem of William Blake sewing as frontispiece – the Chimney Sweep Poem with ending with the words, WOE, WOE, which is what PENTE means, according to Jung, which words appeared to me in a hypnagogic vision at the time I was trying to determine the title, you

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18 Coyote’s Journal and Coyote Books are the creations of American poet, writer, and editor James Koller (b. 1936). The Journal published thirteen print issues between 1964 and 2007, and through an online “New Series” begun in 2006. Like Big Table, which emerged from the suppression of a controversial issue of the Chicago Review, Coyote’s Journal began when a 1963 Northwest Review (published by the University of Oregon) ignited a scandal over its inclusion of an Artaud poem and an interview with Fidel Castro.
remember, and I didn’t know what the letters meant. Now I find out from Charles they are WOE from the river NEPENTE, and this must be used as the title for the book. O.K.

Love,
John

This It is a beautiful illustrated poem of Blake’s, The Chimney Sweep, and you will love it, perfect for illustration. Do give permission for Gardenias – printed here by Harvey Brown of Frontier Press, and only a pamphlet, but still to be included in the next book, “the Saviour”? first part is to be called THE MANIFESTATION OF HOPE.

Also Dave is bringing out a single poem called Chinoiserie, written in 1963, I can attest to that in manuscript of RECORD, and read first at Berkeley. You can get the tape of that reading from Berkeley or I will bring my copy to New York over New Years and you may tape that. Do have a royalty check ready for me then if (I feel you will be furious by this letter, but don’t be, it is only business – 30% royalties, too.

I deserve one. I have a list of 20? persons who must have hard-bound copies of the book, which I will bring them – as I want to sign them personally – as they are friends, or wealthy admirers or both as they must be now for me. Or not, really. Just friends with interesting faces on backgrounds. So will you save them for me? 20 of them? And deduct them from royalties. Also give, if you will, Jennifer Douglas of Penguin Books, permission to reprint – My Mother – And An Anniversary of Death for their anthology. She is offering $15 – They also They wanted Acts of Youth, but Kelly got it and they want to avoid Doubleday duplication.

Thank you for sending down the bag of books with Diane – I really appreciate that, as I needed the Pound, etc. Olympia Press for my morale, also the trenet and Ma Vie of Piaf’s, Love you, Bob, and all best for the Holiday Season. I will see you soon. Please ans I would like to mark in the copy of Ace of Pente for abroad revisions – small ones – also include the NEW TITLE in French translation. What do you think of this? Please answer soon.

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Dave Haselwood

November 25, 1965
[Buffalo]
Thanksgiving Day

Dear Dave:

Forgive me for being so long with this, but this poem has always been difficult, as you know. Now I think it is as good as it will ever be.

I called you earlier tonight, but you were not home. I do not have a phone here, except English Graduate Office, State University of New York, Mrs. Marilyn Schimek, and she can get me for you, if you need me. I am always here, except going home to Boston over Christmas, and New York.

We will both save up money for your trip, next Spring. I read at Cornell last week, the whole new section of the Wentley, and we have already got it listed for Who’s Who in America, 1966 edition, and Contemporary Authors, vols. 15-16 which will be out 1966 too.

Lots of publicity here for it. Also talked to Bob tonight. Drawing and poem both going special delivery so you can get them quick.
Will you use the typed copy? There is not much difference but capital F on line 7 and comma on line 10, and last two lines rewritten and improved, tightened, with line 16 returned to original printing, and line 17 added, according to the temper of the times.

Love,
John

Color photograph being developed for you still at Herzog’s. Ready Friday, and send then. Maybe week later, now that I think of it, they have got to send it to Rochester. They returned it once, already. Love to Glenn (da)…

---

Robert Creeley
Sunday, November 28th, 1965
[Buffalo]

Dear Bob:

Just to write and Thank you for sending me The Gold Diggers. I read “3 Fat Tales” to class and have yet to get the book back, two weeks ago, they love it so much.20 Also Charles’ introduction to you in New Directions 13.21 I’m getting that mimeographed and distributed to them. Also for having the Guggenheim people write to me, I haven’t responded and won’t this year, but later I hope, when I need it, after an education is complete here, and I can travel.

Thirdly, William Cookson’s Agenda which I haven’t seen yet, so I wonder if he used the photograph I sent, or the article. I hope so.22

All love to you and Bobbie,
your friend,
John

---

Dave Haselwood
[December 1965]
[Buffalo]

Dave:

I want you to add this to the main body of the text of The Hotel Wentley Poems before The Poem For Painters. Read it first before you make your judgment.

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19 On University of Buffalo letterhead.
21 James Laughlin’s first publication was New Directions in Prose and Poetry, an annual anthology of new writing. Number thirteen was issued in 1951, featuring Robert Creeley alongside Tennessee Williams, Lorine Niedecker, and others. Olson wrote a two-page introduction to Creeley’s work, “Mr. Blue and Other Stories” (Maud Charles Olson’s Reading 108).
22 A year after Ezra Pound was released from St. Elizabeth in 1958, he co-founded a British literary magazine, Agenda, with William Cookson, a young writer who had befriended and corresponded with Pound during his incarceration.
23 Though Auerhahn Press folded in January 1965, Haselwood continued publishing under his own imprimatur, including a 1965 edition of The Hotel Wentley Poems, the book whose censoring by printers had spurred Haselwood to learn printing in the first place. Dave Haselwood Books ceased production in 1968.
Love,
John

or after The Poem for Jimmy Carter. Ju-Ju –
The Vipers.

Now that life is lost to me\(^\text{24}\)
Will you remember for eternity
what is to come.
You, who are to come.

Not what is to be,
but what is.

The harried pace, the majesty
of what once is past, is gone forever.

But you who are
receive this heritage.

The gift, this grace of far time.

We are only yours,
to be done with as you want.

Not pain, not poor
but swept into eternity
as so much dust behind the door.

Receive such vision, it is yours.

Time is nothing, is a game
between sixes.
Eternity does not exist. We enter it willingly
through your minds.

Wilfully, you destroy us as the wind

The orchard, the peach trees in the yard
before the hurricane.

It can cane you to death.

For final breath.

Now that life is lost at last.
Enter the full flower.

\(^{24}\)“Now that life is lost to me…”
A Poem for benzedrine

Voices of the underworld rise stoned to bring me down.
The Law of the land falls on all heads in town.
Declare war the morning is blood red
with reason war is when one of us
dead is worth more than all of Congress
Declare it       I hear it.

Stretched by a window  over Polk and Sutter
Sutter another painter stretched by death on his shoulder
sits on his canvas cancer
A country rancid
buries  its eyes
with war won over by death
at each instant of life
even our heads the law, half in love with it
in debt to it, we are lead by it.
I pay dues in drugs, and keep my pockets full
Out of the mouths of strangers, the sound of friends.

Sue Rosen26 I heard tonight talking in a Spanish girl.
Demons possess all of America's middle aged women
With houses full of men who whisper and cannot hear
How far out they register the transactions of their souls
I see the studs of Africa passed off as toys
Golden and clay
The feet of lovers walk away.

The sky shoots 15 colors all cool.
The head of God laid in my arms
A junkman who makes it after midnight
Then home to turn on sight laid in his eyes
And ears cleaned out forever by the sound of the a motormen’s bell
That announces each opening of these doors to Hell.

Robert Wilson December 6th 1963
[Buffalo]
Dear Bob: 2 AM
I am sorry my letter has upset you. I have re-read the Record just now and find there is no mention of you in it at all. The Phoenix is mentioned twice as such in a Memo book,

25 “A poem for benzedrine”
26 Sue Rosen, American poet and participant in Jack Spicer’s “Poetry as Magic” workshop, described in Poet Be Like God (by Robert Duncan) as “devoutly Spicerian” (90). She was briefly married to poet Ron Loewinsohn.
attached to the Journal like this: “Sold books at Phoenix for $13.” One entry. “Went to Phoenix and Briggs” – the other entry. There is no mention of you by name. Just a name of a place not even identified as a bookshop amid a lot of other names in a Memo book. It just happens that I was seeing you at this time. (I think that’s how I expressed it.)

I haven’t as yet answered the two requests from COYOTE BOOKS to publish a book of mine. I have never corresponded with them. So it will seem funny and a little outrageous to get a letter from you, threatening libel suit or injunction for a book they know nothing about. The poor things. I hope they don’t get upset over it. Or I know that they will lose interest in the book now, or get unnecessarily fearful. I am sure they will not do it now – but its alright Fred Wah will do it here in Buffalo, tho I wanted the City Lights distribution. And he will use a verityper which is not good.

I would send you a photostat of the manuscript but it is over 100 pages long, and I do not even have money for food. But that’s alright, too. I am used to it.

You see I wanted to avoid any trouble, so I thought I could send a manuscript, written in 1963 (to answer their requests. But I had not done so when I wrote you, or even told them this)

Chinoiserie has come out, in an edition of an 100 copies. I do not see how you can buy 50 of them, as they sell at $10 each but you may buy 50 Gardenias, but I am given 40 of them i.e. Chinoiserie, Dave keeps 40 and Robert Hawley gets 20 to distribute through Oyez at $100 each.27 I am sorry at this – but I did not know who or even that there was a distributor till Sunday Nite when I talked to Dave on phone – after receiving Chinoiserie after sending your letter There will be $70 royalties, coming on that, too, if they sell. I have got 1 (one) advance copy, as they are hand-stitched – a very small book, one line a page in the style of McClure’s Unto Caesar – no bigger than that. But I will give you 10 of my copies if you will give me 10 hardbound Ace of Pentacles, or Pente, a book of woe. What do you think? Let me know re this – because I am anxious to have 10 of the Ace.

It was written in 1963, I can attest to that, taken out of The Record and in handwriting, in that journal.

Now I am tired and going to sleep. I do not think of myself as a figure at all. I live in a world where only few men count. I am sorry that poem appeared in Fuck You, but you see that was the way I lived until that poem was written, and now no more, except for relapses, which I consider as poetic endeavors.28 I do not intend to capitalize on myself and others,

27 Black Mountain alumnus Robert Hawley (b. 1929) founded Oyez Press in Berkeley in 1963. In its five years Oyez published many Black Mountain and San Francisco poets including Olson, Duncan, Eigner, Lamantia, and David Meltzer, who was a primary influence on Hawley and the press. Oyez began its run with a set of ten broadsides designed by Dave Haselwood and printed at Auerhahn in San Francisco (Clay 69). Wieners’ poem Chinoiserie was printed as a pamphlet by Dave Haselwood Books in 1965.

28 The final issue of Ed Sanders’ Fuck You included Wieners’ incendiary sex poem “Memories of You,” an homage to Allen Ginsberg (mentioning twice the “saintly motorcyclists” who had fucked the speaker of “Howl”) at his most lurid. It is understandable that Wilson would have taken offense, but he is not the only one being humiliated or exposed in the poem – by the end of the section, it would seem Ginsberg, specifically mid-sixties “ginsbergmessiah,” is Wieners’ ultimate target:

Now to Buffalo, where I do nothing
but jerk off and think of Charles.
Bob Wilson blowing 78 men one weekend
not you especially whom I love very much and who took me out of the depths, and to whom I could forgive anything. You see, you gave me hope when I needed it the most, gave me the anchor whereby I live and to abuse it now would be unjust, or to say that it did not exist when it does still hold me, but you must not give into these petty rages or harsh judgments, or hasty actions against me – when there is no cause for them. That poem will not be seen by anyone, you know it and will never be reprinted. I will not allow it. I needed it to cleanse my soul. The reason I did not show you Chinoiserie was negligence but Gardenias for Billie Holiday you may certainly see. And anything else I do. I would consider it a compliment. But now I must sleep. It is a bad poem, too ‘artistically’.

I will send you photostat of Record but you must return it to me and not keep a copy for yourself until it comes out.

I don’t know what to do about it. I know Coyote Books will not do it now, getting that letter from you, or even that they would do it at all in the first place. It is a controversial book, but I think it is beautiful. As it is, I still have their requests and don’t know what to do about them.

Love,
John

Write me again soon and don’t think about any of this in anyway. Now I know why Ed Budowski let me charge $224.24 worth of books so freely with no complaint and then cracked down last week. I could still charge but don’t want to now. He told me Friday he had not paid you after all this time. And he has sold so many of them! I told him today of your threat to sue after Jan 1st – but we didn’t talk about it at length in the bookstore. We will though later. He said Friday it was a vicious circle but I am paying him $50 within the week, as I get a check from the CBC for an 8 minute solo tape I made last Wednesday, Dec 1st – not reading – just talking over the radio to myself and the world in Toronto.

Love again,
John

Could I possibly return the Dos Passos book? I can’t read it. It’s terrible. Ed Sanders told me he was a rightist last Spring and I haven’t been able to think of him the same since. It seems he never left his own backyard, despite being on The Orient Express. Just a glamorous title for a nondescript book. No advances in prose style at all.

You see this is the world I want to live in, not the world of finances, or personality clashes. I on Fire Island where they serve an Olson martini.

Now back to New York and The Turkish Baths
which I find no fun, tho Frank O’Hara does,
and Allen Ginsberg sits in his white pajamas
and dreams of men as I do – and thinks of fame
at least used to but doesn’t have to anymore.
as he is it. And I see what style this has
degenerated into (“Memories” 15).

29 John Dos Passos (1896-1970), American novelist and artist known for his strong political commitment. He was an outspoken communist until the rise of Stalin, when he broke with Hemingway and other American leftists and became an outspoken right-wing activist, even campaigning for Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon. He is best known for his U.S.A. Trilogy, published between 1930 and 1936. Orient Express was published in 1927.
dount want royalties. I want money, or security and friends. I don’t want stealing, etc. anything at all, so long as it promotes love.

Wallace Berman  December 7, 1965  [Buffalo]

Dearest Dearest Wallace;

I’ve wanted to write for so long and congratulate you on the show. No, you didn’t send an announcement, tho Brian Peterson is Rochester got one. I would like one, too.

Re Semina, I hope all goes ahead well and that you have enough poems now. If not let me know and I will send you more as I write them. All I sent came from the notebook I was working on when I last saw you – what you gave me the print for. and that notebook is filled up. We could put that on the cover or somewhere in the text, as they all came out of that book except The Eagle Bar. I have one for Philip Lamantia but can’t resolve it yet.

It’s such a drag to have this school thing on my back, as I can’t be free in my work. I would like to come to UCLA and complete my doctoral work, there after I get my master’s here. The weather here is killing, cold winds from Canada. Or even S7 State would be close enough. They give a doctoral in creative work.

Dave Haselwood is bringing out the third edition of The Wentley in February 1966 and would like to use the picture you took of me on the back cover. You know the poetic one in 1959. In black turtleneck sweater. Anyway I told him I would write you & ask if it’s all right. I hope so Wallace as I sent the photo to him for that purpose? It will be a beautiful edition with large type purchased in LA that’s very elegant. New format, new drawing inside and the poems returned to that original condition the first printer did not observe. What do you think?

The print I sent him I had made at the Jordan Marsh Co in Boston when I was there from the original you gave me which I gave to Jan Minsk which she still has. But which I borrowed for the reproduction which is not too good – sort of brown. Remember you made etching marks on the original.

Whatever let me know your decision re this – and I will tell Dave to go overhead – if ye if you have an original print, that would help. If not the repro will be good enough, except it’s not your work.

(Will you give my love to Shirley and your beautiful Tosh?)

Love,

John

I have phrased this badly. Sorry for the mix-up on the McClure poster. But you know him and I think he was afraid at the last moment of his wife’s family and their position in the bank – (specifically his mother-in-laws) which Governor Douglas owns & on whose property we stayed along with Princess Margaret.

Dave Haselwood  Dec 16, 1965  [Buffalo]

Dearest Dave:

The Chinoiserie just came. Thank you very much! I am trading 10 of the ones to come for 10 hard-bound Ace of Pentacles so I can have some of them for Christmas, too. But no rush!! I mean this. Send them care of me, directly and I will trade them in person with Wilson. What a guy he is to deal with.
One question I have to ask:

Will a) Joanne
b) Robert Duncan & Jess
c) Don Allen
d) Stan Persky, preferably Robin

get them from you? or should I send them mine? Do not hesitate to choose here as I already have them on my list and will gladly send them for you.

My list, so far reads:

1. Charles Olson
2. Bob & Bobbie Creeley (he sent me Gold Diggers)
3. Denise & Mitch Goodman
4. David & Olivia Posner
5. Frank O’Hara
6. Andrew Crozier (England)
8. Vera Zorina
9. Priscilla Morgan (Menotti’s “partner” – I’d send Menotti one, but he doesn’t read
10. Dee Dee Ryan (Mrs. John Barry III) & has too many gift books)
11. Bill Berkson
12. John Ashbery
13. Susan Cummings (my cousin)
14. Gerrit Lansing
15. Robert and Joby Kelly
17. Harvey & Polly Brown
18. Nemi Frost (or will you take care of her?)
19. Robert & Jess? Yes? don’t hesitate to say no – as I should & really would like to.
20. Fred & Pauline Wah (gave me one of his 6 bound-LARDEAU, now o.p.

See that Andrew & Bill Deemer get one – as “John wanted you to have one,” etc. - & Shig Murrayo? shall I take care of him? He gave me all those City Lights books when I was there.

21. Victor & Elizabeth Coleman (Toronto-editor of Island – They are reprinting MEASURE
22. Phyllis Webb (CBC Broadcasting Public Affairs, Toronto – she took me to lunch last two weeks ago, etc.

Michael & Bob LeVigne you will take care of, with my love

John To you both

Charles Olson  12:23.65
[Milton MA]

Dear Charles,

Got a wealth of presents for you – from Bill at the Chinese restaurant, Marilyn, Jack. May I bring them on Christmas Day?

Love,

John
Charles Olson

Dearest Charles (Charlie):

I called the lawyer today and MADE arrangements to handle the loan I made last May. It is all set and I am paying $5.00 every two weeks or payday. Please don’t be offended at my negligence. They promised they (she, his secretary) would not bother you again. So, don’t worry. Except I hate to see your name & mine used in this context.

About the Clarke thing, I don’t know what he’s talking about, if anything. But it must be something. Know you have my love, and that is unfailing. If I made a disparaging remark about you, and I don’t think I did. I KNOW I DID NOT. you’d think he’d tell me about it, rather than write you. WHAT IS HE TRYING TO DO? Of course, I said, “I only trust writers who write.” (I think). But it was an abstract remark, or a summation. No etc. on dittos. what does all that mean? But you are writing. So why should he apply that to you? Enough of that.

he implies much more than HE KNOWS!!

Except, of course, you are right in assuming that I should tell the Boss first. Which is what I am doing. Except I have nothing to tell you. (His remarks, I believe – were taken out of context. Which is so important, here.)

Except Jimmy Savo’s life is Shubert Theatre March 14th in a musical comedy called, Little World, Hello starring Pinky Lee as the late, great comedian, pantomimist and Brandeis University (what museum there I don’t know, or maybe (forgive me for this) De Cordova Museum?? is having the first “one man” (major) (retrospective?) exhibition in America of Fitz Hugh Lane’s paintings this coming, early part (spring?) of the year.

Saw Harvey last year night and we spent four hours at Fred & Pauline’s listening and making a tape (he did) of your Vancouver reading only! It was first time I heard Maximus II (2), IV, V, VI, and it was beautiful. I am so thrilled even today, to have heard it. When we met Temple later, he asked what we thought of it (the rat, was mad he hadn’t heard) and I

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30 John Clarke (1933-1992), American poet, scholar, and editor who worked with Olson at this time and took over his teaching after Betty Olson’s death. A collection of Olson’s letters to Clarke from October 1955, Pleistocene Man, was published in 1968 by the Institute of Further Studies.

31 Jimmy Savo (1890-1960), American vaudeville star whose 1947 memoir, Little World, Hello, was turned into an ill-fated musical by his widow, starring children’s entertainer Pinky Lee (1907-1993). Little World, Hello closed four days before it was to start rehearsals, in January 1966 (Filichia 41).

32 The DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park opened in 1950 on a 35-acre park in Lincoln, Massachusetts, with a strong focus on modern art and sculpture. Fitz Henry Lane (1804-1865), also known as Fitz Hugh Lane, American painter from Gloucester whose nautical paintings and seascapes are startling in their attention to light and shadow. Lane has been associated with the 19th century “Luminism” style of art, a mood inspired by Transcendentalism, seeking divine light in painting.

33 Pauline Wah, Fred’s wife. Wah’s recording of Olson’s reading at the 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference are available in digital form at the PennSound Olson archives. John Temple,
got out SOLID – it’s such a construct (to use your word) on the earlier volume – it builds and creates a mass34 – a thickness, like “your waist” if you’ll forgive me the expression – that I am interested, more so than any thing else in my life, to sustain me – to see what the head (and shoulders)

will be are like of Maximus 3.

Mass is the important word, ((here, I think))

Well, Charles, I am sorry for many things – that I have so little pep left and my life is left outside there and I am only rising and sleeping within it. I am not writing. Maybe this is what I meant by saying “I only trust writers who write.” (I only trust writers when they’re writing) or something like this, I regret saying. If he was a writer, → creating? Oh, God. he’d know what I meant. I probably said it because it sounds like you. But it seems the remark was taken out of context. I hope everything is well with you. The only consolation I have is that no matter how bad it is for me, here – it is no “easier” for you.

and the other consolation is I did not realize what joy it was to pick up a pen and write what I wanted to write – to you – and until your letter gives me such opportunity.

Thank you for writing to me,

Your friend
John

Love.

I cant say anything like what Gloucester was to me – except I wanted to be (want to be with you – and you gave me no opportunity for this. until after the effects were damaging. of the evening & those people. NOT YOU. And so I feel hurt and have nothing to say. At all. For nothing at all happened to me that I want to remember, except I have a psychic memory of those people that hurts.

What happened to you. And that’s not enough for me to say except as entrophy/entropy. for I was only an effect? I think you should stay there and do your work – Maximus (FORGIVE the advice. It is not advice. It is wanting more of that beautiful work. That is all I have to say re the time there. If those “people” persons whoever they are interfere with this work – dump them. That is not a bind or condition – but I thought today at the delly – before writing this – what did I think today at the delly – that

life – I forget to realize every instant life might be taken away from me.

O.K. Forget about the lawyer. It’s TAKEN CARE OF as Edith Sitwell says. And Jack Whelk is like Laurence blowing champagne bubbles. If only it were true of our lives. Love, John again.

I loved The Maximus so much Charles. I cant tell you. Tears come to my eyes of joy. And they are yours. I cant say that your garters were down. The overall impression

British poet and scholar, author of a perspicacious essay on John Wieners called “Haven of the Heart” (Jacket 34).

34 “Mass” is in a rectangle.
I have is of Thor, The Thunder God. Is that enough for you, to answer your question? It is for me.

Diane di Prima

2.16.66

[Buffalo]

Dearest Diane:

Please forgive this paper. Can I have an extension on the Clive paper?* You see I think of everything in terms of papers. I’ve got a poem I wrote the night before you wrote me the first paper with Clive’s poems in it, that I want Alan to see, and I am sending it to him this weekend, when I get money to Xerox it. Don’t worry about the poem in the notebook. It’s not worth reading, and I will mail the poems off Friday. Unless you find the poem before then.

I plan to go to New York City this weekend. How does one get into Kerhonken from here? The March SAF is 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th – or maybe it starts on the 10th. I want you very much to be included, and have pushed that on all fronts. I tried to get in touch with the girl in charge tonight to get definite word, but cannot do so. These damn students are always out. A girl in class asked me a question about you today, when we were reading Freud’s Kultur and its Discontents, re Tibetan mysticism.36

*It’s very hard for me to write on the Clive thing, cause his poetry springs out of a ‘narcotic’ experience, or milieu, I mean it’s a toughness, that isn’t natural to him, and which he has gone to junk for. Mainline to the Heart, indeed;37 I don’t know what to say, but I will say something. Only I don’t want to be cruel. I got thrown into junk for glamour and pain yes, because it led to new experience, and because the people I loved were using it, and the nature of ‘evil’ is such, that it is contagious and infectious. Can I say that? But to take on the pain of the world, is not right. One should obiate, or obviate suffering, not induce it. Don’t you think? And the hardness of the line, the toughness implicit there is not right for me, or the spirit of the world. Sure, it made Clive a man. But who wants a man? I want the angel that he was, even though I couldn’t touch him. Now one feels, he can be had, because he has something to give, but I could love that eterial (ethereal) quality he has, or had, that couldn’t be touched. I think it’s a sin he has gone and botched up the true angel of his soul. Of course, I couldn’t say this in print, so I am sorta at a loss for words on him. But they will come. Whatever you have to say will help.

You know, that fluffy cotton candy Clive was, so beautiful. But I’ll see him this weekend, and TALK. OK. Love – Love again and

36 Freud begins his late-period masterpiece Civilization and its Discontents (1930) by admitting that he had never experienced the so-called “oceanic experience,” the pleasurable dissolution of the ego, reported by mystics like his friend Gershom Scholem. He speculates that the need for this ocean must come from childhood helplessness.
Remember he wouldn’t let anyone near him, always, John wouldn’t talk, was like a swan, I used to say. Well, the swan only sings when it dies, and God, I’m afraid that will happen to Clive. I’ve got to see him this weekend, you know, he’s one of those beautiful people who get killed, because they’re young and brave and honest, like Hemingway said. The good and **Jerry Benjamin’s doing Jive Shoelaces and Ankle Sox of mine /true at the Five Spot this weekend (JSAAS).** It’s a playlet of mine, based on actual dialogue taken down verbatim in Boston ca. 1957! Not so sensational, in that fact, but in content, somewhat exciting.

Diane, we’ve got to do something to save him. He’s leaving New York for San Francisco, but if they’ll look for the same thing out there, but it’s worse. And then, we could get him to come to Buffalo and get a teaching fellowship, or some shit like that. OR BRING HIM TO KERHONKSON. I care again, Diane, and that’s good.

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**Diane di Prima March 14, 1966 [Buffalo]**

Dear Diane:

Will you tell me what else you took besides the George Herms-Wally Berman photographs? Which by the way, are by Dennis Hopper, and the Flaming Creatures clippings from Show, I believe; just so I’ll know, for my own records, and not go looking for something when it’s gone.

I noticed the books, first-off, were not put back the same way we had the night before. You know, it’s just those little things, the angle of things within the clip books that I noticed.

So tell me, what you took. I’m not mad, much.

Love,

John

---

38 Jerry Benjamin, experimental theatre director, member of the Warhol extended circle. The “playlet” Wiener mentions here, Jive Shoelaces and Anklesox, has not been published. Benjamin also directed Wieners’ Asphodel, in Hell’s Despite in 1963 at Judson Memorial Church, with Warhol designing the sets. Theatre historian Stephen J. Bottoms describes the play’s climax,

in which two Adam and Eve couples – the younger naïve and energetic, the older experienced and world-weary – fail to learn from each other, everyone is consigned to hell: the Judson audience was subjected to a bombardment of noise, lighting, and other effects… this climax succeeded in “[bringing] an onlooker quite close to the edge of felt terror… he comes out of the dark with confetti and streamers in his hair, hysteria in his ears, whispers in his brain” (80).

39 George Herms and Dennis Hopper were part of the early-60s art community centered around Wallace Berman’s Semina; Hopper later gave Berman a small role in his film Easy Rider.
at the end

Also, do you still want me to do the Clive? You didn't mention it to me, and the Floating Bear. I very much want to do that. And think, by the end of vacation, which is March 27th, I will have the Clive, unless that's holding you up. If so, I can come through quicker. Let me know. My arm hurts.

Love again to you both,
and Minnie, Jeannie and
the Kid.

Did you have a good time, Diane? I think you did, too. At least, you seemed radiant.
Cessation of desire, indeed.

I also delivered the two poems to Allen de Loach. And he was very pleased. Love again, and thank you for leaving those poems with me. They are very, especially the first one, mystical, etc. I know, but it's more than that. Compassion, a very Western feeling, comes through. Also a greenness, and your voice, speaking as a sybil.

Gerard Malanga

Monday March 14th [1966]
[Buffalo]

Dear Gerard:

Much thanks for the new poems and letter. I would like to use “Destination” (for Debbie)40 in a new issue of The Floating Bear I am editing for Diane. OK? I really hear your voice behind that one. Also, will get together a poem for Film Culture I have set aside. Written in Toronto. Also Notes on Ron Rice's Flower Thief.41 OK? Love, John. Did you hear about Wally?

Gordon Cairnie

3.28.66
[Buffalo]

Monday

Dear Gordon:

Forgive the delay in answering. I visited Charles Thur last week – looking for a house in Gloucester for the summer. July and August (come and visit us, I will let you know) and he gave me a copy of HUMAN UNIVERSE, as I had given my original one away. I'm sorry Gordon for the inconvenience this may have caused but I know you will sell them. They are collector's items, already. Too bad about Gray. (illeg – Gowrie?). Love to you and your charming wife, John

40 Wieners is probably referring to Malanga’s “Destinations,” and his close friend Debbie Caen (daughter of San Francisco journalist Herb Caen). The poem describes a woman whose “skin is white / As a ghost is white sometimes, / In our dreams – / As white as a vial of white powder” (60). No poem of Malanga’s appeared in the issue of Floating Bear that Wieners edited, number 33 in 1967.

41 Ron Rice (1935-1964), American experimental filmmaker whose 1960 film The Flower Thief was a Bohemian fantasia starring future Warhol superstar Taylor Mead.
In 1966 Wieners fell in love with wealthy patroness of avant garde poets Panna Grady, setting up house with her in May in a large Annisquam manor, near Gloucester. Ralph Maud writes that Grady’s “circle in the early ’60s, maintained by what seemed magical wealth in such a young person, was wide and appreciative.” Ed Sanders’ *Fuck You: a magazine of the arts,* gave its “FIRST ANNUAL FUCK YOU PRESS AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE TO THE ARTS” to Grady in 1965, for her “incredible generosity, kindness, tenderness, and benevolence in dealing with many freaky neurasthenic artists, poets, moviemakers, magicians, etc. on the N.Y. scene” (Maud, *Charles Olson at the Harbor* 197). Charles Olson was close to the couple; in these letters he writes to them teasingly as “newlyweds,” marveling at his protégé’s hetero-domestic bliss. The romance was short-lived; after Grady became pregnant with Wieners’ child, she chose an abortion, at the end of June. She drew closer to Olson, and at the end of October, she and her daughter accompanied him on a voyage to Europe. In his journals and letters to friends, Wieners expressed feelings of betrayal and devastation from the successive losses, but he steadfastly maintained his loyalty to Olson.

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* * * * *

**Ed Dorn**

Monday April 4\textsuperscript{th} 1966 4:45 PM

[Buffalo]

Dear Ed;

Forgive the pencil but it’s lead and all I got. Not in my head, tho, I hope.

I was in Gloucester week before last mid March with Panna Grady – not diane di Prima. What do you think? I would travel with her?

This girl is different – an Hungarian Countess born in America – PANNA meaning (little bread) neé Louise de Cholkanai and we are sharing a house together in Gloucester this summer, going there to open it May 15\textsuperscript{th}. In Annisquam, 5 miles from Charles – he steered us to it – a Tudor farm house – built out of stone from Gloucester quarries. He and Panna are a fine match for each other. She hosted a party NOT FOR HIM later at her apt at the Dakota \(\rightarrow\) you know – the place where Prince Philip had his party hosted by Douglas Fairbanks. Central Park West & One West 72\textsuperscript{nd} for Christopher Middleton, George MacBeth, Michael Hamburger, etc. and a 125 others preceded by one 2 days earlier for a 175 \(\rightarrow\) for novelists, Anthony Burgess, John Wain, etc.\textsuperscript{42} I was not there – but we have his blessing and joy for the summer occupancy.

About the book, he wont say much but wants both our names on both books – and wants nothing to do with it. Says they (Maschler) – a director of Jonathan Cape\textsuperscript{43} won’t

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\textsuperscript{42} Christopher Middleton (b. 1926), British poet and translator. George MacBeth (1932-1992) was a Scottish poet and novelist. Michael Hamburger (1924-2007), British poet, scholar, and translator. Anthony Burgess (1917-1993), British writer best known for his 1962 dystopian *Clockwork Orange.* John Wain (1925-1994) was a British poet, novelist, and critic.

\textsuperscript{40} There was confusion regarding the UK rights to *Ace of Pentacles.* Wieners promised them to Jonathan Cape, Ltd., but Wilson had already sold them to Stuart Montgomery’s Fulcrum
accept anything newer than 5 years old but this I doubt (is an exaggeration) & The reason why I persuaded Panna at all to visit Gloucester & to take the house with me May 15th to Sept 15th was to get the work done – but she’ll be gone half the time – June any way back in the city, etc with Norman Mailer in Provincetown. & her legally separated husband on Long Island, etc. She’s only “28”, she says.

Now Charles waved a contract in the air there but that’s as far as it got. I suppose we’ll get word from Jonathan Cape but I think he’s holding out for something from them, & until he gets it, we got “nothing”? Just a supposition on my part. Don’t say anything to him. It will work out.

Love,
John

Tell Jeremy Prynne I will send him Chinoiserie as soon as I get the remaining 10 from Dave Haselwood. Loved Geography, and it’s a great solid book to have. Reason I didn’t write before re this – Geography – was Charles had my copy since last January when Temple brought it to him and couldn’t get it back. Now his own copy arrived so beat up, I understand he hasn’t got a “book” – so I finally got mine back at his insistence week before last. With two copies of HUMAN UNIVERSE, one for Panna, one for myself. DO YOU NEED ONE ? for work there?

Panna will be moving to England Sept or so to Nicholas Mosley’s mother’s house – Lady Curzon’s (?) – she’s a friend of his, too plus Jacob Lind, etc. etc. Gregory Peck, Miles Davis, etc, etc. Bill Burroughs, etc, etc. So I might see you in January, there if you will be around. After my degree [cut]

Everything is clear here and more will be revealed during the summer which will be when the books are done, I hope. O.K. Together, both names on both books, as he wants it.

READ THIS LAST!
I’m NOT in love with the men she’s slept with, I’m “in love” with her.

“I am furious when I think of all the men who have slept with me while thinking of other men who have slept with me before.”

(reef!)  

Peggy Guggenheim nee Marguerite

Press. The result was a very frustrating mess for all involved. Wieners went forward with Cape (in its new incarnation as Cape Goliard) on his 1972 Selected Poems and with Fulcrum for a book of early poems, but the latter project fell through.

Jeremy Prynne (b. 1936), British poet, highly influenced by Olson. Fulcrum Press, Stuart Montgomery’s avant garde poetry press in the UK, published Ed Dorn’s poetry collection Geography in 1965.

Sir Nicholas Mosley (b. 1923), British novelist whose mother, Lady Cynthia Mosely, was the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston. Jacob Lind (1927-2007), Austrian-British writer who survived the Holocaust and eventually settled in London, where he published many works of fiction and drama, including Soul of Wood, his first book, a collection of artfully crafted, nightmarish short stories that established his reputation.

Peggy Guggenheim (1898-1979), American art collector and socialite known for her bohemian life and trendsetting style.
a little nutty all this sounds, but
forgive me, I am in love.

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**Dave Haselwood**  
April 17th 1966  3:27 AM  
[Buffalo]

Dearest David:

I am so tired / of living. Everything is dull and done. I am worn out. Have no strength to meet the next instant. The distance.

Oh God, I long for you. Have been able to do nothing. And so go on, existing in the void.

Please forgive me for this.

Enclosed find the proofs. I am sorry to be so late. But keep putting it off to the next day, and it never comes.

I am going to Gloucester for the summer with an heiress, Panna Grady, but it doesn’t help. An Hungarian Countess. (Comtessa) – so pray for me. But will come back here for six weeks – June 6th to July 15th. OK. Write here. When will I see you again.

Love
John

And Dave I wonder if it would be possible to put on the end of “A Poem For Painters” the line “The poem is done.”

On the same line as
It is my life you save. The poem is done.

I heard the Berkeley Tape the other night & it sounds more complete that way. I know it is impossible but ask you anyway. Please don’t feel bad if you cannot do it. I know it’s too late.

This place is nuts. I still owe a paper from last semester & if I don’t get it done – then I flunk out. Got to read in Princeton this weekend with Tom Wolfe – Allen Ginsberg – Arthur Kopit etc – Peter Weiss / Marat-Sade author

And then Detroit May 5th. Plus tests, comps – and finals.

God, I love you.

John

Please forgive me again for the unpardonable delay.

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**Ed Dorn**  
June 3rd, 1966  
[Annisquam, MA]

Forgive the slop. But it’s got to go this way, or won’t be done at all. I’ll get used to it somehow and clean up as time goes on. The most difficult chore I’ve done.

Any hints you can give me re letter writing, I’ll appreciate. What is it? don’t re-write them, etc.

Dear Edward:

Please forgive me for not writing before, but Re-read?
as you must know, living with a “wife” and child I am or was just meeting so unsure
in the country is a little different for me than before. I don’t know how long this condition (i.e. wife and child) will last, but at least it is a home and a house for the summer, which in itself is different. We are in Gloucester, and I love her very much, always will, but this am very happy being here. That’s better isn’t feeling of doom and transience always it, Than all that personal stuff.

Love, John

be sorry, but as I say, { I love her.

Now to business. Charles will not help us at all, on the book, but if there are any pertinent questions, I can ask him directly, and that is a help

We can do anything you want on the books, and I too want think we’ll make that September deadline.

Have to.

Think That’s wonderful

Now, what do you think? want? think? I know that already and you will go ahead, doing all the research and reference I can.

Have got Mike Glover & George Butterick,49 his two bibliographers under my wing, so that’s that’s O.K. Any questions you want, material you need, just go ahead and ask, ask, we got it all here, or at least on hand in Buffalo, if we need it be. I dont think we will basically, as we pretty well know the basic only basic stuff. But will consult their files in Buffalo, soon & check out all early poems in

47 These appeared in the August 1966 issue, which featured on its cover a colorful photograph of Allen Ginsberg in Uncle Sam stars-and-stripes top hat.

48 In the left margin: old stuff – The residue of the old soul.

49 Wiener is referring to Albert Glover, editor of Olson and Corman’s correspondence Letters for Origin: 1950-1956, 1967’s Bibliography as well as the Curriculum of the Soul, a collection by different authors inspired by Olson’s “A Plan for the Curriculum of the Soul,” including Wiener’s prose-piece Woman.
Harpers etc. Atlantic Monthly
for possible use. O.K. Fire away, &
always open to questions, as you
must must know & love to supply information: As
well as love your letters the most. Keep
sending them always. Anytime you want to write.
And I will answer. That way, the book will clarify itself.

We’ll see how this summer works
out & whether or not I can get my
degree by next January, regarding
future trip to Europe, but I think I’ll
make it. O.K?

Be There. (“Dont tell anyone.”)

Love again,
John

Till Sept 15th

c/o General Delivery
Riverdale Station
Gloucester, Mass.
on Dennison St.

We have a beautiful lovely house in the country, furnishings,
fireplaces, music, love, etc. Food.

Your friend
John

love again to Helene and the Kids –
I thank you again for all the prayers and love you have sent

no postal address –
Charles got us the property, as
I told you before.

You’ll see Panna soon enough, I’m sure, before me, but
dont be disappointed. It’s me walking in disguise.
But not until October. Watch out, Helene. This one
is a Knockout.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

June 3rd, 1966
[Annisquam, MA]

Dear Lawrence:

Please forgive me for not writing before. I am in Gloucester now & the mail got held
up. Am here for the summer in a lovely house with Panna Grady. Imagine me!

Here is the only poem of the four I read, not yet published already in America. The
other three They were altogether

1. Paul (enclosed)
2. A Poem for early risers –

50 Arrow down to “no postal address”
pub. in Hotel Wentley &
Evergreen Review No. 9.

3. The Suicide (for Sylvia Plath) pub. in Set
No. 2 (Gloucester) &
Pente (formerly Ace of Pentacles.

4. My Mother – also pub. in Set, I think
also in PENTE

You have rights to all of them if you want to use any, Anyway I enclose PAUL for you.

Thanks again, Lawrence, for asking me & I hope I am not too late, as I have never been published in your magazine before, & want to be there.

& It is to be included in a new book. Gardenias for the Lady – now being printed by Harvey Brown in Cleveland & Buffalo. But not out before your magazine. Would you give him a plug?

Paul

It's nice under your hands
a stranger whom I have never met
before tonight but twice

It's nice beside you on the bed
where my heart bled for love.
It's nice to have you here

and having said that, dear
nice to feel your hands upon my hair
and nicer still, to know we will

meet again, and start off where
your girlfriend, mistress, what ever

she is, the sleeping bride
will not be on your other side.

John Wieners
unpublished

Dave Haselwood
June 21, 1966
[Annisquam, MA]
MidSummer Eve

Dear(est) David:

Just wanted to thank you for your visit most heartily and to thank you for bringing The Hotel Wentley Poems East with you. IT IS A TREMENDOUS PLEASURE FOR ME. I

Wieners notes in his November 24, 1965, letter to Robert Wilson that “Paul (Unpublished)” was from his journal RECORD, and “read to Ezra Pound at Spoleto.”
hope you enjoyed it as I know Panna and I did. I am sorry I forgot to ask you for Chypr[e]. I looked for it afterwards and didn’t find it. Also I have the Bruce Conner pussy box, alas I am sorry to say, empty. It was empty good, tho. Charles and I polished it off that evening. We got back to Gloucester mid-afternoon, after riding The Swan Boats in the Public Gardens and breakfasting at Sharaf’s.

But this letter was prompted by looking at the Mike McClure – Bruce Conner envelope.\textsuperscript{52} I thank you for that most sincerely – as well as the Andrew Hoyem \textit{Chimeras} and Jonathan Williams’ \textit{Paean}.\textsuperscript{53} How proud you must be – and should be.

All love to you

\underline{Ed Dorn} 7.25.66

[Buffalo]

Dear Ed:

As far as I can see – the poetry book should start off with 1)

\begin{quote}
Knowing All Ways,
Including the Transposition of Continents
\end{quote}

printed as next to last poem in In Cold Hell, In Thicket

2) The Song of Ullakumi (see that before you go on.)

\begin{quote}
Trans. from Ancient Hurrian
\end{quote}

I can get that for you – in Robin Blaser’s magazine I believe, coming out of Univ of British Columbia, Vancouver – This fall. I forget the title.

3) Red Cloud — Crazy Horse — what this one is I (can you help here on this poem? can’t locate yet but will I KNOW it’s EASIER TO ASK identifying get – from him. QUESTIONS THAN ANSWER THEM.

4. Bossum Road? – Whatever this means I don’t know

\textsuperscript{52} It is unclear what the “pussy box" is, but the McClure-Conner envelope to which Wieners refers is probably \textit{LOBE KEY STILLED LIONMAN LACED WINGED APRIL RAPHAEL DANCE WIRY}, one of two collaborations between them for Auerhahn Press in 1966, described by one McClure bibliographer as

An envelope containing 26 cards, each printed with a mandala on one side, and with four words [one on each edge] on the reverse. The envelope’s flap is printed "Bruce Conner 1966 Michael McClure;" \textit{LOBE KEY STILLED LIONMAN LACED WINGED APRIL RAPHAEL DANCE WIRY} is printed on the front. Sometimes called by the name \textit{MANDALA DECK} (Enck n.p.).

but will follow through
5. The Binnacle? (can locate, I think
6. Now all ships come in (printed in Fuck You –
   and the mind go forth to the four lines – read at
   end of the world Spoleto & San Francisco outdoors

7. Drummond Hadley’s wife’s sweater
   poem – printed

[Vertically up left margin:] The Vancouver Tape will have a lot of these that I can hear again in
Gloucester Buffalo when I go next week: for a week.

I don’t know where but I heard read in Buffalo. Can locate again.

8. The Gold Machine (read on Vancouver tape)
9. Grandfather/Father Poem – printed in Poetry/
10. Gravelly Hill – or Maximus from Dogtown III Chicago
11. Cole’s Island – Poetry/Chicago
12. Maximus from Dogtown I
13. " " II printed in Paris Review #37
14. Maximus from Dogtown IV or POEM printed in Psychedelic Review
   Vol I no 3
   all these I will get copies of.

plus
15. New poem in Poetry Chicago this month plus
16. Letter 72

Now this is as far as I got with him so far in conversation plus there were about 13 others he mentioned I could not notate through due to laxity. All this I will correct. Now re-

Essays –
   I like A Foot Is To Kick With
   only one page
   you left out
   [illeg] in H. Univ:

also Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn
and Proprioception – I wonder if we can get rights to these – definitely Grammar a “book”

1. The Resistance OK
2. A House Built by John Somes 1763 \( \rightarrow \) I remember now
   I don’t know what that is.
3. Against Wisdom As Such – one of my favorites
4. A of T – yes I did not bring everything to Gloucester
5. Homer & Bible Yep! but I will go carefully over things in [illeg]
6. and all the rest – plus another essay in Dorothy

Norman’s TWICE A YEAR called
Dostoevsky and The Possessed
haven’t seen for years –
might be worth ago as I attached it once last year and Charles defended same. Now I had all

this trouble with the an abortion Panna had – my child – so I have been put off from human communication but am allright now and will not let you down. We are still living together and everything is still OK. but sadder. Now I will be in England soon I hope as soon as I can get out of Buffalo & get my degree JANUARY – POSSIBLY. She will take a place in London where I can live in the basement or something like that – a footstool, you dig, etc but I don’t mind as long as I can be there & with you. And yes I would like a book published OK. Will bring it with me or send over after reading with Creeley Oct. 24th at Poetry Center YMHA in New York. Monday evening at 8:30.

Congratulations on all all your success over there, by the way.

Stay there. Love, John

Now to go on –

Brooks Adams’ The New Empire should I think be pub. just to bring attention to the man and also for the chemical/al chemical divisions.

Right. Leave Ernst Robert Curtis out.

Letter to Elaine Feinstein always perplexed me – but I kept going back to it like Against Wisdom As Such – and it is to an Englishwoman, after all. Might help the audience to feel they are part of the scene – what’s going on, etc.

54 “in Eng. Magazine” is in a box, with an arrow up to “I remember now.”
55 Beginning in 1964 Dorn spent five years in England, teaching at the University of Essex. He had divorced Helene, and while overseas married a British woman named Jennifer Dunbar, who edited Dorn’s Collected Poems in 2013.
56 The New Empire, historian Brooks Adams’ 1902 book about the shifting of imperial power from Europe to America. One of the key entries on Olson’s “Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn,” a new edition of The New Empire was the second book published by the Frontier Press in 1967, with an accompanying poem by Olson. Ernst Robert Curtius (1896-1956), German literary scholar. His work was featured alongside Charles Olson’s in the third issue of John Sinclair’s Work magazine, Winter 1965/66.
57 Charles Olson’s 1959 “Letter to Elaine Feinstein” was an answer to English poet Feinstein’s questions about the breath-based prosody of “Projective Verse”; LeRoi Jones’ Totem Press published the two together, and the “Letter” remains a sort of addendum to “Projective Verse” in the Olson canon (and his Collected Prose). “Against Wisdom as Such,” published in
Also, I figure there’s talk of Random House picking up the option this side of the Atlantic. Then there’s a prose note on John Wieners I haven’t seen to be published in the new issue of *Fuck You* – The prose issue – hasn’t come out yet but which I hope will soon.

I am sorry to handwrite but I got so used to it here – not being able to typewrite with the Kid in the house broke my other one – and it seems like such an intrusion in the country – the peace of it – natural sounds, etc – I hate to interrupt that with a man-made thing. Not that there’s anything wrong with man though we both know there is. I have an old box left to me from Alan Marlowe from via Lamont Young so if you don’t like this, let me know and I can typewrite. Love, John

again

Now Dave Haselwood has a copy of *The Sutter Mine Claim* or something like that I can get from him mentioned in that Berkeley Bookshop Bibliography.

Also I think we should do the Y + X poems, do don’t you. I enclose the Proprioception and The Bibliography on Ed Dorn in case You haven’t got these. My only copies, by the way

But I don’t see how you can’t have them. Tho you didn’t mention them – by the way.

Right – leave out Theocritus – I thought awfully bitter

O.K. Now lead on.

The two ‘newspaper’ pieces by all means – and another “Letter” to the Editor so beautiful I can’t wait for you to see it. printed abt. Dec 27 last year.\(^{61}\)

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1954 in the inaugural *Black Mountain Review*, was an admonition to Robert Duncan to refrain from seeking “wisdom” – hidden or ancient knowledge – outside its historical, cultural contexts. “‘Truths’… are so overwhelming and so simple there does exist the temptation to see them as ‘universal,’” but easy universality must be avoided (*CP* 261).

\(^{58}\) It is unclear what prose piece Wieners is referring to here. The last *Fuck You* featured an “advertisement” for “John Wieners Orgasm Tonic” but nothing else about him.

\(^{59}\) La Monte Young (b. 1935), American avant-garde composer and artist.

\(^{60}\) *Y + X* was Charles Olson’s first book of poetry, published in 1949 by Harry and Caresse Crosby’s Black Sun Press.
Is this too vague. We will go on. That’s all. Anything you can identify. Plus anything I didn’t mention means I agree with. Like Mayan Letters. Would like to take a look at Creeley’s
  Selected Writings of
  Charles Olson
  later to get an idea of what he’s done.
  But that’s later.
I’d like to see The Cause, The Cause [illegible] too – remember it but have BMRs myself as having sold them to the junkman. Long ago. And far away. THO not so far. But awfully long.
  Did I say – right Leave Notes on Lang & Theatre out. plus But intro to Robert Creeley – I found that awfully useful myself. And will still use it if I right might will like it, liking Creeley OK. Salesability.
  Not that one needs to. But it gives some point of identification or says so much.
  But of course – we need the new Max Wilentz is bringing out, if it’s to be any good – PLUS “Ed” in the prose book – the speech he gave at B Berkeley that last night. Thank You They called it but now have changed it. We must reprint that – transcribed by Zoe Brown from the tape to be published soon by Coyote’s Journal.62 What a tie in between the two books PROSE AND verse in one. Could be the last essay in the prose book. OK?

my dear

I know he thinks very highly of it.

Irving Rosenthal

July 25, 1966
[Annisquam, MA]

Just call it RECORD & print Freude’s dedication inside

Dear Irving:

the dedication too

Yes — remove the Rimbaud altogether as not part of the original mss.

61 Olson’s letter to the Gloucester Daily Times published December 28, 1965, was reprinted in Maximus to Gloucester (edited by Peter Anastas for Ten Pound Island Books in 1992), a collection of poems and letters Olson sent to the paper between 1962 and 1969.
62 Charles Olson Reading at Berkeley as transcribed by Zoe Brown was released by Coyote Journal, and distributed by City Lights, in 1966. It was reprinted by the Four Seasons Foundation in Muthologos: The Collected Lectures and Interviews in 1979, edited by Ralph Maud.
Thank you for your card and letter. I don’t know what to say about the mss. I think the *Journal for the Damned*\(^{\text{63}}\) should be cut, too – And not Ronald Firbank, at all – tho that’s a good *parody* one to make. If one could do it. For he parodied just that type of Aunt Jemima\(^{\text{63}}\) I am talking about. Of course, mark up the manuscript. As you see fit, if you can & it’s not too much work. I would like to see it, as it’s the only copy in existence. We will keep this book UNDER our hats as Wilson (& Carr) especially are issuing an injunction if *Gardenias* ever gets published to prohibit its sale in the U.S. And they have no legal rights. The contract only reads:

> “The author agrees that he will discuss with the publishers their publishing any new book which he may write. In agreeing to the intent of this paragraph, the author is not legally bound to give his next book to the said publishers, but only to discuss it with them in the hopes that an agreement for its publication might be arrived at.”

[Vertically along the left of the above quote:] *Gardenias* has old and new work in it. So I don’t know. And I already discussed it with them. They are publishing someone else.

Exact quote of pub. & author’s contract re future work – while this book *Journal* you have written before (contract was signed 1963)

February 27, 1964       Love, John

P.S. Also Irving, as you know – love is repetitious, boring, extemporaneous – and of necessity not to be cut. But I would like to see your emendations – as I could stand help on the book – and I made a point of reproducing the whole thing exactly as written. So that’s why an “editor’s” or friend’s hand could be helpful. I see your point, perfectly. Now Gerrit Lansing likes it as is, also Dave – I take it and Harvey Brown plus Fred Wah. all publishers. So get on your horse and do it. Love from us all here & you are welcome the most here when you feel like it.

[Vertically along the left:] Of course, we create our own image and they have to adjust to it.

Bring the mss. with you too – as I would prefer it’s not let out of your hands being the only copy and the nature of its contents.

Will write to Ira Cohen\(^{\text{64}}\) soon and thank him for his lovely letter.

Stay well, Irving –

> The first of August
> I will be gone for a little while to Buffalo to see to things. Might see you in city then or afterwards here.

Forgive handwriting – awfully rushed to get WORK done

THIS {Enclosed} should

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\(^{\text{63}}\)“Journal for the Damned”

\(^{\text{64}}\)Wiener is probably referring to American poet and artist Ira Cohen (1935-2011), who published *The Hashish Cookbook* under the pseudonym Panama Rose in 1966.
answer the format
question: sell it for
75¢ – just as is
Thank you for the remarks
abt Wentley – Bill Deemer
already written 9 page
critique of new edition &
sent to Poetry Chicago.65

Charles Olson
7.25.66 Monday
[Annisquam, MA]

Forgive this card – I’ve tried three times – This is the best attempt I made

Dear Charles:

Can you come to dinner
This Saturday evening at
“whenever you get over your
best time ? I will be over to see
you before then, as I am
going back to Buffalo The
next day to attend to business.

We’ve invited Guy, Gerrit, Gladdis & Gelly Kelly belly

Love, John & Panna Gordon

Dave Haselwood
July 25th, 1966
[Annisquam, MA]

Dear Dave:

I wonder if it would be possible you send 15 more Wentleys to me before it’s too late, as I gave away all of mine but a few. Also give my love to Mike McClure, as you see I can’t contact him until I pay my debt.

Also Panna doesn’t have Wm. Burroughs’ The Exterminator nor do I have Lami yet.66 And Destroyed Works she might like to have. She bought Phil Whalen’s book Memoirs Saturday and Mike’s Hymns to St. Geryon (now o.p. I take it) at the Grolier Bookshop (Cambridge Mass) but The box also I am most interested in that I left there, if you can do that, as

65 Bill Deemer, American poet from the Pacific Northwest who began publishing as a teenager, landing his first publications in Poetry in 1965. If he wrote a review of Wieners’ book, it was not published.

66 William Burroughs’ The Exterminator, easily confused with the 1973 book of short stories Exterminator!, was a “cut-up” collaboration with Brion Gysin published by Auerhahn in 1960. Lami is a posthumous poetry collection by Alden van Buskirk, who died in 1961, published after a great deal of hard work by his good friend David Rattray by Auerhahn in 1965. Rattray’s reminiscences of van Buskirk, especially “Van,” are beautiful reminiscences of their late-fifties Bohemian life, collected in Rattray’s Semiotext(e) publication How I Became One of the Invisible.
my nephew’s records are there also other things I can’t remember like hopefully heroin and marijuana possibly even hashish.* All love to you, Dave

Make sure Ferlinghetti sends some Wentley to The Student Bookshop, 3400 Main St, Buffalo 14214, NY. 25 or 50 for my return there in the fall. Be good now Dave and don’t take any LSD, promise me, please.

Write soon and let me know how you are
John

love to Bob LaVigne and thank him for the cover.

*see Marlene Dietrich’s song
“Ich hab’ noch einen Koffer in Berlin –
I still have a trunk in Berlin.”

Lawrence Ferlinghetti
July 25, 1966

Dear Lawrence:
I hope it is not too late to get into Spoleto issue. Could not write here before as my girl friend had to have an abortion and I was terribly upset. But do feel free to use any poem you see fit. But Wilson would throw a royalty fit if we used any poem in Ace of Pentacles – namely You talk of Going
I Walk Under the Distant Stars or
The Imperatrice

the other two are free –
High and A Story of Old
but you didn’t like these as much, & I don’t for a place like that of yours. Love,
John

And thank you for writing to me.

Charles Olson
[8-2-66]

Dear Charles:
Woke up laughing
at the Adelphi Hotel
in Saratoga wondering
“What am I doing here?
Love
John
Moonlight in Vermont.
Charles Olson  
[Aug. 16, 1966]

Tuesday

Dear Charles:  
The 16th – Noon
Do you think you could come to dinner tonight at six? Ted Berrigan & wife are in Town  
over-night. Gerrit will be There. Panna and myself. George Kimball and the potman Pat  
Newman. We are having swordfish. “Someone can come over and pick you up if you dont  
showat six.” Panna says. I wont wait on you I promise.

Love, John

Heard from Dorn yesterday. Everything moving ahead faster than we could hope for. Just  
eight for dinner. I have some material for you.

Diane di Prima  
Sept. 9, 1966
[Buffalo]

Congratulations on your reading in Washington Square…

Dear Diane: I saw the clipping in The Times.

Do you think it’s possible we could include this poem of Charles Doria’s in The  
Bear in place of the one we already have. (Been published before.)

Leaving Sunday for Buffalo unfortunately. Panna staying on here a while. Then up to  
Buffalo for a weekend, I hope before reading in New York Oct. 24—

Harvey, Creeley, Allen, Peter, Lafcadio, etc all here for a last weekend  
plus the editor of The Atlantic Monthly. She had article

5 days on and off actually on LSD This  
Creeley after They all left issue plus  
Allen’s article  
on Pot next one.

Love to  
you and [illeg] Alan. Yours, John

We plan to go to Berlin for a reunion in December

---

67 Ted Berrigan (1934-1983) served in the Korean War, studied at the University of Oklahoma  
in Tulsa, and was active in Chicago before coming to New York to be at the heart of what  
has come to be called the second generation of the New York school. His Collected Poems,  
edited by sons Anselm and Edmund and his second wife Alice Notley, came out in 2007.

68 George Kimball (1943-2011), one of the foremost boxing writers of his era, won many  
awards for his sports coverage. An editor at the Boston Phoenix and later a columnist at the  
Boston Herald, Kimball had his feet in many worlds; his 1970 campaign for sheriff of Douglas  
County (Lawrence), Kansas, is legendary.

69 Charles Doria, American poet and translator who co-edited Audit magazine with Michael  
Anania in Buffalo.

70 Lafcadio Orlovsky, troubled brother of Peter Orlovsky, artist and lover of Allen Ginsberg.

71 The September 1966 Atlantic Monthly included an article by John N. Bleibtreu called “LSD  
and the Third Eye,” and November featured an essay by Ginsberg called “The Great  
Marijuana Hoax: First Manifesto to End the Bringdown,” an appeal for decriminalization  
based on a candid account of his own positive experiences.
PS –

Couldn’t get any definite word out of Harvey about the book. He’s changed printers and actually has none now at all. Looking for one in New York or asking Polly’s father. Charles and I both spoke favorably most about the book. He showed me 4 pages of proofs of mine own after 10 months work. He really is dumb. But what can you one do?

Charles and I speak
of you both most all of the time
and we both are indebted to you.
I still feel waves as Charles would
say and would like to take it again.

Did you see Timothy’s article in Playboy? [illeg]
Thank you for the Clive Matson book (hardback)
what words cannot say I send you again.

---

Charles Olson

[Sept. 20, 1966]
[Buffalo]
Tuesday AM.
3 o’clock

Dear Charles:

Please forgive me for my behavior
this past weekend. I have been under
sedation since and feel just
terrible. But it can’t be helped.
We have been used this past
summer and given a great deal –
why I don’t know.

All I have is souvenirs.

But I left a silver stamp
case under the prongs of your
mail box Saturday evening –
from Tiffany’s. I hope you found it. Please keep
it for me.

I love you more than
any other person in the world
simply because you have
given me more and I am,
as we all are, selfish.
I try to explain

---

72 Timothy Leary (1920-1996), American physician, psychedelics scholar, and activist. His Castalia Foundation at Millbrook, New York, ushered hundreds of people through the first psychedelic experiences, in a carefully planned “set and setting” that was conducive to safe psychedelic exploration. He married his third wife, fellow psychedelic activist Rosemary Woodruff (1936-2002), in 1967. Rosemary would go on to work with the Weather Underground to bust Leary out of prison in 1970, and she remained on the run for 23 years before surrendering to California authorities.
things – but cannot.  
I look for answers. I look  
for drugs – to ease the  
pain but cannot find any.  
The only answer is work and  
I do not have the stamina or intelligence  
for that.  
   It seems all the  
beneficence of that her  
presence lends has been  
taken away in the flash  
of time. But we will not  
forget. Will we?  

John  
Your friend (love  

I want to thank you for  
the guardian angel ship  
you have been.  
This letter seems so in-  
adequate to how much you  
have given – but it is not  
what we can give that counts –  
it is what we cannot give  
That is the effort.  
   It all sounds so human  
and petty but something  
weighs on me – I dont  
know what – seconal?  

Please forgive the stationery –  

Charles Olson  

October 7th [1966] \textsuperscript{73}  

Dear Charles:  
   Just wanted to drop a short note from here. And say hello. And wish you are well.  
Called Panna tonight. No answer. In Remsenberg  c/o Grady  

She sent me a telegram this morning.  
Very long and confused. Trying to purge me of her. Went to Castaglia last weekend and met  
Leary and got into an auto accident with his lovely wife – Rosemary. The doll. How women  
are [illeg] I found. The only ones I care for. One can be a man around them.  
Ate at a Hungarian restaurant tonight here called Carmen’s. And wonder if all Continental  
Europe is as attractive. I know that is my home. We Americans are so savage, better that I  
only can be hurt by them.  

\textsuperscript{73} On blue Ritz Carlton Montreal stationery.
God bless you
John
Who is Elinore Georges. Pilot? She sent flowers. To my room.
Staying here till Sunday.
Call and reverse charges
if you get this in time
Rm 904

Allen Ginsberg

October 18th, 1966
[Buffalo]

Dear Allen:

Much thanks for sending the amendments, etc. I return what you asked me. The insert-article (center fold) was done last night. 4 pages I worked on it at the Spectrum from 2-11 when we finally finished it. I hope they don't fuck it up now, but I am afraid to go back. Anyway, we got the full Anthology printed, plus a poem of Philip's from Narcotica called 'Memoria'. 2 photos by Wally Berman, and 2 poems by Bob. Plus full excerpts I made from the LaGuardia Report. The Goddard speech was no good as you see from the enclosed, and we got the entire NSA resolution re marijuana printed. I left out all mentions of LSD, to concentrate the article. OK? And used the NY Times text re Goddard to highlight the article. I think they'll do a good job as they are most courageous in presenting unconventional news articles.

OK. Allen I'll send you the article special delivery when it comes out. Or bring it with me. My mother and father are coming to reading, so I'll hope you'll meet them at last. The reason I can't go back is they feel it's their province now, as to layout, etc. Poor Panna dropped me like a hot Irish potato.

Love,
John
John (Wieners)

The Three guys are out of jail. The rich one had his charges dropped!!

Fouster* says it will be Thrown out of court on illegal search and seizure. He is now one of 4 advisers to the President here.

Eroticism
Intellectual Functioning, etc. All I could get in
Sociological Aspects & Mayor's Forward.

---

74 The Spectrum is the University of Buffalo’s student newspaper – At the National Students Association’s 1966 conference in Urbana, Illinois, Ginsberg had proposed a resolution against marijuana prohibition. Waiting for notes from Bufflo regarding this “Anthology”
75 Or “Touster”?
76 Looks like “pu.”
Dearest Irving:

The days pile up, as snow, in Buffalo. But here is the poem you asked for. I hope you are well.

CHAPOUTIER & CIE  CAVEL

Vin rosé
Rose wine
is so clear in the afternoon light

What difference does it make
if my heart is broken

and runs red
in the afternoon

It is the same with her
in New York our unborn belly in her belly,

she plans to ill
sometime soon in Puerto Rico

It does not matter if his blood runs red
in the afternoon light,

this wine is pink
and consoles me.

John Wieners
Your friend love.

* * * * *

The late 1960s were another tumultuous time for Wieners, as he continued his work in Buffalo while becoming increasingly politically active with the anti-war movement. At the same time, he suffered increased paranoia and a series of delusions regarding his old friend Robert Creeley and his wife Bobbie; the letters he to Creeley from this period are harrowing. Within a couple of years the delusions abated, and by 1972 Creeley was inviting Wieners to speak to his Harvard classes. It is a testament to all involved – and the kinds of relationships this group of poets formed – that Creeley and Wieners would remain close friends till the latter’s death. This section of the letters begins with another difficult relationship from this time, as Wieners’ work with Robert Wilson and the Phoenix Bookshop became increasingly confused and frustrating for all involved, with questions of royalties, foreign rights, and translations complicating an otherwise mutually beneficial friendship.

77 “Chapoutier & Cie Cavel”
Robert Wilson  March 26, 1967  Easter Sunday
[Buffalo]

Dear Bob:

I’ve made a formal complaint against you to Werner Neumeister, telling him of your duplicity in not acknowledging copyright of the photograph, given you by myself,

Also, I’d like to say the last amount given me for royalties was far below the amount expected. You’ve gyped me continually in the past.\[78\]

I have asked Werner Neumeister to investigate you; bring my royalties up to date and also extend the courtesy of a reply, regards the pittance paid me, the past three and one-half years.

I intend to go head with Jonathan Cape and Fulcrum, too.

Without regards to you,
John Wieners

You are listed as Phoenix Books, Inc.

Does this mean you withhold funds from me, for the benefit of other members; or are you listed as a non-profit organization?

If so, then it is required that you show proof of where the profit you have made from me, has gone.

If no reply to this, then I will be requested to ask my brother, an attorney-at-law with Burke, Monaghan, and McGrath, in Boston, to bring suit against you, as to a statement of books sold, how many, to whom, and where. Also to further investigate the nature of the limited editions so freely sold, without one penny to me.

Allen Ginsberg  May 20, 1967
[Buffalo]

Dear Allen:

Received a call last evening from Dr. Karl T. Dussik, Ass’t Commissioner of Mental Health in Massachusetts, that he is unable to obtain B-3 to prescribe for me.\[79\]

\[78\] Wilson wrote back incredulously: “I have always given you advances every time you asked for them, in excess of sales,” he explained, and indeed “you have continually drawn heavy advances against royalties, and in fact are still in debt to me (that is, the Phoenix Book Shop) for books which you charged against royalties.” As to the photograph by Werner Neumeister, Wilson reminded Wieners that the latter did not even own the photograph, but “I shall be glad to re-imburse you for it out of my own pocket (Neumeister charges $2.00 apiece for them)” (March 28, 1957, R.A. Wilson Mss., Lilly Library).
Could you supply me with the doctor’s name at Princeton who invented the formula so that Dr. Dussik may use it in my case, as I am suffering from inability to concentrate here. I have a contract needing my signature, with July 1st deadline, from Jonathan Cape, and the absolute horror of grey May in town, has prevented organization.

I am taking NIACIN plus VC but still have so much to do and require the basic substances of order, cohesion and presence.

Have decided to leave school and go home to Milton without a degree. So again will be a patient of Dr. Dussik. He seems to have been in Vienna in the twenties.

I am unable to continue here because of nuclear vibrations inflicted irrationally upon the students – injustices imposed by a graduate study that drains vision rather than nutures it.

A few birds sing now but they seldom last.

Your friend,
John Wieners

#5
3262 Main Street
Buffalo, New York
14214

Am also attempting to have my mouth repaired but the doctor, Dr. Bernard Garliner, Delaware Avenue Medical Center, is charging me $5200 for what seems to be minor extortion.

[a drawing is here of a curved row of teeth, with “stanchions” written at each end and 5 teeth marked]

those with vertical line are my own. The man of course has not begun to work and has already shifted me to another one dentist who at least is kind and an orthodontist, a Dr. Henry Spiller, after to straighten them initial X-rays & cast evenly done by a Dr. Dennis Epstein. So far it has taken two months for 15 dollars.

to get an impression and I wonder how dentistry can still be trusted when over and over again, since youth I have been I and my entire family, have

I was recommended to Dr. Norman Mohl in the first instance by Bob (Creeley) who had a third front tooth removed.

this man works for U.B. 4 days a week and is only in practice at his own office for one.

---

79 Karl Dussik (1908-1968), Austrian physician who specialized in psychiatric medicine. In the 1950s he was the director of the Insulin Treatment Teaching and Research Division at Metropolitan State Hospital in Waltham, Massachusetts, and remained a strong advocate of the controversial therapy long after it fell out of vogue.
along with others, Charles too have wasted years having our teeth pulled, straightened and filled. He would not honor me but kept cancelling through Olivia appointments already made. So I was sent to Epstein.

Robert Creeley

July 27, 1967
[Buffalo]

Dearest Friend:
Went to library two evenings ago. There is a magazine ‘The Nomad’ published in the 1920’s but as for NOMAD 5/6 (1960) – they are still searching.
Will you check with Karl when this annoying month closes.
I am very lonely and dream of you and the family as one in that dilapidated ‘lodge’ we more less so now without Charles.
Thank you for leaving your letter.
So let
Do understand this laggard response due to reluctance to think of anything but a rather obsessive concern with where I should go?
Here, perhaps there –
Yours,
John

Charles Olson

July 28th Saturday [1967]
[Buffalo]

Dear Charles:
This is to serve in lieu of an introduction to Arthur Axlerod from Kenmore. Of sixteen years he has asked to meet you with his poems.
They, kind pastoral and reflective, show ability to hold common occurrence in power.
Perhaps you may be at home late August for his visit to Gloucester.
Your friend.
John Wieners

80 British magazine Nomad published Creeley’s essay “A Note,” in 1960. “I do not think a poet is necessarily a nice person,” Creeley writes. “I think the poem’s morality is contained as a term of its structure, and is there to be determined and nowhere else” (Collected Essays 478).
81 Arthur Axlerod, promising young poet in Buffalo who died in 1974. He became a protégé of Wieners and then Creeley by hanging out at Ed Budowski’s Student Book Shop. In 1975 his parents funded the printing of a collection of his verse, The Sterile Honeycomb, and Creeley wrote the introduction, concluding that “Arthur’s life was short, often bleak, often isolated—but also with guts, with heart, with intelligence and response, with places of inexplicable grace and clear beauty. He loved it, he hated it, he lived it. These poems were his resource” (Collected Essays 290). The University of Buffalo awards an annual poetry prize in his honor.
Dave Haselwood

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16 [1967]
[Buffalo]

I now come to find writing a poem is the most sacred act of my existence. I was wrong in 1959's journal to say it was no holier act than passing waste. It is the accumulation of all days, the first spear into the exposed side of chaos. For despite the time tables that is what we live in. And to set order on that face, the face of that is a dream itself. For what is a dream and whose face appears in it but the Sacred Master who dictates all things.

Anne Waldman

September 25, 1967
[Buffalo]

Dear Anne:

Received yours of last week and will be delighted to read at St. Mark’s In-the-Bowery the evening of January 3rd next year, 1968. The fee of 50 dollars is just right. Thank you for sending Angel Hair. Would it be possible to stay at your apartment that evening after the reading? I have such trouble in New York if I do not make arrangements beforehand. Lewis and Phoebe returned from honeymoon. Dined with them last Wednesday evening and Harvey Brown passed through the Monday before to say he had seen you. Am glad you went abroad this summer. Will be holding on until January.

Your friend,

John Wieners

W.S. Merwin

October 28, 1967
[Buffalo]

Dearest Bill:

Finally found someone to type poems for Jonathan Cape. Don’t know when book will be out but at least proofs are here. Weather beneficient but of course can’t tell this year as last was so mild it seemed a Concord holiday.

Will you have a new book out this year or next also? We read, Charles Olson and I, not simultaneously but as part of a convocation “Poetry on Campus” at Cortlandt State University or rather The State University of New York at Cortlandt. He addressed a dinner on Friday evening and the students, ourselves included, read Sunday after luncheon. It was so fabulous to meet after a year when I thought—all love I had told him my years as a student were over, 12 in all, last summer 1966.

Now our friendship may start. It was never that before as I was in such awe, I could never contribute anything but audience. Last weekend held delight & maturity, sophistication. 83

82 Angel Hair collection, NYU.
83 In October 1967, Olson wrote to Harvey Brown:
Expect to honor his birth this December as always.
Yours with thanks
John Wieners

for the kindness April 11th. Regret delay in reply but harassment from new arrivals in town hinder every thought. As it is now I barely am able to think.

---

**Alan Marlowe**

November 16, 1967

[Buffalo]

Dearest Alan:

Where were you the 10th?

Lonely here but busy.

Took French mid-year last evening and would love to be in New York this weekend for Barrault concert at the Hunter but cannot afford it.

Can you break away to spend some part of Sagittarius here?

I too am confined to a single room but am able to keep in food and supplies.

Going to Gloucester the 27th of next month then home – to read finally at Ste. Mark’s the 10th of January and stay at Lewis and Anne’s on St. Mark’s Place. 84

Perhaps best to wait till then.

Saw John and he was just as usual too much. Read marvelously — & was more than ever my Admired One! … He *is* sharp-tongued and swollen with hurt-pain and feeling, but anyone who can’t see he is quicker and more profound than ever are themselves fools! *(Selected Letters* 390)

84 Lewis Warsh (b. 1944), American poet and publisher and member of the “second generation” New York School. With Anne Waldman, whom he met at the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference, he founded *Angel Hair* magazine and books, which published Wieners’ *Asylum Poems* in 1969.
Your gift of Tolstoi arrived – otherwise simply a rather impoverished man about town. I take it that too is your circumstance. Meeting the 20th for a new magazine and possibly you would care to contribute:

Anonym
Also the PRAISES eagerly anticipated

Hope you include the beauty written at Diederich’s winter last. David Tirell? delivered broadside printed at Pleasant Valley – also Harvey by to say tell Driscoll dead.85

Your beloved,

John

Alan Marlowe

Dearest Alan:

Your letter this morning blesses the confusion of the horrendous past few days, unable to go to school, sort correspondence or concentrate without the Creeleys interrupting every moment. I especially hear or feel Mrs. Creeley possess my body with vile, curt suggestions, for example, “You have no body” alternating with violent tremblings of my own.

Since my return every evening I shiver alone in bed, sometimes Mr. Creeley comes so near I have even felt his hands under

85 The Sri Ram Ashrama yoga community in Pleasant Valley, New York, ran the Kriya Press, which printed intricately illustrated, limited edition broadsides by several notable Beat poets in the late sixties, including Ginsberg, Kerouac, Baraka, and di Prima.
my night gown. This excites me, and I often have hallucinations of him forwarding flesh or her frothing at the mouth this morning.

Soon they will return whence they came and my contemplation will continue.

Your weekend in new York unforgettable. I especially enjoyed the Museum and want to see Charles Ludlam play again.

Hope to take the Twentieth Century Limited this weekend and participate in any demonstrations to stop draft induction of unwilling citizens. We must support the right of the young to further develop within the resources of our land, rather than be subjected to service that removes individual initiative. Having never been an inductee, but observing both my uncles’ behavior on return from military duty, alcoholism and violence manifested themselves repeatedly as a result of induction.

My development as a human being thus impaired.

Your grateful guest in [cut off]

John

Allen Ginsberg

December 16, 1967

[Buffalo]

Dearest Allen:

My family sent me a check for twenty-five dollars this morning, so I feel reassured. Here is the photograph I mentioned in Status (October ’67). A young poet just dropped by, Arthur Axlerod, whose work, “Lamplight in Autumn” I am sending to The Paris Review for Tom Clark to consider.

Allen, the visit with you so cheered me I still consider it part of the present. Reading your poem this morning “Holy Ghost on the Nod Over the Body of Bliss” it truly collected the best epigrammatic rejection of contemporary belief to project into contemporary the confines of separation.

Am calling the Dakota now – for a reservation at the Deficit Party to oppose the war in Vietnam, to raise funds for an ad in The New York Times. Will you be there appear Friday the 22nd this month? so that an ad might

86 In February of 1967, John Vacarro’s Theatre of the Ridiculous produced the first play by future avant-garde camp superstar Charles Ludlam (1943-1987), called Big Hotel. There were such arguments between Vacarro and Ludlam that the latter split off to form the Ridiculous Theatrical Company. The RTC would go on to produce, on average, at least one or two plays a year until Ludlam’s death from AIDS.


88 Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Holy Ghost on the Nod Over the Body of Bliss” was published by City Lights in 1968’s T.V. Baby Poems.

89 The Writers and Editors War Tax Protest was formed by New York Times editor Gerald Walker in 1967 and recruited over five hundred writers and editors to sign a pledge not to pay the 10% Vietnam War tax surcharge proposed by President Johnson. On December 22, 1967, the organization held a party at the apartment of Betty Friedan in the swanky Dakota building in order to raise the money to publish their statement as an ad. The hand-drawn invitation for the “Deficit Party – to help pay for our newspaper ad” promised “Dancing –
Thank you for the check of 40 dollars.

I spent twenty on the room, a needless expense and five on toiletries, five on dinner, three to have my shoes heeled and a few dollars on taxis and breakfast the next morning on return to Buffalo.

I miss New York and wish if I could find someway to live there, not to socialize but actually contribute to the intellectual and literary group.

Without Charles, whom I am going to see December 27th for his birthday, this community’s juvenilia interrupts production. Creeley’s absence only furthers a cowardly rejection of blissful consummation.

Your beloved son in poetry,

John

David Meltzer

March 1, 1968

[Buffalo]

David:

Your slick sound on The Serpent Power\(^1\) surprises my memory of your voice – so intense and Tina’s so confidential the Vanguard machine destroyed both qualities. It seemed taped.

Youth passes – presses one to say where was the human delight we cherish?

Will you write and explain?

Love,

John

Robert Wilson

March 1, 1968

[Buffalo]

Dead Bob:

Do I have to file the income from these books as part of my tax return? Also, have written Victor Coleman in Canada re his printing of the 4th issue of Measure; he won’t acknowledge my letters.

Lots of Liquor – Some Food,” with Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Dwight MacDonald among the listed hosts. Only the then-liberal New York Post, Ramparts, and the New York Review of Books published the ad, in early 1968, with John Wieners’ name among the pledged writers.

\(^1\) This entire paragraph is crossed out.

\(^2\) David Meltzer (b. 1937), American poet and musician who has been at the center of San Francisco culture since arriving at twenty and becoming part of the Spicer/Duncan circle; he was the youngest poet included in The New American Poetry. He and his first wife, Tina (who passed away in 1997) were close friends of Wieners’ from the time of his move west; he frequently babysat for the young couple. David and Tina Meltzer’s psychedelic art-rock record Serpent Power was released by Vanguard in 1968.
I would rather it were printed in this country. As you know the 4th issue contains a translation of the hymn of deities, first or last translated by a Rev. Cumberland in England this past century.

Would you care to handle it?

Write to the ISLAND PRESS now under the name of the COACH HOUSE PRESS 317 (rear) Bathurst Street, Toronto 28, Canada and ask them to send you the materials for its printing. Or we, meaning yourself can may go ahead on a copy of the translation I shall procure from the person who gave it to me in the first place, Charles Doria, the University of Texas, I believe in Auburn; e/o the

I would wish it to be printed in this country. Mr. Coleman has made no plans known to me of its publication; has received many library orders, none of which have been filled.

I want you to handle it, as it would be the first American printing, if you do so.

Yours gratefully for the check,

John

---

Diane di Prima
March 30, 1968
[Buffalo]

Dear Diane:

Received letter from Alan two hours out of Ceylon and in control. Will show same if you still wish me to be there for reading April 7th, or later if you cannot raise transportation fare.

The phone here TF2-3221, a business number, but they will take message. or if you ask, call me to the phone.

John Logan is too old to do so. David as you know was all too willing. Have written both the dears recently but no answer.

Submitted thirteen poems to the Paris Review two evenings ago and am stepping up publication, so reading will be good place for demonstration.

Liked meeting Alice Molloy and need desperately to keep all the friends earned this decade.\(^2\)

Called Castalia yesterday morning for a neighbor and it definitely is closed, only an Irish colleen in the bunkhouse.

Am excited about new book.

Love to you, Diane

\(^{\text{for to see next visit.}}\)

---

Robert Wilson  
May 13, 1968  
[Buffalo]

Dear Bob:

I sent a copy of our contract to Tom Maschler to let Jonathan Cape Limited handle the matter. If you will be so kind as to return Arnoldo Mondadori’s letters so that I may send a copy of our books to him, I would be most grateful, as he needs it before he decides on translation. Will you do that?\(^3\)

Also do not be upset with Mr. Maschler as he only wants to print our poems and give proper credit where it is due but I can assure a personal visit with him at this time alone might postpone autumn publication.

My family, who are old and tired, need the book. We are broke. My room has been ransacked. My mail stolen. I am bringing a man to court for harassment and have no funds.

Your sincerely,

John Wieners

---

Don Allen  
May 17, 1968  
[Buffalo]

Dearest Don:

Your last royalty check arrived and belatedly I thank you for it. How happy times are in Buffalo, working and productive on poems, I look forward to seeing you next month in the Golden City, vague as that seems.

Bob Creeley mentions rather confusedly he visited you. I see nothing little of him but am always irritated at his presence person, promising so much but even in recitation withholding more. It’s a rather mean echo of charity. You know his desire better so I mentioned this in a more formal complaint to Dr. Norman Holland, his chain mail.

Nevertheless, will you be home if I call the second week in June?

Your friend,

John Wieners

---

Gordon Cairnie  
July 22, 1968  
[Buffalo]

Dearest Gordon:

Mother sent the article by Elsa in this morning’s mail and how pleased I am to see finally the shop in your local news.

A week previous she had sent a small check from my father but now alas spent. Could you wait until a small award from the National Endowment of Arts and Letters arrives, the second one in two years, so that I may cover my tardy debt with you. How alarming to hear creditors are threatening you.

Just returned from Colorado and California where I read for the celebration of underground arts 1945-1968.

\(^3\) Italian publisher Alberto Mondadori (1914-1976) had written to Wieners on March 5, 1968, with copies of the Italian translation of The Hotel Wentley Poems (Poesie dell’albergo Wentley, translated by Mondadori’s son Fabrizio and published in 1967) and a request for the Italian rights to Ace of Pentacles, but this second translation did not come about.
Will you accept this as a promissory note until the award arrives?

Yours in exhaustion,

John Wieners

---

The Chairman of the English Department
State University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, New Mexico

September 12 in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-eight

Dear Sir:

This is to inform you I have written to both the District Attorney and the Office of the United States Attorney in the Department of Justice, District of New Mexico regarding Robert W. Creeley, whom you employ as an associate professor, in the Department of English, to charge him with sodomy, abduction, and other illegal use of surgical instruments to perform operations upon my person, whereby colons of his step-daughter and wife Bobbie Louise Hall, were transplanted into my person; and pelvic bones, medulla oblongata and portions of the sphincter, the cerebral cortex, the pituitary glands were removed and placed in his body from mine.

I forbid this man to go on teaching there as I am unable and unfit for work, having female organs, while he is employed in and by your department with my faculties and organs, while I am leaving me destitute, and while he is earning a substantial income with my talent; which he has removed before ever since I was a child – I forbid this condition to continue.

The operations were performed the months of March and October in the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and sixty-seven, in the home of Albert M. Cook, 256 Woodbridge Avenue, in the City of Buffalo, in the state of New York, and on a farm rented by your employee in the Boston hills, at 9596 Knoll Road in the state of New York.

Yours sincerely,

John Wieners

May it also be added drugs were used both times and that sexually I am entirely beholden to a man who is an inferior, having married an Apache, who has diabetes and is dim-witted, while he himself has only one eye and a criminal history of murder, rape, already

---

94 Creeley mailed this letter to a friend, with the following note of explanation:

Apropos John Wieners’ letter – unhappily his circumstances are very difficult, i.e., he had a period of hospitalization in the late fifties, early sixties – and during one time at Buffalo, he was manifesting pretty literal paranoid behavior. He is a brilliant poet, and, paradoxically, an old friend – and so it’s a patently awkward situation (e.g. he had written a similar letter to Norman Holland last spring in Buffalo – and seems obsessively involved with Bobbie and myself as the “enemy.”)
proven in the state of Massachusetts where he is native, operating there also, a laboratory, illegally, where he corrupted three men before my eyes, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty, by means of strychnine, masturbating, ingestion of waste matter to minors, against their will, having used homemade formulas initially to remove their cerebral cortexes, (mine is still missing and within his body, as well as that of a former beloved companion of mine, Russell D. Durkee, native of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, now resident I believe in the State of California, who could also testify against your employee.

Homosexuality is the end result of his Teaching and I implore you to terminate his position at the State University of New Mexico, as he is an unfit person, a thief and a literal man who takes other person’s lives as his own, rather than preserving them through education, he has destroyed the very nerve-fibers and beings of over twenty human beings.

I have written to the states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts, besides the nation’s capital, Washington, the district of Columbia, regarding his murderous accomplishment, all at the expense of, loss of other men’s lives.

Perhaps to make myself clearer, he has murdered a child by bashing its head against the rocks in a field off Blue Hills Parkway in the town of Milton, in the state of Massachusetts, where I was raised, and tore open my own brains to digest them, as had his wife that very evening, hung me in Trees, and injected substances to remove my memory thereof, performed operations beneath my testicles and at the back of my skull, the scars still in evidence, and forced other victims through habits of brain control to confuse, distract and punish agents of the law; whereby the entire cerebral cortex is gone and now placed in his right leg or thigh. I cannot allow this man to go on walking around with my entire cerebral cortex in his body, while his wife, Bobbie Louise Hall, has my frontal lobes in her retarded person, I ask you to respond to this and cease employ-ment of these two persons at once.

Robert Creeley

the 10th October the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-eight

[Buffalo]

Robert:

In March and October of the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and sixty-seven, you performed atrocities on my person, in properties rented while in employ of the State
University of New York; illegally employed as from previous memory, my family has had you declared a legal sterile.

You now have two children from my reproductive organs, and I have informed the Attorney General John Quinn of the State of New Mexico that you have committed crimes against my family, property and future, since I was an infant, at 22 Churchill Street in the town of Milton, the state of Massachusetts and at 15 Blue Hill Avenue, in the same town and state, as well as at 185 Eliot Street in that town and state, as well as in the town of Medway, near your so-called birthplace.

I have notified the Chairmen of the English Departments at the State Universities of New Mexico and New York of these atrocities, branding you a rapist, abductor of children, and murderer, as you and B. Louise Hall, murdered a child before my eyes in the month of September, the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and forty-two.

I have instructed my attorney, Donald Paul Wieners, to sue you for damages, and to sue Albert M. Cook, of 256 Woodbridge Avenue in the City of Buffalo, the state of New York and to have you both imprisoned, as you in the eyes of the courts of the States of New York, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, and Virginia are guilty of beheading me, lynching me, castrating me, removing vital bones and organs for your own sexual gratification.

You have performed the gross acts of enforced fellatio, sodomy, and masturbation upon my person, removed or not, and I ask or beg you to refrain from doing so in the future. I have called your “wife” and requested her to do the same.

I have also written the Attorney General in the nation’s capital, Washington, the District of Columbia, of whose designer I am a straight descendant, to inform him that you planned the assassination of our late President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Junior, in my presence, and are guilty of it, giving him the names of your “wife” and stepdaughter, as accomplices.

There are bones, you, in the guise of verse, which you have adopted only for attack against my second cousin, Mal Wieners, keep between your “wife’s” legs, and which you stimulate for copulation. I taste your legally sterilized sperm, a horrible taste it is, and I am party to the diseased organs of her womb, vagina, and vulva, all horrors to one unused as you, to strychnine, cocaine, or cocoa, and excrement.
Your behavior has been psychopathotic towards me since as a child you drugged, abducted, electrocuted, and forced ceremonial hysteria on my person.

How unfair to one, unused as you, [illeg] barbaric practices.

I force you now to surrender these stolen properties, or suffer the consequences of public embarrassment before the United States Courts of law for their possession.

I am a true grandson of Fedor Dostoevsky, and seek the wrath of the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic to justify this intrusion upon your contaminated condition of blood-letting, anger, drunkenness, recklessness, dyslexia, schizophrenia and drug-addiction.

I ask you carefully to return in your own words what happened or occurred those only two evenings I accepted your vulgar invitations to spend evenings in your home. What could be your reason for such horror, as to take a person who only respected you and debase them before the eyes of townspeople, the savage and drug-addicted eyes of the strumpet, from a madhouse, Bobbie Louise Hall, and her step-daughter.

I have given full investigation to these horrors and find you guilty, despicable and a person I will publically in literature and teaching as a criminal, under your own names, and whose writings I will destroy, as emitting from stolen properties off my family tree, of which you are a bastard, and will make known in every level of this country and abroad of your treachery, treason and assassination.

You have used lies, cowardice, and madness to influence my person, my creative imagination, and my career as a man of letters in the United States.

You have done this to countless other citizen, as for your imbecile housewife, serving meals in a slovenly fashion, dressing in ignorance, and following me from city to city, as beasts after a virgin; a condition you have besmirched, with your foul penis, your bloated thighs and your corrupt intelligence.

If I do not receive back the glands, the cerebral cortex, the medulla oblongata, the cerebellum, I will, as I have already done, continue to write the district attorney in [Berrabillo?] County, to have them removed from your jaundiced household, as both you and the half-breed “Hall,” have hepatitis, tuberculosis, and mental retardation.

Will you honor this with a reply.

Yours, The Hereditary Grand Duke Prince Jean of Luxembourg and “His” Royal Highness, crown prince Felix, of the Imperial and Royal House of Austria and Hungary.
Otherwise both your estate and those estates you inherit shall be prosecuted for these atrocities, crimes, and offenses, and I shall order your estate and those you inherit withheld from public sight, as both your estates and those you inherit merit from centuries of such torture.

---

Anne Waldman

November the nineteenth 1968
[Buffalo]

Dear Anne:

Enclosed find a poem in place of “First poem after Silence.” I do not need the reference to “cock-kissed in Shea’s Buffalo.” or rather find it harmful to my activities in town. My uncle Rudolph Wiener is supposedly deceased is a drug addict and plagues me with his homosexual affairs, using illegal law officers to persecute my normal efforts to eat and reside properly here opposite school, where I have four poems published in the current New Student Review. Enclosed find contract signed and new verse you may print in World if you care too.

January 15th at 8:30 PM sounds a god-send, and the fee fine. I am broke, and going on welfare, so the travelling expenses would include train fare one-way, and I could use the fee for fare return. Am staying in town for the holidays. Have a new wardrobe, new scrap books, a listing in Dictionary of International Biography and twelve clean teeth.

Will bring on a new pamphlet for you and Lewis.

Did you see the new show at The Gotham? I received an invitation, returned it and it was returned to me.

Charles Olson received a warning letter from myself re his drug-addiction but he insists on poisoning my throat and esophagus with his offal. Nonetheless Robert Bly was will be here to read on the 20th or 21st, and that should purify these parts.

David Ray, also and George Garrett aided in alleviating the autumn.

I wish they would ask Philip Whalen and Joanne Kyger.

Yours in gratitude,

Jean
George Minkoff

November the 20th nineteen hundred and sixty-eight

[Buffalo]

Dear Mr. Minkoff:

Glad to receive your letter that the broadsides are finished. I have received an invitation to read in New York the 15th of January that I have accepted. Without funds I will not be able to be in the city until that time unless you send for me. I am going on welfare as soon as I raise the cash for the car fare. Or you could if you care to, come to Buffalo and I could sign them in my room. That would be safer than sending them* through the United States Post Office.

*the broadsides

I have all kinds of irritants here; the drug-addicted undergraduates at the State University fill every evening with pain, screaming and offal. As a descendant of the original designer of the town, I am horrified at their behavior, ex-convicts and thieves particularly, from Long Island and the Bronx. I have been persecuted by them for twenty-five years, so desperately turned to poetry as a means of revenge.

Thank you George for printing the broadside and for writing so often. Have four verses in the current Paris Review, you might enjoy.

Your friend, John

3262 Main Street
Buffalo, New York
Fourteen Thousand Two Hundred and Fourteen

I have no phone but am always in my room, unless out for food, a poetry reading or a film. Sometimes a Saturday evening soiree or Sunday afternoon picnic. I shop frequently though in bookstores, and drugstores, department stores for my leisure, as well as to the cobblers and laundry for wardrobe maintenance and fortnightly an [illegible]. To have these undesirables in town hinders mobility at the theatre, museum, or concerts but I still attend, and if I could afford it would purchase season tickets for all three. Someday that will be my my usual activity. As it is now, [illegible] with parasites and I look to there opportunities for relief

Anne Waldman

[December 28, 1968]

[Buffalo]

H.R.H.

Three Thousand Two Hundred and Sixty Two Main Street
Buffalo New York Fourteen Thousand Two Hundred [illeg]

Dear Anne:

I have to plan to be in town the Twelfth Thirteenth of January (12th) for signing of an important broadside with George Minkoff, thus am calling the train depot this afternoon for round-trip fare. The receipt of same I shall enclose with this.

Am glad you can use “Fugitive. I have a terrible time here in my room with the manager of a neighboring clothing store, who drains me of, or shrinks my creative membranes to such an extent I hardly work, and am ill a large portion of the season. How unfortunate. My affairs are disgraceful, and I am obtaining a medical report while in the city, to initiate swearing out warrants, and ultimately lawsuits through the Department of Social Welfare for compensation.

Nonetheless shall call you on the after noon of the Thirteenth, and love. I can hardly wait to see you, New York, and the wonderful friendships there.

The Penn Central train from Buffalo to New York is 20.70 coach one way, $41.40 round trip, leaving 10:30 AM arriving GC 6:10PM. I shall go on Monday the 13th – Possibly the church could put me up for the evening.

Yours in devotion
Jean

Thirty-
Three thousand two hundred and Sixty-two Main Street. Buffalo, New York
What I Imagine To Be My Love Whispers In The Corner

Those who stay at home
often worship far away places
and unattainable ambitions,
such as fame and idealized love.
Those who travel find their dreams come
true, meeting fantastically interesting persons
through talent and achievement, even
of a minor sort. I have moved all
my adult life, finding success sweet
when I came home in overt defeat
forgot it and settled down to a routine,
(only to wake up at those out of the way places,
with my hands full of familiar feelings,
a new sense of glamour pervaded the scene.
Oh yes, this is that bus station known at twenty years old,
and now past thirty-five, in good health, I sit
at the same tables, bearing the moon and its dreams from the fifties
rushing down Charles Street, on fire with desire for
beautiful women, bubbling alcohol, late hours, smart cafés,
fast limousines more demanding assignments on my energy.

John Wieners

Alan Marlowe

Dearest Alan:

Dear boy, how I would love worship in New York for a year, the theatre, the shows, dancing with you and Diane, holding forth at the Cedar with Joel or Lion’s Den with Joel and Fee, seeing the new work at galleries, meeting old friends, forgetting Bob Creeley and Bobbie / we read together Thursday evening in the Millard Fillmore with Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan and Robin Blaser. How I’ve with party afterwards at Lewis MacAdams’, who interviewed Bob recently for The Paris Review.

Lewis and Duncan MacNaughton are issuing a record with Kenward Elmslie, Frank, and myself, Lew Welch, Phil Whalen, besides others I cant remember – so events are productive in Buffalo.

March 13, 1968

[Buffalo]

“What I Imagine To Be My Love Whispers In The Corner” appears in Cultural Affairs in Boston exactly the same as in this letter, but with the postscript: “John Wieners 1970 St. James Street Boston, 2 PM / Waiting for Gerard and Rene” (91).
Taylor Mead, Michael McClure, John Chamberlain, Jean-Luc Goddard arriving this week.
Your letter sounds productive to me. I would like to have a grant from the Frank O’Hara production.
Please see what you can do.

Totally without funds this semester and unregistered – fellowship having expired.
Yours in love,
John –

* * * * *

Wieners’ vital but tortured late 1960s ended with his third extended hospitalization, from June through September 1969 at Central Islip State Hospital, after he was arrested in New York for a minor offense. While held there he worked on Asylum Poems with Anne Waldman for Angel Hair, the press she ran with husband Lewis Warsh. In letters to old friends like Olson he began once again to piece together his increasingly fragmented mind. “For the past 20-18 months I have been under the delusion of being about 50 persons,” he writes to Olson on July 10th. Of course with characteristic wit, he adds, “I have given them all up and am now ready for the next 50.”

It was a difficult time. Once again, Wieners was not in one of the private hospitals where upper-class writers were able to go “gracefully insane,” as Anne Sexton described McLean in Boston. In a journal partly written during this incarceration, published in 2010 as A New Book From Rome, Wieners described his environment:

Around men are sleeping, playing craps and pacing back and forth. They are jabbering in Spanish and drinking beer. But this is not a sidewalk in Spanish Harlem, or the Lower East Side, this is a State Hospital for mental illness where I have been for two months and a week. Confined against my will. But you know this.98

* * * * *

Allen Ginsberg

June 16, in the year of Our Lord 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Allen:

Your letter of alternatives has sustained me for many moments of each day, I will tell you what I wish a) to return to Buffalo as soon as possible and to continue assistance 2a) to observe the law as strictly as possible and to hold to its principle letters faithfully without trafficking in drugs and/or narcotics; namely to see that my family is well taken care of b) to see them as shortly as possible 3) and live as independently of you as soon as I can; you can

97 The last two “issues” of Mother were audio recordings distributed in LP form.
98 52.
see in my present situation this is not so possible and 4) to continue my writing efforts as least as possible in view of the state situation.

Possibly this is not what you wanted but all I can do and I wish to take my time in so doing.

Yours sincerely
John Wieners

Duncan McNaughton
June 21, 1969 Saturday PM
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Duncan:

Your letter finally reached me this AM. How cheering it is! I heard special delivery from Anne yesterday for the first time and she hopes to come Tuesday with John Giorno, possibly. I am well and I doubt if my confinement will last much longer. It's up to the hospital as the court has reserved its decision for how long the hospital staff does not seem yet to have down. It's been nearly two months of imprisonment. I miss you and Jeanne so.

Thank you for your phone number. I don’t exactly know what to do. My family seems to want me in the hospital for what reason they must have. Possibly my delusions re them harmed our relationships. Anyway I will cease sending them same. You think they would have questioned me about them, instead of acting so severely in this matter of confinement. I have seldom received intelligence from any of them. Thus I’d rather pursue my friendships for utmost gratification. Write here. I need writing tablets, pen & cigarette money up to 2 dollars.

Love,
John

Also heard from Cape and they want to see a new book, when I get out to assemble same. That’s the only real in this madhouse.

quote: “Them”

“That you have a new manuscript is exciting news and of course we want to see it as soon as possible.” Thus I do have employment when I am released.

Robert Creeley
6-30-69
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Robert:

Please try to understand and forgive my “literary” efforts of the past year. I wrote things under a delusion that seized me.

If you wish to write, please do. You, [illeg], are one of my favorite guys.

lovest, John

99 John Giorno (b. 1936), American poet and performance artist. A former lover of Andy Warhol’s, by the late sixties Giorno had begun staging performances and happenings at places like St. Mark’s Church, where Anne Waldman directed the Poetry Project.
Charles Olson

July 10th 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Charles:

As you know from Mr. Brown, I am now confined to Central Islip State Hospital – (S1 Station H. Central Islip, L.I., New York, 11722) much against my wishes.

You must forgive the last two letters I wrote, as for the past 20-18 months I have been under the delusion of being about 50 persons. I have given them all up and am now ready for the next 50.

How are you feeling? Can you say the same thing? I hope so. I can’t even make-believe here. Too serious, too mature, too adult, too painful.

I sleep in an old oaken bucket with about 75 drugged, tranquilized slaves and am a nervous wreck.

How I thought I could forget you? I cannot nor do I want to. You make me well. How I love you.

Your –
Jean

Wieners S-1 // Station H
Central Islip, L.I.
New York 11722

How I would love to have a word.

Was writing here and Tom Maschler wrote 2 days ago –
“i am also very much looking forward to your new volume of poems and it’s my understanding that you will not contract with anyone else here for that.”

Am giving Anne Waldman 12 verses for a pamphlet ABSENT VERSE FORMS.

Saw your JonathanCape Jargon/William
Maximus II and bless you
for coming in at high crescent.

Anne Waldman

7.11.69 AM
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Anne:

Your package arrived entact from Calais, Vermont. I hope you returned safely.

Duncan McNaughton wrote of visits to Provincetown, Gloucester for Creeley & Olson to New England. When and if you visit with Bill Berkson, who also visited, or John Giorno, you may be pleased, that I can go out for the day! If you or whoever you’re with signs me out. Quit Kitchen Work! Thank you so much for lovely Butterfly amidst leaves and paste cartel – LOVE John Wieners
Duncan McNaughton  
Friday, July 11, 1969  
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Duncan:

Want you to know how much your letter, listing with such detail, your activities in Gloucester, Provincetown, and your uncle and aunt’s house, meant to me, as I too am party to some pleasure, though others might not gain, and there only is gain from exploring that. And Jack and Mary’s wedding, too.

I needed this hospitalization for I have been inhabited in a very sophisticated way by manifestations, powerful ones, of political leaders, Gustav Huczsak [“?” above the “z”], President of Czechoslavakia is one of them – “Bunny” Rodgers, etc. I thought I was Frederick III still alive over 200 years.

Are you going to have a third baby? I can’t believe it. So soon, too, it’s hard for me to believe. I guess that’s what married men do.

Heard from Allen De Loach and Anne Waldman with your long, lively epistle, that I would like to have typed out. It all makes so much sense to me except for this place, that is below the ground. literally.

I write from a dirty cellar, awaiting 9:00 opening of the doors. Soon we’ll see each other again. Until then I am being asphyxiated by the state.

Yours sincerely,  
With love –  
John Wieners

Allen Ginsberg  
Saturday July 12th 1969  
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Allen:

I went to Jewish services for the first time last Friday at 3PM, and wore the cap and sang the hymns, & recognized the voices of the faithful as your own. It was the, since childhood, most powerful religious experience, outside of my own moods.// How I miss my “freedom.  
Talked to Dr. Weiss (she is again my doctor) and she could give no date for discharge. How sorry and lonely I am on all these park benches.  Tom Maschler sent her a very good letter on my behalf.  Love to Peter and Julius is more on my mind and Bill Berkson is coming tomorrow. Can’t reach Dr. Weinstein and in tears on Thursday asked my mother to take me back to Massachusetts.

Love, John Wieners

Anne Waldman  
[July 16, 1969]  
[Central Islip, NY]

Acceptance¹⁰⁰

Should I wear a shadowed eye,  
grow moustaches  
delineate my chin

¹⁰⁰ “Acceptance”
accept spit as offering
attach silver rings
grease my hair

give orders to beloved
legions of lovers to attain manhood,
scimitars away as souvenirs?

Sooush, embracéd one, here is my tongue.
Accept it as yours.

John Wieners

[Written vertically along right side of page:] Free Poems Among Friends #4 Mail Press ‘68

Fugitive 101
My Sin

Foul wretch upon an ill earth
the suffocated servant claque
bleed unsolicited remark
on through every house and hearth

running water to cover ugly thought
from risen poisoned skin and pest-filled brain,
stretched thieves of black rot,
aiding by impersonated reign

the bloated sewer songs’ domain,
whispered from damned throats
impotent desire from within sunken moats
of repulsed prisoners slain

for centuries beneath gutters and stone.
How to expel these bombards giving orders
to citizens unaware they even inhabit
the same nation of rejected aliens in

earnest dread they might seep beside
to take innocence and authority instead
of the noose and nail as apparel cursed
enough for such unnecessary offers.

101 “Fugitive (My Sin)”
Duncan McNaughton

Friday July 18, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Duncan:

Just a note to say hello and let you know I am doing well, here, but see no signs of release in the near future.

I had a note from Bob earlier this week and one from Charles I haven’t answered yet, with clippings from the Boston Globe re a mass review of Charles’ books by (Uncle Dudley) Herbert Kenny, one of the editors.

How I wish I were out and visiting with you again, in those small precious hours.

How is Genie? Expecting again as is Allen de Loach’s wife Barbara – Congratulations.

How I miss the literary scene about school, the readings and magazines.

It is so boring here.

Do not work so hard, full-time, and keep in touch. I need your notice.

Best in love,

John Wieners

Charles Olson

Friday July 19, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Charles:

Well, my interest picks up the moment I turn my thoughts to write a letter to you. How bored I am otherwise. I never bothered to investigate waking enlargements of the imagination of in repressed wishes areas. But as in all you see, am terribly repressed. Carnivals are not enough.

How I miss you Charles, the long hours we spent together and to think that the possibility of these hours has been removed, pains even inertia.

I hope I make myself understood, despite slack handwriting.

In the small same mail of with yours was one from Bob Creeley, the dear. And my sister sent the clippings of Herbert Kenny’s mass review entitled, Charles Olson, poet to know. 102 So it was a bountiful evening.

Thank you for your loving note, sympathetic and generous, it returned to me dreadful sanity.

I am up every day by 6AM. Medicine four times and in bed again by 7PM. Work in the kitchen, at library on a book entitled and already published by Lippincott, entitled Poetry Therapy, author John Leedy, M.D103 and other projects. Shopping, drinking, friend-making.

Yours in that activity, privilege, behavior.

John

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102 Herbert Kenny (1913-2002), American poet and writer who edited the Boston Globe’s book section for many years, profiling and interviewing Olson at different times along the way, including an interview just 5 months before Olson’s death.

103 Dr. Jack Leedy edited Poetry Therapy: The Use of Poetry in the Treatment of Emotional Disorders in 1969 for Lippincott; the founder of the Association for Poetry Therapy, Leedy had solicited articles from a variety of psychologists and psychotherapists who were using poetry- or book-therapy in their practice.
Duncan McNaughton
Tuesday July 22, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]
Dearest Duncan and Genie:

You may be sure your letter arrived Sunday morning, much to my surprise and I was able to spend a better three days because of it. My own money comes in Tomorrow noon and I’ll be all right then. Until then I am partwise indebted to you both as my sister sent me five dollars and will be down visiting the week after Labor Day, when I might be able to come home for a few days.

Bob Creeley also sent a nice note after your visit as did Charles Olson. I am happy to have them.

Duncan, do write again and until I hear I’ll be grateful to you both.

John Wieners

* * * * *

A salubrious development from this time was Wieners’ new friendship with young Boston teacher and activist Charles Shively, who wrote to Wieners at Central Islip out of admiration; from this fan letter came a warm, revealing correspondence and lifelong friendship – Shively was with him the night Wieners collapsed in 2002, and later at the hospital when he passed away. Shively later gave their complete correspondence to Boston gay liberation activist and bookstore owner John Mitzel, who made bound copies available for anyone who asked.

* * * * *

Charles Shively
July 29, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]
Dear Charles:

Thank you for your kind letter of a month ago, and please forgive delay in answering. I have been both in prison, jail, hospital, and now wind up in Central Islip State Hospital, which place gives me a better perspective or grade on things for a short while longer.

Thank you for sending your lovely poetry and thinking of you with such regard you had to write. I have many friends in the Boston area still though I will have been at school in Buffalo since January 1965.

Returning to parents’ house in Hanover, Massachusetts by the end of summer I hope. Must wait and see what the overall verdict renders. Will I see you on return to Massachusetts?

Yours presently,
John Wieners

* * * * *

Duncan McNaughton
August 1, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]
Dear Duncan:

Your kind letter arrived with ten dollars. And I have no words to express my gratitude towards you. My parents were down that weekend and a check arrived from
Stonybrook with worth 40 dollars. My father is budgeting it for me. But your ten dollars and the previous ten and the presents from Provincetown were more than I deserve.

I have very bad eye-sight now without glasses and it’s hard for me to read the small-script, and once read it’s easily forgotten, so this “thin” mind you mention is true and applies here, though I find no evidence of it in your correspondence. My mind would be better if my eye-sight were and my father is mailing me a pair of magnifying glasses for temporary use.

Thank you for writing so frankly of your self, of Robert and the direct word of my friends in Buffalo, I especially care for Chuck Schubb and would like his address if you have it. I could send a letter to Mr. Gay of the Poetry Room for him through Diana but don’t want to do it that way.

I must close for now, Duncan. Thank you for mentioning Genie and the children Daniel and Io and the expectant one, as well.

Your friend
John with love Wieners.

I don’t have Ed Dorn’s address. Do you?
I will be here pretty sure until after Labor Day.
when my sister comes to visit and I hope takes me home to 24 Chestnut Circle
Hanover, Massachusetts

---

Charles Olson  
[Aug 5, 1969]  
[Central Islip, NY]  

After a walk across the early morning fields, soaked with dew and night rain, he would read his book for an hour on a park bench outside Robbins Hall.

When the hour was up this morning, he walked back over the wet fields and mailed a letter at the Administration Building. The light was hot and misty. He then returned to the library, for what purpose he did not know. At one point, or many points in his life, and even still he once regarded such leisure as priceless. Now he did not, quite so wholeheartedly.

Instead he was in a quandary. He had nothing to do and was tired of writing, of reading about it, and even being where he was, an hospital of the State in New York.

Charles: August 5th 1969

I have done a bunch of poems while here, sent to Anne Waldman in the East Village: Angel Hair Books. 16 of them to be exact.

I will be out before Thanksgiving and up to see you, if I may around then. With more ham.

Love,
John

S-I  
Station H  
Central Islip, L.I.  
New York 11722 or

Chuck Schubb
new address in Massachusetts

24 Chestnut Circle
Hanover, Massachusetts.

my parents bought
a house there.
new

And sold the old one
to my cousin

---

**Charles Shively**

Tuesday the 5th of August 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Charles:

I know I should not be writing again so soon, but I have to be up so early in the
dawn, 5:30 AM and by 7:15 AM, we are done with breakfast and medication. I have too
much free time, so wander in the fields and think of those wild fens in Boston. And yourself
brings up a well of curiosity, Who would read my poetry so closely as to quote it, only as
your verse reveals, an abstractionist! Well, that’s good enough.

I am 5’9” and some, blue *hair* eyes, 12 teeth left, bad eyesight, etc.

Your life sounds fruitful enough for a friendship.

Here’s

Thank you for revealing your birthplace and home town. You probably know mine.
And a good deal of gossip about yours truly, but you’d be hard put, to find an unkind tongue
wag in this direction.

I was born in Boston and raised in Milton until this past year, when my parents
moved to Hanover. I haven’t seen the new house yet, and it’s partly accountable for my
breakdown, that in process is what I am still partly suffering from now. And will be here at
this state hospital for *well* into September, then transferred back home then.

Am writing like crazy, as they say.

Yours, love,

John Wieners

---

**Allen Ginsberg**

Thursday August 7th, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Allen:

The only thing I can do with any financial and by that I mean emotional stability to it
is to return home. I have no other choice. It’s the only thing offered to me other than
Buffalo or Cherry Valley, where or that my next of kin would be most benefit. For they in
my most bereft hour do not desert me.

I. Buffalo – certain welfare but parents don’t want that.

II. Cherry Valley – temporary or at least adjunct

III. Dr. Weiss gives me no choice here but the possibility of perhaps release the
week after labor day.
Dear Allen: Thank you and the Committee for the ten dollars and Emily’s fig.

Love,

Station H Central Islip, L.I., N.Y. 11722         John Wieners

Let me say this: I will be getting out soon, possibly in a month and promised my parents I would return to them for good.

They have a new house and want me to help them with it.

I would say ten years with them now wouldn’t hurt me and save the anxiety if need be, if any, for later, for I’m not your only concern.

Peter still gives me a good hard on.

Thank you for sending Dr. Weinstein out again. We had an important meeting, mother saw you on the Dick Cavett show and thought you were very intelligent, well presented and worthwhile thought-provocation.

Give Herbert my young heart.

Forgive this attempt at a letter.

Anne Waldman

August 7, 1969

[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Anne:

Don’t know any other reason for this than it reminds me of a box of Hart Crane’s chocolates. Saw your photograph in the new Vogue and that does not. Heard from Allen Ginsberg yesterday 5 pgs. Love – Jackie

Mistress Anne Waldman

33 St Mark’s Place

New York, New York

Joe Brainard

August 13, 1969

[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Joe:

I had been living alone amidst poverty for some time before I began to hallucinate, most pleasantly at the beginning, then more violently before I was incarcerated by chance in New York City May 1st or 2nd, after my welfare check came & a plane trip via United hence.

Postcard of Brooklyn Bridge at night.

Waldman was featured in an August 1, 1969, Vogue spread called “The Young Zoom,” an array of 52 young “doers, goers, thinkers” in the “Look-Young Issue,” alongside Bernadette Peters (“21, like some jewels, small and square-cut”) and “loping exclamation point” James Taylor. Waldman’s caption reads:

Anne Waldman, 24, a poet, heads the Poetry Project at St. Mark’s In-the-Bowery, a live, lively forum for New York’s young poets. With her husband she publishes a magazine of poetry, plus books and pamphlets. A doer, she tells unpublished writers to go print their own stuff (125).
Now I am trying to see my identity emerge under the loving care of my parents and friends, at home, unfortunately not here, for this is a madhouse, and I imagine you and Kenward living sleek and perfumed in your own delightful ways, much apart from this delusion, that only by mistake, only exists at all.

Thank you Joe for the sweetest letter imaginable and for the photographs, a hard on in themselves.

All I can do here is wait until discharge, and then get well at home for a few years. It’s or I am so dreadful here, it’s best I do not bore you with the inanity of it. One doctor for over 300 patients. You can scarcely believe the carelessness of condition man exerts upon himself.

Do write again and send a few bucks,
I can use it.

Love, your friend
John Wieners

Do well in your work.

---

Charles Shively
Sunday August 17, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Charles:

This is all that’s left of my writing paper right now. Your most interesting letter and self arrived perfectly. Please ignore the poem on the back.

In your poem enclosed “birth force” I think you lose by omitting or dropping the word “silence” from the third to last line. It diminishes with no nominative at the close, also always an exhortation. Your interesting self fills me with respect, the poetry does. But you’ll also respect that as you get older, as you will shall coming from a large family. Thank you for the picture, and quoting Charles. No, poverty will always depress me, but the close-knit family it breeds will serve you in good stead.

Life here is totally tedious. I much feel like Robert Duncan towards myself when I was 22 and he was 37. How I respected him. And now I feel I’m 37 (not quite!) and you’re 21. You strike me as a much younger person. I’m glad to hear you’re 32!

Most of the material on these autobiographical *** were written in haste, and *** was unskilled in presenting *** to a public that is closer than *** or theatre worlds (from a non. *** when I’m in Boston, I’ll definitely *** with you, but you look *** to say nor may have met *** you’re not a criticism reader *** & that’s why I couldn’t get my master’s degree in English from State University of New York at Buffalo, two years ago.

A cool breeze is blowing before Sunday lunch, after Roman Catholic services. What religion are you? sounds like *** I think I’ll time *** I have friend from Bowling Green in Ohio, in Cleveland, itself but are either patriotic, wealthy or middle class.

S-1
Yours in gratitude,
Station H
Love,
Central Islip, Long Island
New York 11722

John Wieners
Dear Duncan:

Chuck Schub came to visit, and Charles Olson wrote last night, so those are small favors to offset the nightmare of experience Central Islip is.

Day long I am beset with nerves and am continually walking to offset them. It’s not so bad when I have someone to write to but the minute I stop the more these miseries invade. Well, I’ll be alright, once I get home to Hanover. Address is 24 Chestnut Circle, Hanover, Massachusetts.

Bob Creeley dropped a note also and if you see him tell him I asked you to make him write me a letter. I need it.

Things are so bad now with the sun flooding through an open porch door, but this situation is comparable to an extended stay in one of the worst movie houses you have ever been in.

I’ve just had a poem accepted by The Iowa Review, to accompany an article by Richard Howard re myself, “The poetry of John Wiencers” and Mother sent me an article by All about Allen Ginsberg from an issue of Time. Crystal Blue Persuasion is playing on the a disc jockey show and I saw Where Eagles Dare two weeks ago.

It’s a review of a new book on Allen called Allen Ginsberg in America by Jane Kramer (Random House)

Love and god –
love you –
John Wieners

Allen Ginsberg
August 21, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Allen:

Your letter with all the pertinent suggestions has to be handled someway. I finally found out date of discharge, “the best possible date for discharge?” was the question I forwarded to doctor, and she answered after consideration, “the last of September,” so that rules out Iowa, and I have heard nothing from Iowa anyway, except from the proposed Review, with a running of an article about me, by Richard Howard, for whom I posted a new poem about Bob Creeley (don’t tell him) called “Love-life,” it’s pretty good. Thank you for the leaf from Emily’s tree and the article in Time magazine was damn good, except for one or two places.

---

107 The Winter 1970 issue of The Iowa Review featured Wieners’ poem “Love-life” and an essay by American poet and scholar Richard Howard (b. 1929) called “John Wieners: ‘Now Watch the Windows Open By Themselves.’” The latter compares Wieners to Rilke, both of whom start young with ‘stories about God’ and end up – this is surely Wieners’ fate – in other people’s houses, listening to ‘the voices.’ The difference, of course, will be suggested by what divides the Castle of Duino from the Hotel Wentley (104).

108 Jane Kramer’s Allen Ginsberg in America, a series of essays written for The New Yorker.
Also I don’t have Stuart Montgomery’s address to write him, ameliorating situation with Tom Maschler.
Otherwise, everything copaesthetic,
Love,
John
I must thank you more seriously for all the help and interest you have given me over this past decade.
The next one I promise you will not be so bureaucratic. I am very grateful for your friendship, mainly and the constant boost you have totally given my career, which most get more important somehow to save me.

---

Duncan McNaughton  
August 21, 1969  
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Duncan:

The sun’s streaming in the windows, with the temperature in the 60’s in the seven o’clock morning, and I think of coffee brewing and a small house perking, as you peek in my mind as two friends I would like to keep as friends.

Nat King Cole has just finished On the Street Where You Live and I think of your lovely reflective verses, so graciously sent here.

“The natural day like the natural night
Are links on the natural chain
Of light that binds true men up to
The pain of natural sight.”

I wrote you in Buffalo and I suppose they will forward it. I will be in hospital till after Labor Day so we cannot meet as yet. When I asked the doctor “the last possible date of discharge,” she answered slowly enough, “the last of September.” So after then I will be a free agent but not in Buffalo, at the Hanover address, 24 Chestnut Circle, Hanover, Massachusetts.

Jack Clarke sent me the new issue of the Institute for Further Studies and I see you are represented. Keep at it. It’s so helpful to know a man additionally in print.

Love, your friend’s best
John Wieners

---

Anne Waldman  
August 22, 1969  
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Anne:

On further thought, post our just now completed phone conversation, I would rather have you or/ and Lewis do the cover, that is, if you both care to work on it, sort of a reunion effort.

Is that okay? Joe has done so many covers and I would rather, from seeing those books you brought out to me that either you and/or Lewis do the cover for “Asylum Poems”109 = elysum = alyssum = sylvan

---

109 Rather than Joe Brainard, Waldman, or Warsh, George Schneeman did the cover for Asylum Poems; it is a simple line drawing of a hand proffering a flower.
Dearest Duncan:

Just a short note to tell you how much I admire and enjoy your poem for Eugenia, “Locked in a fiery tree.” A perfect song, and the rhyme of “Death” and “Nets” is a masterpiece.

Blake is the only other poet who comes to mind. I am sorry I am not in the issue now. God, I love the ending so much. Yours sincerely

with love,
John Wieners

Dearest Anne:

You will hate me but

Half-awake I am now mailing to you enclosed what I consider, absolutely the last poem in the (book) we have entitled “Asylum Poems.” O.K. It’s a longish poem about Boston and a mistake in conception in that it attempts to include the Meaning of Boston, the metropolis of the world I hungered for at ten years of age. It’s wrong, I know, to send you another poem at this late date, but please forgive me it will be the last one.

Love,
Yours,
John Wieners

I hope this does not, too greatly increase the cost.

P.S. Anne I don’t need to see proofs. They only confuse me and waste time for given the opportunity to correct myself I will, and that’s an error, so if it saves time to expedite the book by correcting proofs at home, then do so. Love, John

---

110 McNaughton’s poem “Locked in a fiery tree” is included in A Passage of Saint Devil, published in Vancouver by Talonbooks in 1976.

111 “After Symonds’ Venice (for Allen Ginsberg)” closes Asylum Poems. It looks back at old Boston – “first town, first bank of hopes, first envisioned paradise” – through “sooty” memory, remembering the old haunts from the other side of urban renewal’s devastation: and the gossamer twilights on Boston Common, and Arlington Street adrift in the mind, beside the mighty façade of convent and charnel house, who go through those doors, up from Beacon Street, past the marooned sunset in the West, behind Tremont Hill’s shabby haunts of artists and the new Government Center, supplanting Scollay Square.
Joe Brainard  August 27, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Joe:

The only way I can stay well in body and spirit is to write, not only poetry, that
comes in gusts, but letter-writing or journal-keeping in between times. The rest of the time is
spent reading or walking, including dreaming.

Just finished a book of for Anne Waldman and she spoke of you doing the cover but
I would rather she did it herself. The book came out of a knowledge that she would read the
work, and she made the initial suggestion. I OKed you though.

Now as for money, thank you for the ten dollars. I can always use it as food here is
terrible and to avoid it we eat out at dinettes and those horribly expensive soda bars, not to
mention the beer and wine smuggled in, as well as stamps, cigarettes and coke.

Sounds rather of subterfuge and it is. Since here I have read Ashenden, or the British
agent by W. Somerset Maugham; Madame Bovary by Gustave Flaubert and A Mid Summer
Night’s Dream of William Shakespeare’s pen. And written my own 18 poem collection, to be
called “Asylum Poems” of all things. It’s going to be good. I can hardly wait.

Thank you, Joe, for the bread and send – as you know or may know I am to be
discharged the last of next month at the latest, so will have no need of funds, as I will be
living at home, who else would have me and I never thought of just how to ask Kenward for
a few dollars, even though I always felt the urge to though just dont know how. Don’t
mention this to him, for I have never mentioned funds to him. We
met through poetry and
that’s the way I want to keep it.

“Crystal Blue Persuasion” by Tommy James and the Shantelles is one of the loveliest
songs ever recorded, and that goes for Gerrit Lansing’s Maiden’s Prayer. By the way, would
you send his address?

Much obliged for the postcards. I will always use them and the lovely lovely
photographs. Yum yum


love,
John Wieners

Charles Shively  August 29, 1969
[Central Islip, NY]

Dearest Charles:

Have nothing to answer you with but myself, as you have so admirably done with
yourself. How I love you for it. Writing so much and so well, so touchingly of your past
experience I could only care for you because of it. Even though I distrust as you do possibly,
poverty as a means.

It’s interesting to see what two poor boys have to say. Yes, I read ½ of Malcolm
Little’s auto-biography,112 if not all but it was three summers ago, I have not forgotten it,
when I was in love with an heiress and we lived, honeymooned, loved together for a summer
in a Norman chaumiere outside of Gloucester, by the stars, without clock, telephone or
automobile. Only a radio and phonograph for communication.

112 Malcolm Little was the birth name of African-American activist Malcolm X (1925-1965),
whose Autobiography was created in collaboration with journalist Alex Haley and published by
Grove Press after Malcolm X’s assassination.
Malcolm X is not memorable to me as I did not know him, as I possibly will not know you. Yours sincerely,

John Wieners

S-1, Station H

When I will be discharged no later than the last of September. O.K. Love always yours

How I admire you for graduating from Harvard. I did not even receive my Master’s degree in Humanities from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and all I needed was a book of poems.

Those publishers in London and New York fucked me with their own duplicity towards each other.

Anne Waldman  
[Aug 1969]  
[Central Islip, NY]

Dear Anne:

Saw your photograph in Vogue! Glad to have you in one of my favorite magazines and glad reached you. I am getting along and miss you. Joe Brainard sent me two lovely photographs of you. Love John Wieners  
S-1
Released from Central Islip State Hospital, Wieners returned to Hanover to live with his parents again until finding the apartment where he’d spend the rest of his life, at 44 Joy Street on Boston’s north side of Beacon Hill, back where he’d started out with Steve Jonas and Joe Dunn in the mid-fifties. His new friendship with Charlie Shively led to new energizing political and cultural engagements like “homophile” societies, student activism, and the Beacon Hill Free School, where he taught for the first time in several years. His friend Jack Powers, who would go on to found the Beacon Hill Free School and Stone Soup Poets, described their lives together in the late 1960s and 70s:

The back of Beacon Hill (behind the State House) had an infusion of remarkable energy that was like Greenwich Village of the 30's and 40's. Rent was relatively cheap, and the living was easy. There was a community that was harmonized around issues like world peace, the ending of hunger... you name it. We articulated the isolation of the individual in society, and moved to the possibility of communication.

* * * * *

Don Allen 

September 17, 1969
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Don:

Instead of the two pieces you mention, I would rather you use my preface to Selected Poems, still held under wraps by Jonathan Cape, Ltd; Thirty Bedford Square, London, England.

Yes, I will be discharged next Tuesday the 23rd from the hospital and my address will be the above one, that of my parents.

You may obtain the preface I expect from Tom Maschler, the Managing Director, there at Cape, I don’t have a copy, unfortunately

    Love to this project,
    John Wieners.

I will also write to Tom Maschler there to give permission to you to print the short and necessary explication.

The other two pieces are too loose. Let me hear from you again, pending this.

* * * * *

1 Holder n.p.
Don Allen

October 6th, 1969
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Don:
Safely at home now, just finished an article on the Political Realities of Being Gay for Jim Hayes of WIN magazine; he’s going to ask R. Duncan for something, too. I respond to your cheering letter of October 3rd, this year.

I will write Tom Maschler to send the Preface onto you. I so want it to be in. Thank you for asking me to be part of the Poetics of The New American Poetry. I love the title of it and it sounds like a good book to be interested in.

I will send Anne Waldman a note to have a copy of my new book mailed to you. It’s called Asylum Poems and will be ready this weekend.

Olivia and David Posner have just written. I so like him. Do you have Robin Blaser’s address and Robert Duncan’s? I would like to write to them both.

Yes $3 advance would be enough for me per page of your book: The Poetics of the New American Poetry. You really truly have given birth to a new movement, all by yourself. Keep it that way, as Charles Olson told me at the beginning of Measure, let no one else in. He, by the way, called at the end of last week to see how I was doing. And I am fine, honestly, Don, I really am.

Yours, devotedly,
John Wieners

Don Allen

10.16.69
[Hanover, MA]

Dear Don:
John Wieners again. Before the coma overtakes me again – the sudden blossoming of an idyllic future with Charles Olson gathering the reins prompts me to say in the reprint of the Grove Press article – printed first in NAP – the word was – as exp.

the price of was is high –
it should read – the price of

war
is high

millions of syllables roll over our tongues, etc.

That for ten years I have let this misprint run and now for The Poetics of the New American Poetry it should be cleared up. OK. Love,

John Wieners

Duncan McNaughton

October 16th, 1969
[Hanover, MA]

Indian Summer then!
Dearest Duncan:

---

The sunlight dances across the violet chenille scatter rug. Children are blossoming everywhere in fall classes. I am quite happy being home and seeing Gerrit Lansing, Steve Jonas and Harvey Brown, not to mention Joe Dunn.

Affairs are quite tidy except for all that busyness at Allen de Loach’s with unfathomable goods stored in his basement, clothes going mildew, unnecessary goods stored gathering dust, etc.

How I miss you for so many things. Sent Jack Clarke a few more poems for his Institute for Further Studies journal. Hope you did the same. I so enjoyed the last one: I cut it out especially for my room.

I scry no other sign of Life
About that fairy tree

Kept me in her boundary
But a changeable Maid, formed o’Strife

? <-------- ...

beams
Now almost as an Angel seems
Now rather like a Bee
Her Voice I never hear but screams

seems
My secret name at me

of
My secret name’s eternity

She folds me in amid her Wings
She covers me with Death
All the while a tune she sings
Of everlasting Nets

I wish she’d stay
But one full Day
Or else forever fly away

Do let me know in a free moment how, where, & when of R. Creeley & the scene. Arthur Schein must be on it. I just penned a note to Chuck Schub & Diana, happily ensconsed in the West Village.

But do not do this if you’re busy and you must be. My poetic output is rather boring. Guilt, sickness, death, mystery, romance love, desire, boredom.

recollection reverie

So it zooms.

Devotedly,
Yours,
John Wieners

---

3 The three “r” words on the left are bracketed together.
Don Allen

October 27, 1969

[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Donald:

Just remembered in that Grove Press book, I had one line in my “poetics” at the back of the book when I quote Charles Olson as saying that “poetry is no more a holy act than say, shitting.” I definitely want that taken out, for the quotations were eventually dropped off and it seemed my remark, when actually it was said very hastily in a class at Black Mountain, and I know he doesn’t mean it and neither do I.³

Love,
John Wieners
belatedly

PS: I always felt terribly embarrassed about this remark getting into print and I’m sure you did, too. Now is the time, if not of all times long before this, to correct the ignorance of such filth. Hee hee.

I’ve wanted to correct this for ten years – and this remark in print has given me three nervous breakdowns – Though I never had the strength to tell you.

Anne Waldman

November 3, 1969

[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Anne:

Thank you for sending the 20 complimentary copies out and tending to the bookshops and mail orders. I know it must be a laborious business to do all this for

⁴ Wieners’ “From a Journal,” written in 1959 during his 707 Scott Street period, was sent to Allen in his letter dated September 20, 1959, and indeed the line is noted as being a “quote from Olson.”
I am glad you have been reading around. I got the Whitney notice of your introductions last month to John Ashbery, Michael Benedict and Ron Padgett. It must have been some honor to introduce them, and your going to Yale sounds peaceful and exciting at the same time. I am feeling well though have absolutely nothing to do! Here at home but worry, worry, worry about lost belongings stored in Buffalo, lost connections and lost time. Still I would love to read December 3 at the Church. I am working for my father four nights a week from Monday to Thursday 5-7 in the evening and if you can’t get any other time I will just have to take the time off from him. Yet if you can get another date from a Friday night over the weekend that would be better. Let me know. I am open to both alternates but still wld go, as my mother reminds me, if you can’t get any other dates.

Love, John and thank you, Anne
your friendship means so much
in countless odd ways

It’s just that my father would have to do the work by himself, as he let another man go to let me have the chance of working. Still it’s up to you. Wednesday December 3rd is good enough and I won’t be too late, although December 5th would be better, unless they have something else on at the church.

Duncan McNaughton
November 7, 1969
[Hanover, MA]

Your letters are a real god-send
here and keep me buoyed up
Dearest Duncan:

Just a short note to keep in touch. Yeste Tomorrow Saturday I will go in town and meet Steve Jonas and Gerrit Lansing for their weekly Saturday evening poetry fête. Joe Dunn will also be there. He you may have met. He wrote The Better Dream House for which Jess Collins did the collages and also published the White Rabbit Books in San Francisco. I will be glad to see them all as I have been lonely and sad these past two weeks, though yesterday Allen de Loach sent all my post mail to me and that cheered me plenty, and Mark Robison called long distance last week from Allen Ginsberg’s apartment in New York City.

When does Genie expect the baby? And have you found any work yet? It’s tough to be at home, though evenings I go in town and work for my father Monday to Thursday from 5-7PM. I miss you very much and Genie, too, the quiet evenings we used to spend.

Do you have Arthur Schein’s address? I would like to drop him a note. Chuck Schub is at 59 Thompson Street in the West Village with Diana Gay. They came up to visit one weekend with Beth Sach and tracked me down over at Joby Kelly’s and we all went to

Michael Benedikt (1935-2007), American poet and critic noted for his engagement with the New York art world; he was briefly the managing editor of New York School magazine Locus Solus. Rod Padgett (b. 1942), American poet, writer, and translator. While he was still in high school in Oklahoma, he founded (with friends Joe Brainard and Ted Berrigan) The White Dove Review, which published an impressive array of post-war poets like Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Blackburn. He studied with Kay Boyle and Kenneth Koch, and continued his work in the classroom for decades, with the New York Poets in the Schools programs and various poetry educational organizations. His poignant memoirs of Berrigan and Brainard were published in 1993 and 2004, respectively.
Gloucester in the middle of night and I saw Charles Olson, who had called me earlier from the University of Connecticut, where he, as you probably know, guest teaches on Thursday afternoons, with 12 students in the class. He promised to take me up there one afternoon to read to his class and that I hope we'll do. He's got a new girlfriend, Linda Parker, and Harvey who called this morning, or Gerrit, keep me informed of his activity.

I feel much better as I go on with Niacin therapy and Vitamin C, and will be reading in New York at St. Mark's December 3rd, as scheduled, or later, on December 5th, as I proposed, since that is a Friday and fits in with my working schedule more. Harvey Brown said he would like to go down for the reading. Niacin is good therapy therapy for “schizophrenics” and is helping me here.

Why don’t you submit the poem you sent here to Anonym as I am a contributing editor and Mark would love to have something of yours.

Will you be here for the summer? I’m glad you saw Bob and my head is clearing up about him as well, so that’s a good sign, though I think Ed Dorn is a better, natural prose writer than Bob, viz Rites of Passage, he doesn’t have the same gift for story. Though I must say, I only read 2 chapters of Rites, before foolishly I gave it away, as a going away present to a girl I barely knew, who was going across country, with someone I barely knew. Well, enough of that. Write again, if you can make any sense of all this.

Love,
John

---

Don Allen

November 11, 1969
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Don:

Some mail showed up here, held in Buffalo since last May, when I was hospitalized, and one of them contained partial proofs from Jonathan Cape, Ltd.

Here then is the proof of the Preface to Selected Poems. I know it is sort of complicated and contrived, but use it if you can, making any changes you see fit. I won’t object right now, that is.

Instead of sending the proofs. I think I would rather send you my transcript. So here it is:

Verse making is mor

I think, Don the last paragraph is the one that holds any truth. So if you want to use just that one, go ahead.

Love,
John

and could you please return

Forgive all this mish-mash, but I have a hard time writing letters, when the matter is right at hand.

---

6 In the 1960s, megavitamins and niacin supplements became a popular alternative treatment for schizoaffective disorders. By the mid-1970s these therapies were largely abandoned as ineffectual and based on flawed research methodology.
1970-1971 was a period marked by one devastating loss after another, a harrowing time in Wiener’s life captured in the beautiful, disquieting journal *A book of PROPHECIES*, published in 2007 by Bootstrap Press. First father figure Charles Olson died in January 1970, then old friend Steve Jonas a month later, followed by his mother Anna Wieners in March. His father Albert died the following May. “The dull machinery of time / yields menacingly as before,” he writes to Robert Wilson in late February:

there is no better hope,
poems buffet no winds
against grave’s uncompromise.

This next letter to Wilson was mailed from Fort Square, the outcropping in Gloucester Harbor where Charles Olson had lived. Wieners had just served as Olson’s pallbearer.

---

Robert Wilson
January 13th 1970
[Gloucester, MA]

*After Charles’ Funeral Service*

Gloucester

Posted from Ft-Square

Dear Bob:

Various poets, photographers painters publishers preside per de mer for the honor & worship due Olson. We hope & know through your letter to Stuart Montgomery that all with you well for a Selected Poems, 1970 with Jonathan Cape, Ltd Love, John Wieners

==Bob – your letter to Allen, read here at O’s funeral, and the carbon of yours to Stewart – Yes, we all hope so, and send love & Dover – Allen De Loach

Dear Bob – Yes Charles for both letters – I’ve been travelling! Saw and showed others your [illeg] suggestions to Stuart – we’re sending him card of reinforcement [illeg] – Good luck – Allen

---

Robert Wilson
January 28, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Robert:

Finally finished one for you, 70 lines exactly. My second try. Did one over the weekend, “The Chair, The Book, The Hand,” that didn’t come off, but this one does, I hope. You like it? Let me know, and mail check promptly, deducting money I owe you for books, etc.

---


8 Postcard from THE NEW TAVERN RESTAURANT AND COCKTAIL LOUNGE, 30 Western Avenue, Gloucester, Mass.
Harvey Brown says he will take the 500 Ace of Pentacles off your hands for friends and gifts, to hold over the years. I so regret that phrase, “2 men on a cot,” & think that particular poem, “Act #2,” would be much better off without it.

Gerard Malanga comes to town tomorrow at 1:55 PM on South Station for the weekend, filming and I am meeting Harvey early in the morning at The Mandrake Bookshop in Cambridge before we greet his train with camera (his), books (ours) and tape machine. They are holding up his interview with Charles for The Paris Review for factual checking, or rather tape accuracy.

Love to you Bob, and let me know your decision regarding this, the enclosed.

Yours,

John Wieners

Postscript

If you send the galleys here for correction please enclose the original, as that is the only copy, extant except for the work sheets and first draft.

Youth

The first darkness
on Blue Hill Ave.
from 1 to 6
before the war broke out
or sickness, on the second floor
above the meat market,
MacDonald’s, across from the
Parkway Pharmacy, when
first memory was sliding over a hot barrel in the sun.

What can I do but shine
in memory, in the crib
while the cardplayers were
out in the kitchen, and the rats
ran down the hall, after what
the moon declares,

in the driveway, staring under a veil at an apple tree
after we moved, and climbing another
apple bough, enchanted with the its blossoms
there, When the world was young
(as the song goes sung by Felicia Sanders
on TV weeping, for her father, or at Le Bon Soir
playing to the bar.

Before the war broke out

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9 Charles Olson was interviewed by Gerard Malanga, with the assistance of Olson’s friends Harvey Brown and Gerrit Lansing, in April 1969; the interview was published in the Summer 1970 issue of The Paris Review, number 12 in their “Art of Poetry” series.

10 “Youth”
announced over the dining room floor
on Churchill Street, in Milton Massachusetts,
USA, behind the front porch, where I buried
irises, from beside the house.

There was another driveway
different from the first one, in that it was pebbled,
or was it the same,
only at the end of it, I lay
in a carriage, before the field
where I imagined thirty years later
Bob Creeley held me upside down, by
the left ankle, sticking
pins and needles into that wax doll,

before my sister caught him, or
was it Marlene Dietrich, appearing there
moving majestically down the avenue to guard over
all children
The war-torn refugees, waifs who lined the house
upstairs and down
until we moved
to my grandmother’s
fighting, Nana dying in the bed, the empty room that

my cousin has now,
Marie, and the truckdriver
McDermott, she married.

It seems the Scotch hold our psyche,
with their folktales and legends,
Robert Graves relating at the museum
anecdotes from the Order of St. John of Malta.

The altars burned then
with incense and prayers, not now
late-night vigils and pleas or tears
against death, in the toilets and woods.

I had so many phantasies last year,
of that flat twenty miles away:
only early youth affected before birth
by rituals, scissors, child-abuse.

Not beauty that was real, before the mirror
in strawberry blonde hair, silk black dress,
going to work, during wartime.
First to Toby Deutschman’s burning dolls
in the 5 & Dime, phantasies there as well

Marion behind the counter, Bobbie C. kissing her cunt.

How I loved my sister being a lesbian, but she was not, only a nun.
That was later on, though, after she left the big house on Eliot St.
that was also in Milton, only I left it first, to become a poet,
to live on Beacon Hill, and starve, before Black Mountain,

before Big Charles put his hand on me, and ordained me a priest.

-1970
John Wieners

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Charles Shively

Dearest Charles:

Thank you for your lovely card and note of the holidays and sorry I have been slow
in replying, but with my mother’s illness over Christmas, and Charles Olson, the poet’s,
ilness in New York, and finally, death on January 10th, I have been kept involved with the
funeral, and his friends here, for the services. Perhaps you saw our photographs in the
Morning Globe for February 14th (ironic in that was the date I heard him deliver the Morris
Grey Lecture in the blizzard of 1962) as pallbearers. We are giving a memorial reading at St.
Mark’s Church in New York, this Wednesday, February 4th at 8:30 PM. Then I will read in
Baltimore at The Johns Hopkins University on Thursday afternoon, February 19th, at 4 PM,
to fill you in with my upcoming activities.

I hope to see you afterwards, or even before, if you are not too shy, as I am. I loved
the poem you sent. It sort of excites me. As well as Gerard Malanga was here this weekend
from New York. He is Andy Warhol’s assistant. And he has been photographing
everywhere. We have a friend, here, Rene Ricard, who lives at 20 [illeg] Street, off Berkeley,
in Boston, where I spent the latter part of last week.

I am still working in town, from 5-6:30 PM 4 nights a week, Monday through
Thursday, for my father at 210 South Street. But otherwise am free. Perhaps you could

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11 Most members of the New York and allied poetry communities came out for Olson’s
memorial at St. Mark’s on February 4, 1970; Wieners was joined at the lectern by Ed
Sanders, Ted Berrigan, Diane Wakoski, and Paul Blackburn, among others. Sanders spoke
for many of the mourners when he said of Olson’s work:

Time and time again, you read lines that would spew puke upon the dogma
of a Catholic funeral. These poems are just incredible, their importance. He
makes all these creeps who win the National Book Award sound like idiots
(Kane 217).

12 Rene Ricard (1946-2014), Boston-born poet, art critic, and artist. He left school in his teens
and met Wieners, who became a mentor, and moved to New York in 1965, quickly
becoming central to the New York art and poetry worlds.
suggest some kind of meeting. If not, we can keep up our correspondence, until the weather is warmer.

I hope Gordon is well, and his family, too. It’s difficult though at times, helpful to have emotional problems other than one’s own. I speak in terms of his son. Does he know where he is? I suppose not. And if so, probably would not care say. [illeg] these problems of leaving the Armed Services are more common now and well-publicized, so that some of the stigma is removed.

I do look forward to meeting you, Charles, if only in the [cut]way, by chance, under the moon, which might happen by the way. But be careful, please.

Your friend,

John Wieners

I have forgotten where you said you were teaching. Was it Boston State? I hope to start substitute school teaching in Fall, if only in the elementary schools around Brockton or Plymouth, if possible. I am also often over at the Grolier Bookshop in Cambridge, and there is a very, nice dim [illeg] room, behind the University Restaurant on Massachusetts Avenue, called the Toga Room. As well as a good film we might also see, at The Orson Welles. Besides the Blue Parrot beneath the Brattle for a matinee.13 Yours, John –

Robert Wilson

February 6, 1970

[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Bob:

So good to see you again, to sit and chat as we used to, and see your books and magazines!

Here is the book poem mentioned, which you will see no way compares with the first submitted effort. Believe me in this. The first I trust implicitly except for a few rough spots. This enclosed has some rhetoric I can’t abide.

It was awfully good to see Marshall again, too.

I feel this effort is merely an introduction.

Perhaps three medium sized poems would be better. I’ve got them. But in time you’ll see, you’ll come around to “Youth.” It’s that meaningful in terms of reverie. Or need, as psycho-analysis permit, of obsession as reality.

Denise called this morning asking me to participate in a benefit for the Chicago “7,” which I’ll do, Monday evening, February 16th, at 8pm in the Charles Street Meeting House, where I first saw Charles. This town sure has changed.14

13 The Orson Welles Cinema (1969-1986), Cambridge theater specializing in foreign and independent films. The Blue Parrot, hip Harvard Square coffee shop/restaurant underneath the art house Brattle Theater. One 1973 student review notes that while the Blue Parrot “has a reputation for being frequented by Continental types… more often it is crowded with Cambridge types in search of a continental atmosphere” (“Bars and the Like” n.p.). The Blue Parrot was named for a bar in Casablanca, arising out of the Brattle’s tradition of showing Humphrey Bogart movies during finals week at Harvard. The so-called “Bogie cult” that rose out of this led to the founding of the Blue Parrot (operational through the 1960s) as well as Casablanca, a restaurant still open today. the Toga Room.

14 The February 16, 1970, poetry reading fundraiser, which also included Anne Sexton and James Tate, was one of many events supporting the so-called Chicago Seven, the accused “ringleaders” of the 1968 Democratic National Committee demonstrations in Chicago, after
Love to you, Bob, the coal stove and cats –

John Wieners

The Chair, The Book, The Hand

What day declares
of philosophy
and solitude, *natura anima*
in annals underground

whether a new hope disposed
to rid the heart
of its evils
and memories, is
best disclosed

through
[illeg - when? what?] content declares
there must we adhere
and we find its substance
extends our “lives”
as its form.

These words formerly foreign
now find new meaning
we understand, and dreams of youth
come true, reveal layers
of intellect unsuspected.

The dull machinery of time
yields menacingly as before,
there is no better hope,
poems buffet no winds
against grave’s uncompromise.

Still this is fitter occupation
than harrowed, stark passivity,
activity of the pen
creates new pattern
for mind to behold

for other young
worshippers

the trial of Bobby Seale (the eighth “conspirator”) was severed from the others. A photo by Ammiel Alcalay of Wieners at the lectern is featured in *Joanne Kyger: Letters To & From (Lost & Found)* Series 3, No. 7.

15 “The Chair, The Book, The Hand”
to gather and find
    On the page
    other blasts of this century
escape design
in intention
    Thus our affect
less than those hallowed
stanzas we first encountered

in books by William Carlos Williams
or translations of Ezra Pound.

    Still the round goes on,
the unforseen included
ear left open
for the first commandments,
    admonitions,
examples. Early adornments

of masters and mentors, H.D.,
and Wallace Stevens, T.S.
    Eliot and Charles Olson.

    It is his work
one sees the beauty of the American thing,
the sing-
    ing insistence
    of syllables
and consonants, laid together

to make the awkwardness, the error
    of what he celebrated
so real
    in the eyes of those others
who likewise took the pen, as lovers

but who withheld the true substance
of things –

Anne Waldman    February 7, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Anne:
    Here is a new poem from my book proposed by Cape Goliard Press in London. It is
unwritten unpublished and Gerry Malanga has asked for a copy to place under the glass top
of his desk at the Factory.
Do not despair. Things will steadily progress for you and later on I hope you will be able to visit me here and stay on for a while.

This enclosed I understand is for The World and I hope later for the anthology, commissioned by Bobbs-Merrill. Do not bother, if you are busy, to acknowledge. Denise called the morning after I got home to ask me to read at a benefit for the Chicago 7 at the Charles Street Meeting House, where I first met Charles. On the evening of February 16th at 8pm in Boston.

Thank you for asking me to participate in the Memorial Reading for him. I am still talking about it. It was good to see so many other poets there. I know he would have been thrilled. Ray & David Rattray & Joel and Fee, and Jackson & Diane, as well as yourself and Harvey, Kate, Bill and my friends from U.B. who live in Brooklyn.

Yours best, and remember me to

John Giorgio

John Wieners

Duncan McNaughton February 8, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Duncan:

Here is a mss. for Father. “incomplete” I know, “unfinished” but still part of the process, of recollection, anyway, that you may use for your purposes, in recognition of the many times you fed me, nurtured me, drove me, entertained me in Buffalo. I dont know about the work now, for Bob Wilson who originally asked commissioned me for a long poem for a chapbook, doesn’t like it. And I can see why. It’s so easy to dislike. I would be interested to hear what you have to say about it.

Benefit February 16th 8PM Charles St. Meeting House for the Chicago 7 per request of Denise Levertov, who’s at M.I.T., and then travel to John Hopkins University for reading February 19th – afterwards I will come to Buffalo by end of month to freight by possessions back here. I dont know how.

To go back to the poem, I think it’s an organic unity, down to and including the last word. Saw Chuck & Diana at Charles Olson’s Memorial Reading at Str. Mark’s, also Jack & Mark Robinson. Wish you were there. I should have called you! Please forgive.

Love, yours –

John W.

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The Poetry Project’s mimeographed magazine The World, edited by Joel Sloman, began its run in January 1967 and continued, under various editors in various forms, through 2002. As Miles Champion notes in his fascinating history of the Project, The World filled a crucial need in the late sixties and seventies, as most of the “mimeo revolution” magazines – Fuck You, Floating Bear, C – had ceased publication before The World started up. In 1969 Bobbs-Merrill published The World Anthology: Poems from the St. Mark’s Poetry Project. Wieners was not included in that anthology, but he had two pieces in its follow-up, Out of This World: “From the Journal of John Wieners” (from July 1958) and “First Poem After Silence Since Thanksgiving.”

John Giorgio

Wieners is referring to Fatbar magazine.
[On back of envelope:]
For Frank O’Hara’s work, Or Bill Berkson
I would try Kenneth Koch 107 East 10th Street
69? Perry Street, New York City New York City
Though I don’t have the exact number 1-212-674-5531
of street Tell him I told you to call.

Ed Dorn February 10, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Ed:

Been reading Wm. Bronk’s *The World, the Worldless*,¹⁰ which is an awfully good title when you write it out, and Charles spoke of the book in an earnest way, he said he liked it, and I am looking into it for philosophy to relieve my sadness. The world is so futile, we have such little time, and who could stand more. Each instant seems so weighted with some anxiety, some problem, some interruption. Anyway, I am going to China in 1971, and write a book called China Summer. Bad luck to talk about it though. It seems somehow moving helps, I mean literal action, such as walking. I’m a walking activist, that’s what. But what d’ye do when you get old? Oh well, that’ll take care of itself. One hopes, or imagines. Others have gone through it. That’s the only grace, one figures.

Yes Harvey and I went down on the Colonial Train to New York, out of Back Bay Station at 8 in the morning Wednesday the 4th – had parlor car seats, and arrived in NYC at 2:30 PM, called Ed Blackwell and checked into one room at The Chelsea. Went over to see Blackwell, drummer, & he was playing that Fri-Sat with Theoloniest Monk’s quartet at the Village Vanguard.²⁰ Met his wife Frances, and their two inter-racial children. She has some problem with her teeth, if she has any, one plate was in a cup on the sink, as I was washing my bridge under the running tap water, she mentioned it, her lowers – She’s white.

Then went up to Grand Central to meet Kate, dinner separate, over to see Bob Wilson who showed me contraband magazines from abroad, named Iron Boys and Ding Dong, some of which I have, and then the reading, where Ed Sanders, Joel Oppenheimer, Harvey, myself, Robert Hellman, Vincent Ferrini, Ted Berrigan, Fee Dawson, Paul Blackburn, Diane Wakosi, Ray Bremser, Jackson Mac Low and Gerald Malanga read until quite late in the evening.²¹ On return home, Denise Levertov called to do a benefit for the

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¹⁰ William Bronk (1918-1999), American poet whose *The World, The Worldless* was published by New Directions in 1964. Bronk and Olson had a friendship in letters for twelve years, based on a mutual admiration of one another’s poetry. In 1964 Olson wrote to his friend that upon reading *The World, The Worldless* he was inspired to write “the only spontaneous puff I ever did write,” a brief word of appreciation that would now be called a blurb, which he sent to Bronk’s editor; it would appear on the 1981 edition of Bronk’s *Life Supports: New and Collected Poems* (Kimmelman n.p.).


²¹ Robert Hellman (1919-1984), American poet and translator; Diane Wakoski (b. 1937), American poet associated with different “schools,” frequently published in *The Floating Bear*; Ray Bremser (1934-1998), American poet who began his career (publishing first in *Yugen*)
Chicago 7. Monday Feb 16th at 8PM, The Charles St. Meeting House. I always welcome any “interruption” or obligation like this, for it’s the only way I keep from slipping into the void. No matter how many times one has done it, it seems every day one must take some offensive against oblivion, or else there is no pleasure, that’s the only place from where courage originates, or flows.

Glad to hear of Jonathan. I know his friend, Tom Meyer, intimately.

Also I’d love to get White Stones. Who publishes it? Perhaps I could order it over here, or ask Bob Wilson to send it. I find Prynne, also very difficult, but appreciate him for that. Will send him mine.22

Harvey is very pleased you are going with him, publishing-wise, and though I haven’t seen him since he took Kate to Sarah Lawrence, I returned to Boston via bus the following day.23

Finished the mss. for Barry Hall, and will send it Friday when I get the cash for postage and Xerox. Also J. Cape is sending back original proofs on Selected Poems, as I feared I corrected them with too heavy a hand. They are very good. It seems the second book with Cape Goliard24 would be out before or simultaneously with the earlier mess. Nonetheless I am on or into a third.

Thank you for remembering my family. My father’s 66th birthday and all his children celebrated it with him a day earlier on Sunday, last. Three generations, etc. Two cakes, strawberries, candles and song!

Yours sincerely, with love and gratitude you are there,

John

I’m glad the letters made a difference, in your spirits. They really are a human blessing.

---

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

February 16, 1970

[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Lawrence:

Your wonderfully exciting letter arrived today and I could offer to do a selection of three books now being published abroad in London, and only one under contract, to Tom Maschler of Jonathan Cape Limited for a Selected Poems; the other two, Nerves, being published by Barry Hall of Cape Goliard, 10a Fairhazel Gardens, London N.W. 6, and Boston – Black Mountain Poems, 1954-1956 being done by Stuart Montgomery, of Fulcrum

while in prison for armed robbery; Jackson Mac Low (1922-2004), American poet and performance artist.

22 Jeremy Prynne’s fifth book of poetry, White Stones, was published in 1969 by influential small British publisher Grosseteste Press.

23 Six of the 25 books published between 1965 and 1972 by Harvey Brown’s Frontier Press were by Ed Dorn. Wiener’s could be referring to Songs Set Two (1970), The Cycle, or Some Business Recently Transacted in the White World (both 1971).

Press, 20 Fitzroy Square, London W1. They are all going into proof now, with the mss. already delivered into their hands, and when the proofs arrive here for correcting, I could make a selection of each of the three books for you. I have already written to Tom Maschler of your letter and since our contract mentions no American edition, I’m sure I could make a Selection for City Lights Books, even if they do decide to print through Grossman here.

There still would be abundant material not to conflict with any publication they Grossman might do. And of a different order form, as well. I am very excited about this, Lawrence, as I have always regarded City Lights Books in awe, and admiration, and since Shig Murrayo is an especially warm friend of mine, I would be most happy to have a work appear with you, and know it would be mutually advantageous to us both. I only hope you agree. I’m sure the manuscript could be delivered to you by May if not before.

Yours in speedy glad relief,
John Wieners

May I hear from you re any of this, (before I plan further your proposal.

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Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
February 21, 1970  
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Lawrence:

Have sent letters to all three publishers in London requesting permission to reprint from their texts; only one as I say “under contract” but that one does include presumably, though not contractually rights to an American Edition of Selected Poems. Though at that time I did withhold rights from them, Jonathan Cape, that is, American edition. Bob Wilson of Phoenix Bookshop in NYC is still holding on, not to confuse you, some copies of Ace of Pentacles (200) of them, from 480, originally, of which, 200, Jonathan Cape is willing to buy, so there can be an American Edition of Selected. As Wilson was withholding rights to them for an American, & still is.

I wrote to Tom Maschler re your letter and everything will be satisfactory, as I plan with you, as I wrote, a different Selected, much wider in content than the earlier, since May 1967, completed copy of their edition.

I would like to call this new one:

THE TREE OF DIVINE ASSEMBLY  
(TASHEGOTOS)

A SELECTED POEMS or SIMPLY  
from a Lamaist scroll of the 18th century – SELECTED POEMS, tho I don’t think
Jonathan Cape would like that, either.

and call it under that:

a Selected Poems or something like that, if you want to use Selected Poems.

As you suggest, I have written to all those (2) two British firms, and since they have no contract, or paid me in any way, except for Jonathan Cape, Limited, who does plan an American edition, via Grossman, I will have the go-ahead, as soon as their proofs come in. Fulcrum setting up now; Cape-Goliard awaiting 5-10 final manuscripts, as soon I get them out of storage in Buffalo this last weekend in Buffalo, and Jonathan Cape Limited sending me second galleys this coming week, from which I’ll make adequate selection.

25 Fulcrum Press shuttered before this book could be printed.
I will go ahead and send you 90 poems by this spring.

Love, yours,

John Wieners

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Joanne Kyger

February 22, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Joanne:

How busy you must be not to write your old friend, John. And how successful. How is Bolinas? I have Phil Whalen’s new book, *On Bear’s Head* and love it so. Also some plastic over records. Some guy left me 8000 dollars. Will you write me? I am dying of hunger for you. See your poems everywhere. And Nemi Frost. Do you have her address. I will see you Summer of 1971, on my way to China. Shall I send new poems to Tom Clark for *The Paris Review*. Bob Dylan is singing, “For tonight I’ll be Staying Here with You.”

Monday evening I gave a benefit for the Chicago 7 at the Charles Street Meeting House with Denise Levertov, Anne Sexton, Ron Loewinsohn, James Tate, etc. How is George Stanley and Howard Dull? And Irving Rosenthal? I hear from Charles Plymell in Baltimore in person that Dave Haselwood is incommunicado, being held prisoner by [illegible] Gurdjieff in captivity for his salary.

Love,

John Wieners

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Irving Rosenthal

February 24, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Irving:

Tonight received your address in a letter from David Schaff and as my things have been in storage up Buffalo since last May, when I was arrested in a health club in NYC, on a forgery charge. I thought I was Loretta Young. Anyway I have been home since October and doing very well. But you know what’s it like to live with the womb you love. I am going to China in the summer of 1971 and perhaps you would care to join me. I mean that sincerely. You and Dave Haselwood. Do you see him now? I got a bad report from Charles Plymell in Baltimore last week and that sort of upset me, that he won’t answer his mail, I know, since I sent him a note asking him to, last Christmas. Of course Hotel Wentley I believe is almost o.p. but Laurence wrote, asking me last week to do a Selected Poems, with him, as I am having 3 books printed now or nearly in London, and I will do so, making a selection – *THE TREE OF DIVINE ASSEMBLY* (TASHEGOTOS) for him, from an 18c Lamaish scroll. 90 poems promised him.

The other three are Selected Poems (Jonathan Cape – under contract
Nerves (Cape Goliard
Boston Black Mountain Poems 1954-1956 (Fulcrum

How is commune going? Hazardous, I guess. And your book? *Sheeper*, as you know, still the most important prose book for me of the 1960s, in terms of sensibility. I am planning a book for 1971, to be called China Summer. You should keep a record of the commune, for that is where Americans of the future will look for a record in the future and you will become one of the most important prose writers of the 2nd half of the twentieth century. Just see if you dont.
Went see Allen this weekend, on return from Buffalo. It’s so reassuring to know he’s there, and of course Philip Whalen, there. I have On Bear’s Head (Harcourt, Brace) and read it every evening. It’s up for a National Book Award. Ron Loewinsohn is finishing up his PHD on Wm Carlos Williams at Harvard. His new book out with Harcourt, Brace in 6 weeks is called Meat Air, 1957-1969. We gave a benefit Monday last for the Chicago 7 – Denise Levertov, James Tate, Anne Sexton, Allen Grossman, Sidney Goldfarb, etc.

Write will you. I need contact desperately. Elsa Dorfman I see biweekly weekly fortnightly. Her address is 19 Flagg St., Cambridge and she’s in love with Harvey Sitverglade, a lawyer defending newspaper radicals, and actors of Antonini. I only talk to Ella Kopinsken on the phone. And Herbert I saw at the occasion of reading at St. Mark’s Robert Creeley’s cocktail party at the Gotham for PIECES last December. (Herbert’s book also in proofs with Harvey Brown in West Newbury, Mass).

Do write to me Irving and let me know what you are doing, your plans, and whether I may help in any way, whatsoever.

Love,

Your friend,
always
John Wieners

Duncan McNaughton March 21, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Duncan:

Much thanks for your non-“literary” letter on The Damned. It was refreshing, your letter, that is, as we Gerrit, Scott Reichard and myself, had seen it the weekend before. I did not think much of it, other than shock, at such big bad taste, and loveliness of habitat at onset: Of course, who wears lace panties anymore, in politics, anymore that is. Perhaps a black and white concept would have helped the factual derision from the German aristocracy, which one may see perhaps only in relics on the streets of Germany – viz. Maximillian Schell in that film about benzedrine and a German officer hidden in the attic, who does not know the war is over – I do not know. I have never been there. Only know I have a romantic conception about that ruin, anyway and do regard the Nordic as definitely battle-worn, as if he had been through an excess that always results in “wisdom”. Someone suggested “the palace of wisdom” was death, but I dont see how. Really, death is the one canker, and the only one on earth. I can stand war. Even pain, conquering other person’s property, etc, but death must have some chopper to it that is not permanent, only a progression to another freedom, not so personal as this one, an ultimate broadening of into “inorganic” material. Such as sun light, clouds, space, and air. Blind, dumb and beneficent. But where are we in all this? Collected together at some future time. I believe I may be a dog frisking about on some lawn, but I dont like this, and hope it is only transient, and short-lived. Know it is.

Well, words are some record. Thank you for your two important, memorable, and note noteworthy articles on William Burroughs and Hash-hish in Intrepid publications. I value them highly and regard them as hip.

Yes, the go of this film referred to was majestic, at the outset. But the Rohm debacle jerky and disjointed, as if the editor got too wrought to proceed coolly, as in the house-hold affairs, this might happen every Saturday night and did, does. Viz. Robert McAlmon’s short stories on Post World War I Germany apropos public spectacle.
I don’t know about oedipal incest, but I like *think* filial incest harmful in *immediate* pre-puberty, tho I would love to marry and live with any of my first cousins. Find them the most attractive women in the world. And make me feel the most at home.

How I long for glamour again, though, perhaps that rules out incest.

You know Mark’s skull completely stilled my humanity in Buffalo, thus I could not harmonize with anyone, and what a chance, it will never happen again, now. There must be something about races, you know, as my mind, training, sensibility, civility cannot exist at some times, closes up as a lotus at any dense vibration. You know what I mean. I must *have* imagination, fire, intellect. Drugs won’t do it, no matter how many. Give my regards and apologies to Genie for not coming closer when I had the chance. And could have, but could not, because of this dense lamebrain I was staying with.

Love, yours, John

Lawrence Ferlinghetti
March 21, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Lawrence:

Glad you think of me during the night. I think of such things too. Tom Maschler wrote and said: “I am delighted at Ferlinghetti’s interest, but as you say, it now looks as though we’ll be able to have the Selected Poems published in the States, and I would really urge you not to make arrangements with Ferlinghetti for anything else for the time-being. Otherwise there will be the danger of conflicting books which would be a pity. In addition to this; having been as interested in your work as I have for a long time, I would really prefer it if we could be your principal publishers from now on and arrangements go through us.”

Well, what are they doing? The second proofs of Selected Poems, 108 pages, I just returned to them, but of Nerves, the body of which I sent off Feb 13th to Barry Hall, their “subsidiary” has not even been acknowledged. And Bob says he’s slow. Do you think he’d agree to a Collected Poems to-date, as you suggest? I would love that, Lawrence, and feel the poetry should be published over here as well. You know there are many pieces they aren’t getting, and really, so little of it has been published, my work that is, as you know.

Well, it looks as if he put the strictures down. What can you do.

When I wrote Stuart Montgomery, who had already contacted me in person about “early” work 1954-1957 – ha ha –, of your offer, he immediately sent back a contract after over 2 ½ years of having the material, without even as much as setting it up in type. Well, c’est la guerre –

Love to you, and to Kirby –

John Wieners

I want a City Lights book and know we can have one. The offer stirs me up to go through satchels of unexamined work. Legally, we have the go-ahead. Don’t bother to respond to this until I hear from them. There is somewhat enough to go around. Regards to Allen, with great love –

Robert Wilson
March 22, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Robert:

I wanted to correct this and send it to you, at once. “If there’s any charge, please bill the royalty charge fee. In I see the poem as an impetuous one, and thus wanted to return it to
the its original form, thus connoting the wild rush that prompted it, in more than stream of level consciousness. More a thundering roar down memory’s tree. So I left put back in the repetitions of “another” and “other” and “on” and “on” on successive lines. Also “tree” and “apple tree.”

Richard Howard wrote an extensive review article in the Iowa Review, January 1970, you should see, quoting extensively from the work you published.

I hope there is no difficulty in the proof. If so, please don’t hesitate to call collect, or write again despite post office strike. We’ll get it out in time.

Sorry to hear the shop was broken into. I’m sure you’ll see to it doesn’t happen again. As well as getting married. How I gasped when I read that. I actually thought you meant getting hitched. It really hurt. Now I see you meant something else. And I am so happy and envious at the same time. I know it will really work out. Invite me to the ceremony, if you have one. Am getting a car next month, and maybe can come see you on Fire Island this summer.

Love,

John

Sent a poem for Frank O’Hara off to The New York Quarterly. Hope they use it, even tho or if I am not a New Yorker. I explained I had lived on and off in town & country of New York for the past ten years. Love again – and a gay May.

Thank you for sending the lovely proof so promptly

Anne Waldman

Dearest Anne:

Just received The World number 18 and want to thank you for it, for so many things in it, the Allen Ginsberg, your own lovely, warm poems, and Lewis’, as well as Tom Veitch’s and Bill’s and Larry’s successful collaborations. But in my own particular instance I have one important correction to make before the thing goes into The World Anthology. Anthologies can be very important things. The New American Poetry, as you know, gone into over 14 printings!

First, change the title to “Fast Limousines,” taking those lines out of the last line of the text, and dropping “smart cafes” down to fill that space, as it was written. I should always leave things alone. → line 3 should be omitted as you have it printed, as it was not included in my text, a printer’s interpolation. Thus to make it easier for you, I will include a new copy of the poem, as I wish it printed in The World Anthology.

What I Imagine To Be My Love Whispers In The Corner

Those who stay at home
often worship far away places
and unattainable ambitions,
such as fame and idealized love.

Those who travel find their dreams
come true, meeting fantastically interesting persons
through talent and achievement,
even of a minor sort.
I have moved all
my adult life, finding success sweet
when [one] I came home to [overt defeat] the same places,
then woke up at one of those out of the way stops,
with my hands full of familiar feelings,
only a new sense of glamour pervaded the scene.

Oh yes, this is the bus station I knew at twenty years old,
and now past thirty-five, in good health, I sit at the same tables,
with my hands full of familiar feelings,
only a new sense of glamour pervaded the scene.

rushing down Charles Street, on fire with excitement for
beautiful women, bubbling alcohol, and late hours,
fast limousines and demanding assignments on my energy.

-- John Wieners
-- 1970

Thus 3 stanzas of four lines each,
then 3 of 3 lines each.
O.K. Anne, and all love to you, and yours.
Please keep me on. 26 Yours,
John

Joanne Kyger
March 30, 1970  Easter Sunday
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest dearest Joanne,

All of my Easters have to do with you, at least every 12 years or so: forgive me for
being so scarce. I received your lovely letter yesterday, and we are having a late seasonal
blizzard, which has filled Boston with 6 inches of bunny fur. Things have been good for me,
Kids, though not adventuresome, I'm glad of it.

Enclosed is a photograph by Gerry Malanga, not very good, and too dark, for I am
more a blond Anglo-Saxon type now, or at least would like to be. It was taken in Early
February in exchange for your Mother's clippings from The Chronicle.

How kind and how pleased I am you and Ebbe took time out to think of me in
Vancouver, so important, though you might not think so it appears to me. Harvey Brown
has some literature for me from that place, titled Writing (Something) edited by Stan Persky
Persky. Not much to tell. I am taking driving lessons and will get a Volvo, sometime
in May, probably. So I can pick up hitch hikers, etc. Though I am terrified at the thought of
how to do it. The courtship process, etc, is the main fascination. I notice niggers like it, too,

26 In a February 5, 1960, letter from Olson to Wieners when the latter was in the hospital for
the first time, Olson similarly enjoined his former student: “Please keep me on if you can –
or put me on to yr moves etc” (the sea under the house volume 2, p. 31).
this confrontation with a new human being. Do you think it’s an immigration problem or an inherited genetic?

Charles Olson’s “death” left us all quite shocked, and we are not over it yet. Then Steve Jonas followed him one month to the day, as well as Louise Bogan, Richard Eberhart told me at the University of Massachusetts at a March Mountain Party Festival—March 8-13th there in Amherst Emily Dickinson’s hometown; we stayed Bob Creeley and I, in separate rooms, one block over from where she lived, at the Lord Jeffrey Inn, where Hubert Humphries spoke, after they booed him out of the U. of Mass. a fortnight before—then Eugene McCarthy joined in at the tail-end. Ed Dorn will be here for awhile this summer, with his new wife Jennie, and their son, Kid Lawrence Dunbar Dorn—other poets here are Gerrit Lansing, Denise Levertov, Ron Loewinsohn, Joe Dunn, who doesn’t write at all, works at a Hayes Bickford opposite North Station 6 days a week from noon to nine, and lives in a room at 121 Merrimac Street, in the North End. Write him a postcard, if you can, he’s on the methdon-sustenance treatment and thin, but in good mental shape. Tom Balas still the same. Alan Minsk preaching the Bible; and Cambridge, happening.

Bill Berkson says he’s going to Bolinas. May already have left by now. I look forward to reading at Max’s Kansas City there in New York City soon. It probably will never materialize. Am still on health foods. Tiger’s milk, Cod liver Oil Capsules, Rose Hip Tablets, dessicated liver tablets, niacin, and tobacco. Still losing hair, though. What about you?

I know you are sturdy and strong. But I fear when you say penniless. I will send $200, if you need it, your next letter to help you, if that does. Just let me know, and I will mail a registered check or money order, whatever’s easiest for you.

Does Tom Clark want poems or what? That’s worth 200 dollars worth of information to me, so there. I would like to be in The Paris Review again. Wouldn’t you, it’s about time. But don’t know what I have to send. 4 or 5 poems, do you think? Alan Bullin’s doing 3 poems in a chapbook, and this mid-summer, from San Francisco Santa Barbara, called Invitations, his title. And Bob Wilson doing a 60 line poem, “Youth,” he’s paying 250 dollars for. Would you like one of them? I’ll ask him about it. I mean one of your own poems printed in his “chapbook” series. It has to be 60 lines long though. Wait till I get his O.K. though before you write it. On second thought though, you probably have to get collected in Connecticut and environs before he’ll latch on. It’s time, Joanne, for your analyses, to be issued again in volume entire. What publishers do you prefer me to write? Cape Goliard, Allen de Loach, of Intrepid Press in Buffalo or Stuart Montgomery of Fulcrum?

Give my love to George Stanley. I so enjoyed reading the 2nd Annual Lit Anthology & Stonybrook because you, all three, had such excellent work in it. Do write about again. What about Black Sparrow in Los Angeles, for yourself, that is.

Love, yours

Pip

Don Allen

July 10, 1970

[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Don:

Yes, Don, you have my permission to reprint the material I first published in Measure, Number 1, 1957 under the name of Frank O’Hara, or rather more accurately “Section 9” from Second Avenue. I thus allow your use of the work.
Next summer I will be in San Francisco, taking a boat to China. I received the tapes and regard their return as somewhat of an affront. Couldn’t you have kept them for use in the government? I am printing them with Jonathan Cape, Limited in Great Britain as a basic integer of my experience in Hell’s Kitchen.

Love,

John

Joanne Kyger
August 7, 1970
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Joanne:

Without your scintillating interest in all things, lovely and ugly, along our path together, in San Francisco, New York and I have no doubt in many future other places still open to us. I reminisce of over the exciting events you created by your love for poetry. Could you forget how fervent your admiration endures? Education has dulled my capacity towards the ceaseless experience we radiated in the streets and literary obligations offered while fledging devotees in both ports.

Sharp as time becomes, no acid accusation will separate what has now proved constant existence in a genuine exchange of terms, letters, promise and fulfillments. Necessities of economy prohibit our position from being near to one another, yet these attempts at communication result in relighting the old honors of recognizing a common cause that travel only enriches.

Got a hundred dollars worth of books today, and thought of you, on calling Thomas K Clark for Christine Fleischman’s address as he wrote asking for a photograph, and poems, that I now have on hand for inclusion in the anthology regarding the 25 year celebration of arts in San Francisco 1943-1968. I misplaced her letter, and need that address for mailing the work. Tom said you were working on the anthology and could send it.

San Francisco.

Nob Hill, roaming down Jackson Washington Street in 1957, it was as if I had descended into a valley with mist blowing in front of me, and gas lamps, on either side, as tiny beacons in a wide garden, the Pacific on my right, washing the past away, and the gentle harbor before midnight, offering up benediction to the clouds of ecstasy, of mystery and perhaps, even the dark eyed embrace of solitude. Only Polk Street holds the meadowed memory of countless thousands who walked or roamed there before me for freedom, extension into the caverns of the Tenderloin. And van Ness Avenue, for the rumbling observation from respectable inhabitants, who drove ceaselessly home to television and dinners, for escape of their charges. How little we know how precious those hours would be.

When California Street became the last hurdle before light and storefronts and apartment doorways were the only friends.

—John Wieners

Youth, of course enclosed. And a small thank you for past rent due. When I see Bob Wilson,
will give him your address towards an East Coast publication of your poems.

PIP

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Ed Dorn 1/27/71
Hanover, MA

To Ed:

Your book Songs Set Two – A Short Count may train our future vicinity in patience, though its hasty imprinting prohibits an attentive remediation.

M'sieur Le Patron, [illeg], resides out of lacog, between B.B. et Edouard –

Of course, my efforts are found in D. Vreeland’s columns in two Vogues last year, and as M. Christy pour La Glove & P.M. in Photoplay.


Do you know I miss you. Do you know you warm my despair. Do you remember the past fragments shared, from circulating library corner, to basement abbatoir, and how tender imprisonment for innocence blossomed future [illeg]. No trip to China I fear now, without endowment, without endorsement, without sorrow.

Triumphantly,

Jack Wieners
“Jackie”

-- Jean

* * * * *

Wieners’ fourth period of institutionalization was at Taunton State Hospital from April 1, 1972, through May 31, 1972. Taunton, a once-beautiful neo-classical asylum that had fallen into disrepair; within three years of Wieners stay there the hospital was closed. Wieners was released in time for an active summer, including a trip with Shively and their New York Yippie friends to the 1972 Democratic Convention in Miami, distributing Shively’s gay liberation magazine Fag Rag. Wieners wrote an account of the trip, We Were There! A gay presence at the Democratic Convention, published later that year as a mimeo pamphlet by Good Gay Poets. It is unclear exactly when he moved in, but by the first letter of 1973, he is already settled into the apartment at 44 Joy Street, where he’d live for the rest of his life.

The Beacon Hill Free School began the summer of 1969, founded by gay local activist Jack Powers with assistance from educational theorists like John Holt. Its 1974 catalogue boasted that in its five years the BHFS had offered “over 300 courses to thousands of people of all ages, at no cost,” able to do this because “instructors are willing to volunteer their time and services, and because neighbors and neighborhood organizations are willing to donate unused space in the evenings.” The School held four sessions a

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27 SP 293.
year, each beginning with a General Meeting, usually at the Charles Street Meeting House. At each general meeting, after Powers explained again the mission of the BHFS, members of the community had an open form to pitch course ideas. At the Beacon Hill Free School “anyone may offer a course, and on any subject he or she wants,” Holt recalls. “No teacher has to show proof of competence… If people like the course, the teacher will probably offer it again. Of the thirty-seven courses offered in the Summer ’74 catalog, seventeen were continued.” Their course listings ranged from politics to a popular “bicycle clinic” to courses in creative writing and modern poetry taught by locals like John Wieners, Carol Weston, and Joe Dunn.28

Out of the BHFS came Stone Soup Poets, a cooperative founded by Powers that published Boston poets and held regular poetry readings for decades, which Powers never missed while he was alive. Like Louisa Solano, John Metzer, Charlie Shively, and other poetry organizers and booksellers, Powers was always a champion of Wieners and his poetry, bringing him out for readings (some of which are available online in audio and video formats) in his later decades, and helping him with money and groceries when he needed them. It was friends like these, and later Jim Dunn, who helped Wieners keep fed, transported to readings and doctor appointments, and otherwise functioning in the practical world while he continued his work in his Joy Street apartment.

* * * * *

Duncan McNaughton

April 7, 1972

[Taunton, MA]

Dearest Duncan and Genie:

Right now, I am not at home and cannot get to the proofs of the verses you have already sent, goodheartedly acceptance of and remittance for; which stipend I have deposited to my first checking account at The Harvard Trust Company, thanks to the over-$1000 but barely grant of The Committee on Poetry, Peter Orlovsky President for 1972. If I had copies of the verses I would send rectifications, three in number, unto you. Eric Mottram has just accepted 6 good pages for The Poetry Review over at King’s College The University of on London Strand. Very far out. And he’s paying too. A Council on Literary Magazines is meeting at Boston University this April 29th and 30th and they are sending out invitations Similar to COSMEP. I am enclosing their address in New York, as you might be able to receive (I should really think so) assistance for FATHAR from them

Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines
80 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10011

They might have notified you by now. They are very generous and have tens of thousands of dollars to distribute. Send to them for their organization handbook.

Since I can’t correct the three typing aforementioned errors in the copies you mailed I am sending on another verse to compensate. One I know of the above is Jacquelannee is spelled with a J not a L. see your copies.

28 Holt 28-30.
In the Beginning

The early morning wake-up, melancholia at someone else’s radios blaring bittersweet tunes of remonstrable love, in the stuporific lethargy after rising, fragments of dissolved affairs covert affairs, unresolved ambition in worldly terms and aims

End wonderful instants down fresh clear air rushing in amongst disturbed embers throughout crowded past neighborhood apartments, immature youth strivings, illicit embraces,

Tumbling headlong to submerge passion, by torrents of chaste, unchagrined edginess

Portions dredged that cause shaved identity, though in toto non-surrendered to;

perhaps a weekend here,
a fortnight’s addiction there, a bar afternoon where the lights, the clamor, the music combined to erect a home away from home, while still one had one, past shared then afterwards, now resurrect to produce the canopy from careless sophisticated sojourn; yet be cloudy the total horizon, as if one did not possessed savor the full means to find out what he was seeking to begin with, and although some permission’s been received, the rough edges – the overall effect’s of unfructified worthiness, and fended belles letters
hoping ungathered future strength results about lost green of handicaps.

-- John Wieners
April 5, 1972

Bill Corbett, a professor at Emerson also took some verses 3 to 4, for Fire Exit, since Bill Little split, when his plans for a Boston anthology, “Boss” blew up.

Miss you, very much Duncan, and my carefree enamoured Buffalo seasons, stewing in a pout.

Love, always,

Johnnie

Charles Shively
April 17, 1972
[Taunton, MA]

Dearest Charlie:

So forgive the familiar use of your first name. I miss you and the lovely friendships you have extended in the past two years of our salutary acquaintance. Thank you for taking me to the Homophile meeting in Boston and the gay dance, as well.29 Give my admiring regards to dashing Gordon as well, or as including including the Profile.

I will have some more money soon and take an apartment, I hope plan somewhere in Boston, possibly the Coolidge Corner section on or near Beacon St.

29 There were a number of “homophile” groups in Boston in the late 1960s-early 1970s, but Wiener is probably referring to the Student Homophile League. Founded at MIT in 1969, the League sponsored regular dances until disbanding in December 1972.
called Brookline

Thus I could get about without dependence or with so much chauffeuring on your part. The rides and courtesies offered by both you & Valerie Jean and yourself have been so heartily appreciated, I could never put my gratitude into words. I will definitely attempt to do some public poem to both yourselves.

Glad you’re getting off to Washington in Organization of Historians and also a New U. C. in Chicago! of all places Sat & Sun. April 8th.

How did they go? I am not at home the next 2 or 3 weeks, but temporarily hosp. at Taunton State. Drop me a line at home. My brother and sister are bringing over my mail.

Love, yours.
Jackie non-Auchincloss Wieners

Thank you also for the agenda of gay doings around Town. Your friend, ever –

---

Duncan McNaughton

Friday April 19 [1972]
[Taunton, MA]

Dearest Duncan and Genie:

So glad you might possess a few priceless quarter of hours to keep our worthwhile patience & necessity for another in touch.

I wrote another further poem this morning, “By the Bars” and am sending it to Selma Rudnick of Partisan, as she dropped a note. Don’t think she'll use it, as it’s too colloquoail sp? and long, so will probably blow my chances there.

Also got some amateurish prose going. I am sorry you feel your estimable PHD is ‘worthless’ I know it isn’t. You must understand those things some more, as myself relish and cherish each all the days of their lives. To me a PHD is some impossible dream, given as alabaster cathedrals to the very few. Glad to hear you have many brethren there in Brewster. I miss Chuckie so, and hope, he or some of my other swain recrop up soon, as spring wheat. I know they do, in one form or another, so I never worry. Glad your surety in expression both has such clair dignity including respect.

The numbered lines would be initially counted as form, and not within the form.

In deeper respect,
John Wieners

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Duncan McNaughton

[May 5, 1972]
[Taunton, MA]

Dearest Duncan

Enclosed find “corrections”. Originals still as now talking with my sister in packing disarray. There are two poems. “Eternal Attraction” and “But Not That Low” not three.

Am in rush straightening bookshelves and preparing din-din. Love to you boys in New York.

Yours,
Jack Wieners
Don Allen

May 27, 1972
[Hanover, MA]

Dear Don:
Tonight I got released from
Taunton State Hospital after two months;
I got your letter and check. Didn’t realize
how faithful you were and bought a bottle
of André champagne and good white wine.
Also had my picture taken, for you too?
I’ve changed, haven’t I. Fresh flowers and
a new Cecil Taylor album New York City R&B.
Glad you got ensconced in a new home
but I’m sending this to the old address as I’ve
got it by hand. Hope it reaches you. Forgive
my handwriting, but I’m shaking from tranqu-
illers on an RX.

My new book just came out. You must get it.
De rigeur, mon darling. Now home from the nearly
$5,000,000 shopping complex here in Hanover,
Massachusetts where I live now. Yours till
death do us part.

Your indebtor,
John Wieners

Ed Dorn

December 30, 1972   Saturday 9PM
[Hanover, MA]

Dearest Ed:

For the moment, this is what I have to contribute to your “lovely” newspaper, Bean
News #2. I will send other material as it comes to me. This was written yesterday morning
immediately after the service in Gordon’s bookshop, The Grolier. Your suggestion along the
lines of Hedda H. is especially apt, but I fear Victor Book B. & Andrew Wylie, who were
here later in the day Bean News arrived, have beat me to the punch. Thank you for sending
it. I had not received it earlier, I especially treasure it and marvel at its compactness and
information. It puts us up on the level at least with astronomical issuances though not
up to that careening space data. Certainly it places Victor’s and Andy’s efforts a decade in
reverse, as they were informed by ourselves that evening, by, viz, Duncan McNaughton,
Charlie Shively & myself. I said, “It’s like receiving another installment on the mind. Can you
put a price on that, except an unfathomable sum?” When A. asked, “But does it sell?”

Of course their Contact has been exposed. For the cheap police gimmick Victor
employs.

Have not seen Harvey since going together to see The Ruling Class, over three weeks
ago, and dinner. Polly looks well and he is wonderful.

30 Ed Dorn began publishing the tabloid-format periodical Bean News while he was living in
England, in 1972. The paper did not just publish poetry; in his biography of Dorn, Tom
Clark remembers being assigned sports editor.
Do send Duncan McN. something for FATHAR FIVE His: Smith Road, Antrim, New Hampshire 03440, at Nathaniel Hawthorne College.

My glasses broken last night, stepped on, so can’t see too well, to write longer. Boston is quiet this holiday’s pathological season, Gerrit called from Cleveland, and I have a few intense callers in verse world. It’s good.

Love,

Yours,

John

---

Joanne Kyger  [September 1972]

POEM FROM JOHN W.

I hope It Goes On

A blinding rain storm behind The Beacon Chambers
and out in front denizens scatter under
inclement thunder. Joanne Kyger

moseys down to Brooklyn before Bolinas, this hymn
shall honor her devotion over 15 years
to maidenhood blessed by poems.

It’s not enough to compare her
to movie starts, Jane Fonda or Broadway intellectuals
Breaking shower lightening in Max’s Kansas City

And as sudden as it started, this downpour ends. Class
that’s what she’s got, what gives you a thrill
listening to her in Bob Creeley’s living room

read or dancing out in Berkeley, 1965 after returning from Kyoto.
Columbus Ave hoyden days, tripping down Telegraph Hill
I remember her at Halfway House managing

time spheres as deftly as orange plants or egg-plant salads.
In New York, heroic against warehouse derelicts
and dressing out middle-class fur coats, for a day on the town.

It’s not enough to be simply beautiful, one must manifest
magnificent sex and brains,
besides, endurance here in the sunlight by the windows at Annisquam.

September 1972 John Wieners
Dearest Duncan:

My first official, professional letter of the year, and I am pleased to be able to send you the enclosed poem. Oh I forgot, I also wrote to Ed and sent off Jean Garrigue’s obituary to him, and a short thing I had done New Year’s, called Milton, after the town. Not as good as this one though, that I did this morning, half-asleep. Doesn’t it sound it, though? I hope you like it. It’s the first thing I can remember having done for you, that I liked in earnest. Please forgive me on this typewriter. I can’t figure out what’s wrong with it. Maybe it’s because the floors are slanted. Did so much enjoy your visit, and the last time I wrote you a note on the Christmas card, you called, though didn’t let on to you, my card was then passé.

Love,
yours,
John Wieners

I hope the Jean Garrigue r.i.p. doesn’t come as a shock.
It brought some melancholia to me.

Also spoke to Joe Dunn New Year’s Eve and said you’d write. He & his wife seem are thrilled with the idea of the photo. It will be hard to get a response out of him in a “substantial” way. He said you once had some of his notebooks. Possibly I could get some of those again & you could look through there for what you’d like to use.

Dearest Robert Duncan:

How my heart overbrims with gratitude, pushing away Gerrit’s crème de menthe bottle and seeing Ed’s poem stick out from a note, that he doesn’t, Dorn, know he left here, visiting not so many Sundays ago with cheering reports of you. “How I long for you,” the same words return, as prototype of Brahmin Boston, with Joe right down the street – that you should answer my unthinking braggadocio with such alacrity & generosity. Thank you so much, Robert.

I cannot enter into the realm of memory’s cohorts by the field of verse, as I lack the discipline you do. Nonetheless, even w/o reading – some force prevents the assimilation of it seems, right now, for so many verse-writers I read, barely more than the poet’s early poems. It goes right down the line for most all male writers in this century.

Yet, tho I shall lose energy by writing this, I go into the new poems you sent, with an eager heart.

Beast, of age, of becoming mature, growing up. Beast of in acquiring the goods of one’s dreams. Finding what one wants.

I treasure what you sent, Robert, knowing it shall replace Denise, whom I have not seen for Three years and who, when Sergei Narovchatov, of the Writer’s Union of the U.S.S.R. and Mikhail Lukonin, Commissar of National literature of same nation visited last weekend, could not be bothered until she heard Frieda Lurye was accompanying them. And
then she requested a private interview with same at the Statler-Hilton. Alone. But showed up with Rick Edelman. I was not there, by her request. Yet had to arrange the weekend thru ref. of Allen G, who gave my only name to the Council on Leaders & Specialists in Washington. They also had Robert Lowell and John Updike on the list but both out of the country. I have been boiling ever since. Of course I have no right to. She is a far more talented & skillful perceiver and a more widely published author, by a thousand quotients – still I duly idolized & adored her efforts.

Robert, do not get mixed up in politics. It makes one top-heavy. I am being interviewed tomorrow for Gay Sunshine & shall use yourself and early poems as my introduction including this P.M. letter. She also mentioned over the telephone 1617-739-1016 hearing good reports abt moi et gai liberation.

Robert, I have not mentioned your books, as simply because they are superb & I do not have the intellect to speak of those books. But an author needs to know. You were astute with James Broughton and he has turned out a better contributor to poetics ars poetica than if you had not kept “after him.” I want an even better fate for myself. But I must read. There are so “few.” It’s not a labor even though [illeg- past?]

I want to go back to your letter & poetry now. I have only been home 20 minutes. A future attachment.

John Wieners

PS.
You are, forgive me, vitally “mixed-up” in politics, but on reflection I believe I mean physically combatant in ideological & verbally as well, ware-fare.

---

Ed Dorn

July 26, 1973
[Boston]

Mr and Mrs E. Dorn
Kent University
c/o The Chairman
Kent, Ohio

Dear Jennie:

Ed’s whereabouts as your own without apparent notice must leave some irritation since Gordon Cairnie with sorrow and 500 worshippers peregrinated over heaven’s arches to his edifying citadel of Concord Monticello.

The last issue of the newspaper I lent to some beloved worshipper namely dearest Gordon for his archives, stretching until September 1973 w/o literary executor.

Working on 20 years of personal date still at same spot-------------

Jackie

W I E N E R S

---

Sergei Narovchatov, Mikhail Lukonin, and Frieda Lurye were associates of the Union of Writer in the USSR (practically mandatory for Soviet writers), which sponsored cultural exchange tours of the United States in the 1960s and 70s.
Mister Allen Ginsberg:
The Poetry Committee on COP, Inc.
RFD 2, The Town of Cherry Valley,
New York, 13320

My own beloved son of Poetry

To know that soon you will be or are to be in our new city of Boston
thrills my heart for Oct 26 to 28th, as I am now off to The Body
Politic

and The University of Chicago, Campus Circle the first week of that
month, and then, at the invitation of Kathleen Fraser, to the
San-Fran Gallery of the Legion of Honor, on November 15th, 1973.\textsuperscript{32}

I am making out, from the amount of $300, to the State University of New York, a
tuition voucher, bill received simultaneously with your own gracious award, the second one
this calendar year, for the sums of $250 + College and Graduate Association fees.
That has left me with over One Thousand and 41.75 dollars to pursue the
composition and transcription of materials towards both recitation and publication, as see
enclosed Application for already to be Awarded Grant.

Without further introspection, Course Catalog Number 600, \textit{Independent Study}, as
relayed to me over the telephone by Professor John Clarke, PHD, contains interest towards
a Master's of Humanities Degree from The State of New York. It affords rights for
examination, interrogation and explanatory addition to the years already undertaken at the
State University of New York at Buffalo, in all its ramifications, as a graduate student, a
candidate for the degree of Master's of Humanities, and a resident in the Teaching Fellow
Program, from the years of 1965 through 1968.

You are somewhat aware of the conditions applying to part of these privileges, and,
or priorities, being with Charles, seeing Robert at his homes, and tending to David, Ed and
Duncan. Being in the company of so many luminaries, as William Empson, Sir Stephen

\textsuperscript{32} Kathleen Fraser (b. 1935), American poet and author. From 1972-1992 she directed and
taught at the Poetry Center at San Francisco State University, which has a recording of the
event mentioned here, on November 15, 1973, featuring Wieners and Robert Creeley, with
Fraser introducing them. In an account of meeting Fraser, Kevin Killian relays this
experience she had with Wieners:
She had invited Wieners to come give a reading but heard nothing from him
again until the day before the reading when he rang the bell, suitcase in hand,
announcing his presence. When she got back from work that evening he had
a) re-arranged all her furniture; b) tried on all her dresses and c) written a
poem for her, "For Kathleen Fraser and the Governor of the State of
California" ("What I saw at the Orono Conference 2000, Part II").
Spender, Austin Clarke, John Barth, Leslie Fiedler, Irving Feldman, Mac Hammond opened so many avenues for later consideration of Ed Dorn, Harvey and Joel. It also brought to pertenacity Denny and Grey, George Barker, as well as Isabella Gardner and John Logan. I shall never forgo the 4 and a ½ years there, at 3262 Main Street, in Room 5.

It has being a stupendous honor to hear from you,

John        Joseph
Jackie      John Joseph Wieners
Wiener

Allen Ginsberg

Allen Ginsberg:

Yes, I would like to read with you on October 26 in Rogers Hall at BC, if Mr. “Angus” MacLean’s invitation still stands for that evening. He called once about it. Entre nous, only you could handle the complexity of that event, talking to a lamp bulb and singing through a champagne bottle.

If that falls through, nonetheless I will be present somehow for the weekend festival. But first) I am not mailing a second check to Buffalo as they returned without a bank statement the first one, as insufficient when HTC neglected to honor their depositors, over September and only August on [illeg]. So Buffalo owed now accept my registration.


Eugene has not answered my acknowledgment of your entire family’s sponsoring myself in the total manner of lacksadaisical Jo ina Babs.


---


34 “Denny” was a nickname of Denise Levertov, but it is unclear to whom “Grey” is referring, perhaps his Black Mountain friend Grey Stone. George Barker (1913-1991), English poet and scholar; John Logan (1923-1971), American poet and teacher; Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924), American art collector and philanthropist who founded her eponymous art museum in 1903.

35 Looks like “fachinelors.”

The sane of the new inspection or the sense of it cautions some warming minorities forget labels & riot aimlessly tear-jerking DNC [illeg] A-J belittling, Do help unindubitably we third-class rapprocheables. “A young man… a street” now “the” “and disappeared around the corner. He was wear — … home.” “If I am ‘not mistaken, appeared to be on his way home from work.

As an example: The Law — ab

Arthur E. Sutherland

a) Corrected Handwriting    b) [illeg] Har — and writing
ad (NEIGHBORHOOD)

c) Respect Residents of the Beacon Hill Free School.

John Thibeau or Jack Thibeau

Copyright 1973

Strange things keep happening to me the last week, because it is September, and the beginning of October, and because the business world has begun again, and school has commenced at Harvard, men going around uncovering my brains in men’s bodies. Against my permission they were removed.

Not by cannibals, either. But by highly educated, brilliant men, who had everything in the world to live for, servants as Ezra Pound, to do that for us. Poetry if it ever gets published, my poetry may explain many apothegms, of marriage and wisdom as well as of inheritance. That goes without saying, or True, as the supposed thieves in the living room prove or test.

Then again, The Attorney General’s Office is not exempt from them either.  

1) We drag around the floor like this.
   2) Cyanide
   3) Ocean Mother of Romania
   4) Queen Mother of Prince’s Persia
   (“Sophocles” is written in the left margin, up the side of the page beside the above 4 items]

   1) Idolator of [illeg]

   2) Beware loneliness as tariff
   3) Laos s.f. “No ice in”
   4) Nice, Cannes, [illeg]

African Life
Corrected handwriting
Adherence to neighborhood
Respect residents of the B C HFM.

37 Arthur E. Sutherland (d. 1972), constitutional law professor at Harvard.
38 The previous three paragraphs are typewritten, while the rest of the letter is handwritten in a scrawl.
Charles Shively

Oct 20, 1973

[Oct 20, 1973]

[Boston]

J.W.
44 Joy Street
Boston MASS 02118
Flat Top
Rear Rite

Doctor Charles Shively
Poet and History Professor at BSTC
The Hemenway Estates
53 Hemenway Street
Boston, Massachusetts
Floor First

To my Oddest Co-operative

Charlie Chuck:

Your personage in our metropolitan
City proper is imperative
With no doubts. You contribute
to the perfectability, suave

and impeccable condition
That adds up to optimum attribute.

Off the partly-motive

John—
without motives.

Robert Wilson

Oct 20, 1973

[Oct 20, 1973]

[Boston]

Anyone within this genuine gnosis attaches to exhibitionism from Vermont to Nevada,
whizzing by in open jeeps, covering phone booths, occupying waiting rooms and receiving
awards in literature, cinema and as Mrs. W.T. Paley, best dressed and most healthy from the
households of Carnegie and Pecci-Blount.

I have to make my costumes up in my mind, as I spent $8000 this year along that
aim, not in psychotherapy of course but in Spanish jackets, a Persian lamb, Mexican silks,
Parisian scarves, an American suit, assorted poor boy jerseys and hardy shoes from Eleanor
Spec to Maggy Rouff. Sport clothes, chapeaux, and jewels besides driving lessons and travel,
for that purpose- awarded without resolution of self-stated ambition to cruise over China
then return through Paris and London, with peremptory inspection of Vienna before a
weekend in Yugoslavia, facts I believe I
accomplish

As in
Hilton,

39 After the first page, there is a strip of paper, the left fifth of a page torn off.
a Carl M
overlooked
plumb,
the town
I had see
career a
currency.
Western W
Central,
open embry
the station
must kn
routes
of Invest
Washing

---

**Larry Fagin**

Feb Thu 7, ‘74

[Boston]

Dr. Dr. Fagin:
417 E 12 St
New York N Y

Dear Lawrence

Begum of Mauritius

Gerard’s FILM “premieres” THIS Sunday, Fed 10
at Eight Thirty with a VERSE recitation; posthumous
filming to my GOD, my MASTER C J OLSON! How I hung
ger to view his visage upon the screen, and my own
of course, at THE CHAS STR. M. H. I HOPE WE CAN GET
IN, A SPRIL DIARY

I’m not calling collect, as I talked with MAUREEN&

confirmed your kindest telegram. You got the message.

That ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS IS SATISFACTORY, IF YOU AF-
FORD IT. IF NOT, that’s quite all right, as I have spo-
ken WORD, my dwelling is O.K. UNTIL THE FALL. AND FIFTY
DOLLARS A WEEK KEEPS ME IN LINE, with the work behind

GOVERNOR SARGANT’S HOME. I so wish you can visit before

P A R I S

I have an hand-written copy of Elizabeth Taylor, here at the house,
but looking for it today, was not able to locate it, or I would
have mailed it onto you. If it turns up, I shall bring it down
on the train. I am waiting to pick up the FIFTY DOLLARS so that
I may TRIP without burdening you by sending TRAIN FARE FIRST.
ONLY IN THE HOTEL DIXIE, ONCE DID I PANIC, NOT HAVING ROOM MONEY,
and thank GOD, DAVID POSNER got it to me, FEBRUARY 25, 1966:
LONG DISTANCE, MONEY ORDER TELEGRAM, THROUGH A FRIEND OF HIS FAT*
HER'S IN THE ADJACENCY BANK, WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE. HONESTLY, I
FELT LIKE BARBARA HUTTON, THAT TIME, TOO: AND I AM BRINGING A LONG
GOOD PIECE ON HER, FOR THE SAINT MARK'S POETRY READING FEBRUARY 14,
ONLY EIGHT YEARS NOW SINCE I MET MY BELOVED PANNA O'CONNOR. LOVELY
LADY, MY DARLING LOUISE*MARIE, DARLING, DARLING, MARIE*LOUISE.
Have another PIECE TO THAT INSTALLMENT, EARLIER, It's a continuation
of my Acquaintance to MS. Parkington, that appeared in Boston’s only
HOMOPHILE NEWS PAPER. FAG RAG. This LAST but not NEW ISSUE. Goodness, they have three of those installments ahead of them
but I shall retrieve a carbon, in Xerox, before journeying to your
welcome APPOINTMENTS!!!!!!!!!!
If ANNE WISHES, SHE MAY USE THE GOOD VIRGIN PARTS OF my REVELATIONS
as Ste. Bernardette. . . .

Sincerely Yours,

Jennifer Jones
Elizabeth Taylor

is my sister. You might as well know it. And as you might know, she is always with me, even though married to someone else. I recently visited them at their home in Cape Cod, where they have a small house, piquant for its quaintness against the woods of Duxbury, Massachusetts. It is large and spacious, true and blue, against under the oppressive clouds of August.

My sister is a generous woman. Never once in the thousand times we have met has she refused me anything. Of course, in an imposing question, she is confused: And with friends, she is thrifty. And in matters of generosity, you may be assured she shares in a human, impulsive fashion the dictates of my will.

Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, birthdays, holidays are always observed. She is ever faithful and will not deny the triumphs of her career in her personal dealings with others. Though often insulted by the mediocrity of contemporaneous activity, she peruses our her surroundings with harmony dignity and harmony no matter what the crisis.

In At the see end of the Second World War, and at its onset, she was horrified and overjoyed. Too much sorrow over death has ripened her maturity to a steadfast passivity, at times ununderstandable to anyone but her closest family relation, mother and myself. Her father of course plays a crushing role in her concern. Nonetheless, in a religious experience she must reject him.

Until I see her again, of course, I harness my own reserves towards a perfection of my talents, reaping the qualities of tidiness, dutifulness, and propriety in the event she may interpret the situation favorably.

Until of course public appearance demands, as it must, our conduct in town, I recall why yesterday she left such a favorable impression in my mind while showing a visitor from California the delights of Cambridge, in its hustle, bustle and traffic contradictions. We parted and Elizabeth came into the Pangloss Bookshop with her husband, with the most lovely coiffure and ensemble. Of course we had passed on the cobblestones earlier and I had mentioned to my guest, that the body we had just passed I had spoken to backstage, at the Schubert, after the performance, in a new Pulitzer prize-winning hit, now on Broadway at the Alvin Theatre.

I was in process of purchase, and of course, as the transaction completed itself, through the skilled hands of the clerk at the desk, I spoke to Miss Taylor, about her eyes and complemented her on their unforgettable blend of walk-plot ordinarines and trellis welcomers. She
was more than delighted at my praise of her vista and we passed fifteen minutes together in browsing separate – Needless to say, she did not purchase anything. Separately.

– John Wieners

[Enclosed: typescript revision of “A Superficial Estimation” (“Elizabeth Taylor is my sister…”) as it appears in Cultural Affairs in Boston]

Allen Ginsberg

October Friday 25 [1974]
[Boston]

Allen Gins:

My darling All, in regards to Saturday last, feelings suggest joint BENEFIT welcomed strenuously, in toto. I thank you whole-heartedly for taking me out to the West End, also standing me for L D P C to F. W. Leyland and the monies from Jim, overall amounting to 30$.

Urgency in regards to Behind the State Capital, wherein I mention you a.y.k. for “having assured the success of my first international volume! press anxiety. I.E. After XEROX in the Square, somewhere next Tuesday after Holiday, with banks and offices and stores closed, will be POST-recalled to EDITORIAL offices in G.B. & as well, TWO Xeroxes remaining ICI.

Or one ORIGINAL, and 1 Xerox at home.

Shld. I call LONDON about it? Am also enclosing BIO-Lds. and PHt. SUGGS. If no response, as there hasn’t been a query about running off texts of mine, for a reasonable amnt. of time.

I don’t feel Laurence’s press is wide enough to set the length of 120 poems. 30¢ in prose form.

Dedicately,

Jackie

Joseph Johnston Wieners

Robert Wilson

Saturday November 30, 1974
[Boston]

Thanksgiving Sunny Six

Dearest Robert and The Phoenix Books hop W I L S O N.

Ante-Matter Apartment

Ready to cut down to R A N D A L L G I B S O N ’ S
Charles Street Coffee United
Meeting House

then hike out on foot across Henry L O N G F E L O W ’ S B R I D G E for an early evening cinematography; at Massachusetts’ Orson Welles TRIPLE- H O U S E D ThEATRE – Notwithstanding, return or in any case plan to reconnoiter down town for E S S E X Street’s Playland. 

Your most happiness over the next balmy December
Holidays

John WIENERS Gerald FORD
EVE. AIRWAVES RADIO

75 11 – 18 – 25 T26W17T28 Monday

Robert Wilson [Nov 17, 1975] [Boston]

Better Forget Her
Chicago, Chicago, Chicago
Chicago, except for you Russ Durkee
ssgh Chick Schut; you better go,
Peter Marc and Blondie
Rose foes

Larry Fagin [December 6, 1975] [Boston]

Western Union Telegram

WILL BE IN NEW YORK FOR WEDNESDAY JANUARY 21 AT 830PM FOR CONTRACTING READING AT THE LISTED FEE OF $125.00 ALSO WOULD APPRECIATE HEARING ACCEPTANCE AT THE PROJECT FROM YOURSELVES TRAIN FARE NEGOTIABLE
JOHN WIENERS

---

40 Playland on Essex Street, Boston’s oldest gay bar, established in 1938.
Charles Shively
[Boston]
[1975]
The Reverend Charles Shively
Bureau of Missing Persons
53 Hemenway Street
Boston Mass 0211?

Attn: JAVANESE ANDIRONS

She took it all for granted at one time, now it catches up with them. Minerva [“Oklahoma 1975” stamp] for [“Oklahoma 1975” stamp] changes your life mine.

3 child Prodigy; infants Nan you’re a genius

Robert Wilson

Robert A. Wilson – Antiquarian, Bookseller
The Phoenix
22 Jones Str.
New York 1.C.M NY

Dear Bobbie:

Much thanks and seeing you next week, either Thursday even before, for taking 50 paperback editions of Good Gay Poets Two Hundred page 1500 number printing of Behind the State Capitol; Cincinnati PIKE! Hoping it sold you with C H U C K Shively, who called the night before last.

I WANT YOU TO SPEAK PROPERLY

for as far as we know, in receiving just ac-
The mid-eighties saw a bit of a John Wieners renaissance, with Black Sparrow bringing out two collections of his poetry, *Selected Poems* in 1984 and *Cultural Affairs in Boston* in 1986. Spearheaded by Lowell-born editor and publisher Raymond Foye, who’d come to know Wieners through their mutual friend Allen Ginsberg, the pair of publications resulted in glowing coverage throughout the American and British press, with Creeley reviewing the *Selected* in the *New York Times*, Fanny Howe in the *Boston Globe*, and Tom Clark in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. In an especially perspicacious review for *Exquisite Corpse*, Joel Lewis noted Wieners’ mix of confession and artifice, the roots of its illegibility to institutional poets:

> In this era of nomad MFA-trained poets wandering campus-to-campus in the promotion of their careers & upholding normative middle-class values, Wieners’s poetry is needed, as a Great Refusal to the currency of mediocrity. Although the tendency, even among his admirers, is to focus on the tragic scaffolding of his life, his work is more than a sociological document. It is a poetry of great clarity & stylistic innovation...  

*Cultural Affairs* was the last book of poetry published by John Wieners in his lifetime, though the renewed attention stirred by the new books – and ever-increasing buzz from the New American and Beat poets who’d loved his work all along – led to several more publications of journals that reflected the challenging, cryptic thinking of his final decades.
The following letter was sent from Wieners to John Martin, publisher of Black Sparrow Books, regarding his upcoming *Selected Poems*, which was reaching its final planning stages. Martin immediately forwarded the letter to Foye with a note of alarm. Foye called Wieners at his Joy Street apartment and told him of the panic his letter had provoked in Martin, reading it out to him; there was silence before Foye heard Wieners chuckling at the memory.42

* * * *

**John Martin**  
Tuesday, July 9, 1984  
[Boston]

Dear Mr. Fredericks  
The Sparrow Santa Barbara

de: NIGHT NURSE SAN FRANCISCO CITY HOSPITAL.

The title I have chosen is a roman à clef.  
“SHE’D TURN ON A DIME.”

D Rath.

Whom I don’t know: nor any other man could known, [illeg], Petracci!

The pope’s mistress is so wealthy, this is construed as a double past AND I would like it to be just NEW poems. but slightly under an hundred pages. My second Book.  
Raymond Foye at the Hotel Chelsea repeats over there! And, of course both your wishes will have to be obeyed.

2 other transitional figures are Rathbone’s memoirs as dictated by the other double port & the city mestre Nick Pappas; who has become secondarily Roberto on Broadway Open House. I like to think of Lo [–page torn] too, as that overly masculine woman, how to [illeg] the Oak Room, like Gene Tierney; peut-être Avis d’autre

Regarding: Claire at Breakfast in the Bad and [word cropped] Beautiful with “Arlene Dahl.”

He says that’s not what we call her,  
Albert has never appealed to me, personally.

A woman’s face: Queen Marg. 11 identities  
Immigration Department.  
“That pick is the navy blue of India”  
(Sophie Tucker). age 18

My favorite Comedienne on Broadway: Miss Gertrude Lawrence. That’s untrue. You know of course it’s Ghee Pompey’s inimitable Larry Ross. or myself in that terrible perf with Eleanor Parker as The King of [illeg]: King of Comedy.

42 Personal email from Raymond Foye, March 10, 2012.  
43 The final section of Wieners’ 1986 *Selected Poems* is called “She’d Turn on a Dime (1984).”
Why does Milton Berle wear women’s clothes and [torn]
Mexican City raincoat? Could it be “Mexican H [torn]
Cary Grant as [illeg] Wood. [torn]
Projection Room. Loebbs Oriental Theatre.
John Wieners

Raymond Foye 9/21/1984
[Boston]
Dear Raymond:
    Fine Estimates.
    Best to Isabel Bishop, painter at [illeg] headquarters [illeg] desk!
    It’s Friday evening, again and our guarantor E.M. Remarque from Montmarte\textsuperscript{44} sends his true [illeg] hearty cordials.
    \textit{Jack-[illeg]}

Raymond Foye [February 12, 1986]
[Boston]
Wednesday February
Twelfth Morning
Dear Ray 1986: / Catch you at the wedding.
    Tolls put me out of business. But Kudos from Gil Orlovitz on the QT.\textsuperscript{45} Thanks for the June Allyson Memento-Mori.

    My body is stimulated.
    And I can hardly BELIEVE
    CREDO’s spelled that way.

Wieners (Anne Revere)

Raymond Foye Feb. 13 1986
[Boston]
Kid:
    Merci.
    One of my dreams has been accomplished!
CITY ORDINANCE MANAGER –
over-burdened as you are, with ordinances in town, it’s logical delays took place OUT WEST.

If Gil, Bill etc. FALL THROUGH it’s not our fault. You promise as I. Orlivitz and \textit{as MARGOLIS}, have taken over.

\textsuperscript{44} Erich Maria Remarque (1898-1970), German author best known for his 1928 novel \textit{All Quiet on the Western Front}.

\textsuperscript{45} Gil Orlovitz (1918-1973), American poet.
Robert Wilson
June 30 Monday 1986
[Boston]

Dear Bob:

On the waterfront at the Boston Docks this morning. At last the title “She’d Turn On a Dime” has appeared as the next to last of same before Dolores. That is [illeg - Moran?]

Hatfield is hurt because publicity has been so scant. but as Loy off the cuff spks may her family suffer their false whore-house blues for whom an empty womb spells…

to Miriam back Streets
and North Quincy
SHORE

* * * *

It is fitting that Wieners’ letters would conclude with a note – a Christmas card – to one of his oldest friends, Robin Blaser. Wieners sent the card to an old address at St. Lawrence University, where his friend from thirty years before in Buffalo, Al Glover, found it and forwarded it along to Blaser in Vancouver with a note: “Look what arrived in my box today! I haven’t seen that hand for years!” And indeed the penmanship in the card is remarkably similar to his earliest letters from the late 1950s, the elegant penmanship of parochial school, as though no time had passed. In this “blast from the past” card, Wieners has written across the top: “The Black Mountain Review.”

* * * *

Robin Blaser
January 3 – [1997]
[Boston]

The Black Mountain Review

Dearest Robin

Just your two-volume edition on the works of “Tatum O’Neal” and I recommend your scrupulous board direction to any, who if I remember correctly, dare broach the subject.

Keep me posted on your new address.
Wish I could afford it.
It’s well worth the price

Wieners

[Card: “Sending you Christmas Greetings and warm wishes for all the delights of the season”]

and a remunerative year
ahead
1997 most

Jack
Robert Duncan            March 8, 1957

No, dear Robert, you are not late. Robin and I had your mss.—to-him thermwaxed? so we both have copies, and then you send one with an added section. OK. Don’t worry about sending duplicates, as I am sure we can do like-wise in the future, and it always gets me into a poem to have to type it, someone else’s that is.

The money also gave me a boost, to know that you care that much, in fact, this is what I am riding on so high these days, is that so many care.

And a flood of mss, too, but these (most of them) have to go back. Two days ago I spilt a bottle of blue ink over two of JB May’s so now I have to have them re-done before I return them. An awful hungry west coast bunch.

YES: I agree on Robin’s hunger after sound,¹ and told him I wd. open the issue with it, if we or he can get it from Don Allen. With a photograph, R says MAN RAY; of the child, the saxophone, the guardian cat somewhere. You see we both saw it together, that boy asleep with the cat raised in front of the lamplit windowshade, his paws on the kid’s hips, and his ears high.² I think of that poem as a landscape, and it has its greatest power when R names/plants the landscape, its objects for us. From a height? A medieval landscape, of course at the time, I had been looking at a lot of their paintings, with the landscapes enlarged in the books.

If I can’t get that one of Robin’s, then Marshall opens with a GO WEST poem,³ and a series of his. Of course, there is R’s Freud Poem, and then ‘And when I pay death’s duty’, but of course there is still the Evergreen, which ain’t, you know.

Spicer’s Psychoanalysis: An Elegy, is what I really want of his. I don’t like the ending of the Bird Poem⁴ and am after Robin to get Spicer to ‘maybe’ tighten it, I wd. even say, heighten it. Because what he’s done is easy. Rexroth⁵ ending Thou Shalt Not Kill, did better, if you want to do that at all. Still in that poem of Spicers ‘Bird’ there is an intellectual content that is present where else in his work. ‘The horse in Cocteau is as neo-classical an idea’ etc that whole passage is a great pleasure, and of course, the anecdote.

---


² Man Ray (1890-1976), American Modernist artist who spent most of his career in Paris. It is unclear which of his thousands of photographs Wiener is referring to here.

³ In 1965, former *Chicago Review* and *Big Table* editor Irving Rosenthal established “a press, Carp & Whitefish, with the express purpose to put the bulk of Marshall’s work into print.” At Rosenthal’s urging, Marshall gathered his poems, both published and in manuscript. The initial intention was to publish a series of small books, each of which would be organized around a theme (devotional, travel, sex, the color yellow, and so on). The first of these, *Transit Glory* (travel poems), appeared in 1967” (Abel n.p.).

⁴ The last two lines are “You can start laughing, you bastards. This is / The end of the poem.”

⁵ Kenneth Rexroth (1905-1982) was an American poet and scholar who was at the center of the San Francisco Renaissance of the fifties; he was the master of ceremonies at the famous Six Gallery reading on October 7, 1955, where Ginsberg first performed “Howl.”
I am glad there are so many openings for you, and it wd. be fantastic, in fact no greater pleasure for me than to see Princess C print the MAIDENHEAD.\(^6\) I appropriate it, as if I am somehow in it. Last summer was a very close time, and what was done had all of us part of it. A very beautiful time, despite the pain, the lack.

Again: Where could I get work of Mary Butts? In what dust, Mary Butts? I feel her, often. I began with The Crystal Cabinet, and then Ashe of Rings! Then the letdown of Speed the Plough, and now Robin gives me Armed With Madness. So there must be poems of hers in the family, or if no family, the estate, or in someone’s hands. What do you think?

There was one of hers in Louis Zukovsky’s OBJECTIVISTS ANTHOLOGY,\(^7\) which you might not have seen, so I go now to copy it out, and enter into her South. Maybe her south with us last summer, and I never knew it.

Thank you again Robert for the mss, which I will use, although I was pleased with it ending ‘There are no instructions.’ Maybe it was just the thing of finality. Anyway, no bother, as just my own taste. And thank you again for the pledge and the interest.

John

Charles Olson

3-9-57

Dear O:
Were you the one who did Queen Street Burle-Q in that CoMBUST? I can’t tell from the layout, but don’t answer you rat you did.\(^8\) Did I write that the sky has fallen in on Cock Robin? But don’t rush, for I put out 8 pages, so fill what you want. Spicer wrote: GET the one with ‘motorcyclists racing in from the sea’. His best. Anyway, thank you for the PUSH out West, suddenly they are lambs dropping their wool on my stoop: Give MEASURE the guns’ eh? Michael’s FATHER shall follow Gavin’s BLANKET. for ‘they are all their mother’s sons’. And Marshall open/ or R Blaser, but something called Grove (Evergreen?) has his mouth tied. Again, later

---

\(^6\) Wieners is referring to Duncan’s play *Medea at Kolchis: the maiden head*, which Wieners and other students had performed the summer of 1956, but unpublished until Oyez Press’ edition in 1965.

\(^7\) An Objectivist Anthology was published in 1932 by To, Publishers, a small press run by Louis Zukofsky with Charles Reznikoff and George and Mary Oppen. It featured many important Modernist writers, not all of them self-identified as “Objectivists” but all engaged in the Objectivist project of creating the poem as an object out of the stuff of the everyday, inspired by the pathmaking work of William Carlos Williams. The anthology included several of Wieners’ favorite writers, like Pound, Williams, and Mary Butts.

\(^8\) In issue #1 of *Combustion* (January 1957), Raymond Souster inserted one of his own poems, “Queen Street Burle-Q,” but failed to note that it was his poem; it was placed right after Olson’s “The Loves of Anat, 1,” with no clear separation between them, and many readers assumed the poem was Olson’s. In fact, George Butterick and Albert Glover accidentally included “Queen Street Burle-Q” in Olson’s posthumous collection *Archaeologist of Morning* (Whiteman).
Ed Dorn
April 9, 1957

Dear Don:

Here finally are some poems. The two I like best, are the last two I’ve written, but feel free to pick what you like, or none, if you don’t like.

No:2 sounds very grand/ and NO:3 even grander I think in Robin’s second part, he has such a break in line, that the poem gains excitement in craft it did not have before.

Measure is at the printer’s and is promised back early in June, and w/send you one then

It’s here, spring, i.e.

The best,

John Wieners

Wrote to North Africa yesterday, as he had sent three pages of ‘contacts’ and information. Ginsbergmessiah/ though this does seem to be a year, in which great things are happening, and he is one of the causes. I don’t think there would be as much freedom for what both of us are doing, an interest in results unless he had howled somewhat, first, over the countryside.

(On re-reading this, I haven’t identified the two poems I say are the last. Well, they are the handmaid ones, with references to the city awaiting them)

Michael Rumaker
April 9 [1957]

Dear Michael:

Just to say that once you set up shop, YOU in the night & day’ are of use. They do compose themselves, if one doesn’t interfere by story. This doesn’t mean I’m miffed simply that why you don’t think them of worth is why I want them, that Jung has all he needs, and the rest of us don’t & cd. compare, make use of same, see the story

A handbook.

As they declare themselves. Laid down as they do not until we lay our heads. Caught up if we get up.

Bits, fragments. I’ll make the handbook out of old skirts, and sign no names, if necessary.

love, MEASURE
My dear Daddy Dorn:

You’ve got to understand the delay/ that I have wasted my time in saving people’s feelings, been too soft and tried to answer all those cruddy poems that flood in now from Fairbanks Alaska to Maine. Magick unfortunately no one has picked up on, in fact they object, somewhat. Olson says “it must be all lure, sorcery / White hands on the ladies’ white legs, stress silk stockings, panties.”

So this waste has only allowed me to keep current with what demanded / w-out any groundwork on No:2 – I wd. say it be more Black – fuck Duncan’s lady riding out to green – That it be streetwalkers / and Augustine’s wet pillows and the old lady from the furnished room stealing oranges in the A&P. Frobenius is out, as I think back to on it. Though maybe in No: 4 – I have 20 extra pp. on Pound & Mussolini by Achilles Fang? This also tentative as I don’t know whether I want to cash in – it depends on what you do.

DON’T listen to the blurb I sent. As it is aimed at those quarters mainly in NY – where O’Hara & VR Lang & etc matter but they don’t in Measure.

Be assured that only what’s there is there because I like it or etc / not because its ‘chic’ as I’ve learned to say, in my green corduroy suit and banana curls.

Then again – if you read long enough in NY poets you can find 50 lines out of a 9 page poem, 36 lines to a page, to say it has ‘something’ in it.

You’ve got to try me on anything, but not the prose. I can’t do it ‘justice’ nor do I have interest enough. There is enough in Report from Wash: March to measure up/ surpass any poem I’ve received in the last month. But personally it will be delight to read a batch, and to say/ by mid-May. There w/be Rumaker dreams, 2 McClure, more Marshall, Creeley? (I wrote him) more Duncan (I will write him) Olson

May 14

Creeley w/ be in #2 – he doesn’t know what yet – Duncan a be-u-tiful poem

The Dance – an opening piece – also a thick bit on Maidens.

Then again I got a book of Kerouac’s to dig something from – though I wd. say his cd. wait until 3 – The City – Mexico City Blues

57 Blues

So do you want to do anything even notes say on the Tarot Deck –

Or something for the handbook of dreams, even a page – written out as you wd. tell it across a supper table.

Then we’ll have a bit on numbers from I Ching? (From you?).

#9 means fellowship

men in the meadow –

Also Duncan is urging Levertov onto No:2 – but you see why I am hot on some of you rather than these is that one won’t know to expect & I want to fit the magazine to what you do. O.K.
No#1 is at printers – will be ready by middle of June & I’ll send same – so good. Money slow – but Time-Life subscribed yesterday & etc James Laughlin (3.00)!9

It will happen –
Write if you can – Questions or whatever.
Absolute deadline is June 15 – or earlier as Sankey is puis slow.
    My best to Helene and very glad –
Moonlake Casino & all that –
    So send a big batch of it all –
Faithfully –

PS – The Pound & Mussolini is out love John

Larry Eigner

May 8 [1957]

Dear Larry:

Again you will have to pardon delay / but at least I offer you the results, that the proofs are done/ and now only await return which will be (knowing Sankey now) all of 10 weeks, the bitch.

BRINK looks ‘gorgeous’ on the page, and I am glad it is long. Because I’ve been following you up in other places, and they’ll take you but only a page or so. So I am glad in MEASURE you’ll get some space.

Another delay of course, is that there is so much of you, it throws one. And when I tackle it start at the beginning, but I wd. want it no other way.

Thank you more than the words for the money. I print sponsors on the back, so some like Duncan Blaser dont want their own names, I use their lovers, or whatever. Do you want it under Israel Eigner or your own, which I wd. like. Let them know this is a poet’s book.
Mgt Anderso: read by those who write the others.

I have gone for yr stu ff at Audience/ but there has been no result. And it is now owned by an undergraduate: Peter Wyman,\textsuperscript{10} well he’s alright, still they have no sense of where we are today, what has happened in verse, is.

Century will be worse/ since I dont think they even will get to No: 1. I shall contact them though. For I will give you 5 pages in Number: 2. Also if the idea is not offensive to you, wd. you send a photograph, as I plan with some worked vacation money to have a page [illeg] & of contributors: a montage, with you all thrown together. I dont care what it is, if only yr hand or yr desk, I might as well make joy for myself. I return a batch of poems here,

\textsuperscript{9} James Laughlin (1914-1997) founded the seminal press New Directions out of his dorm room at Harvard, using his considerable fortune from the steel empire his great grandfather, an Irish immigrant, had built.

\textsuperscript{10} Audience: A Quarterly of Literature & the Arts was published in Cambridge; its first issue came out in 1957.
oh about Rolling, it was not printed in One, so if you want to send the correction, there is time, the deadline not being for three weeks. That is why I will get Century.

I will use Boxes, OK, if Naked Ass dont.

Now lets talk about reviews. The PONSOT is great, and I will print same. For you dont praise Ginsberg, ‘so calm down wild bells (we know you dat’ a very fine ending. Oh fuck words; I like it. And I enclose it for you to type again. And I think her poems shd be hit the way you do it. Otherwise, I wd. not like so much. In fact, I wd. be stronger.

But the Levertov, simply because you give to Allen Ginsberg qualities I dont think he possesses, ‘he’s more timely, you cant get away from that’ YOU are timely, faster than he’ll ever be

I dont know what the hell to make of the review, its exciting and the questions (not slick) anyplace. If you want to quote her so much, all right.

Timely, that you have time in yr poem, in the way you cut thru, how he plods, is caught in the mouth and the head to make sentences. You dont give a damn for the sentence/ and that’s timely.

made copy & ret’d to you original. I dont think I understand:

(d1) ‘THERE’S A DANGER IN THAT TOO, tho I like the most its CONTENT: the present always is here’

(time problem) it wd be the greatest if you cd explore this more, it’s yrs, at least thru yr work, you are more concerned than ANYONE right now, making it. So there’s really quite a bundle to print, and that I am most grateful, the pickings being more slim than you can imagine, from others.

NOW: Measure I’s only delight right now to me has been all the space it leaves open for II: the improvement that I think II is, namely there is more ‘manifest’ than the one thing Measure I has been accused of. (VIOLENCE & FILTH)

And critics always frighten me, diminish me. Man, they should not.

Fielding Dawson wrote from NY, he thgt Brink best poem of yours he had yet seen. Better certainly I think than how you were presented in Sparrow.

Again: Larry Eigner as sponsor appears in Measure II, the sponsorship coming later than deadline. Duncan’s also. And Marshall, and abt six more, so Measure really is a little solid, although Harvard fired me two weeks ago, anyway, there are only 75 copies left of 300 copy printing.

I sent Mr Berman his, and you cd tell him none of those f……. words are in II, not even one. I wish I cd do state issue right now as I like yr poem that much. Oh yes, Measure II has 64 pages, and it, if the mss come thru, wd be great to keep it there that size, but I’ll let the quality determine that. Will return photo very quick, as there is a tie-up on

---

Marie Ponsot (b. 1921), New York poet, translator, and teacher whose first book, True Minds, was published in 1957 by City Lights Books.
montage, I’m not sure yet, I shd lay out loot. And cant get everyone in time, too expensive
to reproduce every photo before I cut them up, & it probably won’t look good. Whatever yr
photo, OK, w/ be ret’d. Creeley still edits BMR: BMC, Its ‘estate’ provides backing. For a
couple more issues. Creeley says he has seen proofs on ½ of SEVEN. But that was months
ago: his address:

1826 Griegos NW
Albuquerque, (sp?) New Mexico

Re letter of June 11th: I did not see you come in auditorium either, only when Wms. came
ever: I had seen yr. father (unknown to me) go up, and I thgt it some contemporary of
Wms. then saw Wms. very shy even walk towards the audience, and from where we sat in
back of hall, on grandstand, lean over and talk, and then it came w/o seeing at all, that it
must be you. I thgt Wilbur disgusting myself.

Yes: in Lamont, they have the Woodberry Poetry Room/ and all that magazine are anywhere,
they keep, and the locos like us, read same, and so I come across yr stuff, where it’s done
elsewhere.

Laughlin (Inland Steel) YES that’s the money behind NEW
DIRECTIONS, HA, him & his usury, whatever, I don’t listen anymore, to editors.

What do you mean: writing a novel? Cuz I was carrying all
that crap, that Friday. No, I am a poem-man strictly, can barely read prose, unless it’s to do w/
poem/ w/poets.

Now a serious question: what does Koshare KOSHER? mean? Also that all those chichi
sanfranciscans (oh well, all I want to say: is that you are the first one to dig MEASURE,
that even Olson has not come back, or Duncan but I didn’t expect him to)

that it great there is word in somebody’s mouth for it, besides ‘I liked
Spicer best, or who’s Ed Dorn’ etc.

Now: Tambimuttu\(^\text{12}\) is editor of Poetry: London: New York mad from his
editorial in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} issue, last one to appear, & that was at least six months ago, so man,
maybe he has. (gone home)

Shawms – it’s supposed to be, wait till you hear this. Marshall arrived tonight from NY and
I asked him: what shauns mean: he said: it’s shawms, and I got his original mss, and it’s true,
that’s what he had down, but then he said: why it’s what they wear over their shoulders, like
a shawl/ then I looked it up & shawms are: an obsolete word meaning reedpipe. Oboe.
Which Marshall says: it fits anyway. That’s what you mean by casual, and what I don’t think
II has as much of:

swagger etc. I think is needed amidst the pantywaists
I love a parade, me on one, and the expose is ½ the fun the poet gets from the poem.
Except, dangerous, if one’s intent is only effect.

Tiamat:

Maximus [illeg] somewhere [illeg] → [illeg] those that lay down in Tiamat,” (biblical) place of stupor, I
imagine, tho Marshall’s out. I’ll leave this unsealed & check when he turns up. See PS.

\(^{12}\) Meary James Tambimuttu (1915-1983) founded Poetry: London in 1938, and over the next
decades, like Laughlin’s New Directions, published most of the major Modernist poets.
Murdok: a personal reference, inturned thing from Mr'shall's own scene, friend I wd take it, of his in NY.

TErrIBLE Blunder on Olson: reading Cock in next (oh I told you that already)
I think you lay on Jonas much more intellectual weight than he is conscious of, tho this is the effect he wishes to lay around, that he has one.
When I take his chief value to be bitch, etc, all the black that goes w/ this.

MARSHALL IN: Tiamat is: the mother of chaos: my Funk & Wagnalls Dictionary of Folklore says: Tiamat: The primeval dragon of the Mesopotamian cosmological myth: Enuma Elish // the mother of the gods, who was destroyed, cd only be destroyed thru her open mouth, & by MARDUK, sic Marshall's Murdok, no personal reference at all, in fact Marshall hysterical that I thgt so. Enuf on traces (Mr Keen). Marduk: the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon, the god of the CITY OF BABYLON. Hero of the creation myth. From his mouth issued flame. They attempt (Marduk & him cohorts) attempt to put order in universe. Tiamat goes to battle against them, she a sea dragon. and receives an arrow thru mouth into heart. He cuts her body in ½, 1 part to form heavens, and the other, the earth. It dont say, which to which, somehow I think we got the lower ½, or maybe he split her down the middle. // Re you in Mezuh:

Mistakes will not happen again, within my power, stanza-wise, indentation-wise; I think too, he shd have kept DORN on his own page, he certainly cd have, and left

13 Olson's poem “Variations, for gerry van deweile” in Measure: One contains a typographical error in Part III, “Spring,” that would continue to embarrass Wieners. Olson submitted the poem with the ending

  In the roar of spring,
  transmutations. Envy

  drags herself off. The fault of the body and the soul
  – that they are not one –

  the matutinal cock clangs
  and singleness: we salute you

  season of no bungling

However, “the matutinal cock” (in other words, the cock of early morning, “matutinal” from the Latin matins) was printed as “the matutinal clock.” In an August 17, 1957, letter to Larry Eigner, Wieners explains that it was a printing error, not present in the proofs he’d gone over, “only in finished copy, nothing to do abt it, because proof sheets rather: page proofs are not a service [Villers] offers. It was the opening poem of Measure’s first issue, and the irony of the last line’s proclamation – “the season of no bungling” – was lost on neither Wieners nor Olson. Coincidentally, Wieners’ first collection of poems the following year would also be missing a “cock,” as the printers working for Auerhahn Press censored The Hotel Wentley Poems by replacing the offending word with a blank space in the title “A Poem for Cocksuckers.” It remained Wieners’ habit to insert “Cock” by hand when asked to sign first editions of Hotel Wentley.
you yours, thus named wd not be crammed. I am responsible for position of POEM*TITLES/ AUTHOR'S NAMES, their position.

I think I swagger more in remarks (this casual thing you point out which is new to my head) in Number II.

Whatever I wont make you say Too bad! again.

over –

By all means send as much new stuff as you want to. It boosts me up, although I cant answer dont mean you shd not write, if you feel it, abt whatever,

I return also yr friends poem from Lawry, Maine

Arthur MacFarland

as you say, it has lines. And many of them too. Send anyone else’s also that you come across.

What is word in

THE MOVIE OF IT

that you wrote over: (sin): next to last line.
I’ll hang on to it, also, & see how my time affects it.

Yes, I wd say his Enslin’s mag doubtful, and he has been in hospital, was there anyway in April, or so, but planning out. His liver, or something.

NOW I SEE one poem of yrs I have sent out for MAGICK (MEASURE: II)

‘Before setting
the sun…

Christ, I hope no one else has it, or used it. If they have, cd you let me know right off, & I’ll send replacement to printer.

I dont find rhetoric in you, at all.

Yr statement that you regard DAYS as magnum opus, is enuf for me to say: send it back, but it might not matter to you now: I usually never return anything to you, until I have exhausted all chances with it, that so I’d probably return it again, but if it’s not a bore to you, send back.

Evergreen Review is a quarterly edited by Don Allen & the publisher of GROVE PRESS, Barney Rosset, who also publishes Evergreen Books. The address is 795

14 According to Donna Hollenberg’s biography of Denise Levertov, Arthur MacFarland was “a boatbuilder, violinist, and contemporary poetry lover whom Denise regarded as an ideal reader”; he helped Levertov and her husband Mitch Goodman find a getaway spot in Pleasant Point, Maine, in 1958 (160).

15 Barney Rosset (1922-2012), founder and publisher of Grove Press, and publisher and editor-in-chief of the highly influential Evergreen Review. He faced down immense censorship efforts publishing the first editions of William Burroughs’ Naked Lunch, Henry Miller’s Tropic of Cancer, and D.H. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterly’s Lover. The first two resulted in landmark anti-censorship court rulings; the publication of Lawrence broke an international ban on the book, resulting in an American edition coming out (in 1959) a year before the British.
Broadway, NYC. $1.00 a copy of Evergreen, but picture of Duncan, a lotta poems, and a lot of people who are part of/measure: 5 short poems of Creeley in 2, Jack Kerouac has choruses in M:II, Stuart Z. Perkoff has 4-6 page poem, Steve Jonas has 8 pages, Books III and IV from a long poem for Jack Spicer because he needs it. Robin Blaser—6 page poem: Hunger of Sound, etc etc. 2 Duncan, a short Olson, short piece by Rumaker on: The use of the unconscious in writing, and seven of his dreams. Ginsberg sent mystical letter (not really) that I think good enuf to print in City Issue: with a poem & his father writes that it wd be interesting, if they cd appear together, which idea I dig.

PLEASE SEND ARTICLE: “epistle to Henry Luce on the way he pedaled the A E and the nuclear tests.” Scald me (sure). Let TIME cancel their subscription, they aint paid yet anyway.18

Write and my best, and thankye for the work done.

John W.

6:10AM!

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Michael Rumaker

May 17. [1957]

Dearest Mike:

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16 Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), American novelist and poet who achieved meteoric (and toxic) celebrity in 1957 with the publication of On the Road. Wieners was among the first to publish Kerouac (and William Burroughs), including some of his Mexico City Blues in Measure. In a June 7, 1957 letter to Ginsberg, Burroughs, Peter Orlovsky, and Alan Ansen, Kerouac is enthusiastic about the publication: “I just wrote a mad poem and sent it to John Wieners, yes Whalen and I sent him a big mad letter with Corso, him and me poems, and Gary [Snyder] too, all’s set, we’re all accepted and to be published in the next 3 issues!” (Kerouac 47)

17 Michael Rumaker’s essay “The Use of the Unconscious in Writing” appeared in Measure #2 and was later reprinted in the 1991 Wesleyan College Press edition of Gringos and Other Stories. In it, Rumaker offers a theory of fiction grounded in the psychological studies he’d engaged at Black Mountain. In his essay Rumaker writes that fiction can be read “obliquely, [as] a map of the unconscious, its terrain and peopling. The physical can be made to yield psychic responses.” It is a marriage of New Criticism-era fiction-writing basics, the creation of a world through sharp, concrete observations, with Jungian insight: “The unconscious nests the actual” (n.p.).

18 Henry Luce (1898-1967), highly influential publisher of Time, Life, and Fortune magazines, among others, married to playwright and Republican congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce (1903-1987) who was instrumental in the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission under President Truman in 1946.
I was thinking as I walked home this afternoon, happy and full of Measure, that it is not what I receive that matters/ its what I give, make of the space of myself that gives the pleasure. This/ the success, why success is empty because it means you get things for what was done in the past. NOW i walk in/ and there is Basil’s letter (very firm with promise of drawings for No: 2) and then you, and I read the list dream and I dont take so much to the language of, yet content & bulls & barn YES, maybe Mother in capial M, anyway I see the heading of the next/ and then it comes that you are GIVING me the dream from BM, and I go on & it builds and at the end there is something in my throat A BIG : OH NO, the perfection of, the no word there I dont make, that it rushes over me, the field the run the well and the stone, so perfect, with nothing but the fragment/ the clarity of what a dream is: THAT i am opening MAGICK with THIS 1st night etc. Above the lovely Duncan Waltz, and then Creeley promises some thing, notes articles etc, and I have some NY poems that will make (not mine the NYers) and Basil’s drawings, and a few good Eigner at this date ALSO a contributors page, with a montage done out of their faces, maybe not even recognizable, at least not identified in contents just who they are; simply with HEADING: CONTRIBUTORS, like a shot I sent O of negroes looking in a window, the camera inside, all black, them black, their faces clothes, all in positions, of desire. So if the idea is not offensive to you please send a photograph, and you must trust me on it. That it will not be exploitation – simply letting the face, whatever is seen of it or the tools of the men (yr hand, desk, pantlegs,) stand as biography of them. Thus we do away with all that crap, and let the man in.

OK Forgive the thickness of language here, I go back to you with much pleasure. The cover of Measure: I is hideous, layout, type used for title) so I got to do something there. For Two. My problems, however, and things are well. Did you get Origin XIX? Come back later.

I just typed the date above, must have been a happy day on the black hill two days, maybe when we walked down thru the flowers, and Olson tooted his horn, and gave that limp wrist wave, as if we were off to sin in the woods. MAJOR STUFF, MIKE, THIS DREAM OF YRS. Has sent me off frantic. So that one does get a lift from receiving.

May 21
Well, I’ve gone over the dreams again & again. This business of editing is like the women with too many clothes laid out at her greedy hand. She has no will. Keeps saying: well, I’ll take just one more. So altogether I take 8 of them – . they open the book. Followed by Basil’s drawings – I feel they shall fit there. We’ll see. He sounds like walking the good ground. Here they are some reasons for same & the order as of now that they will be in. If you see contention, etc feel it, please write same & we can pull over the same material if you care to. – Possibly I try to impose a coherence on them. A continuity. Anyway read your copies as I have them now marked: to see how that buying man (the consumer) shall get it.

1) 1st night 2nd night 3rd night: Here because they: open are tied to no place. Have ‘THE IRIS SHOT as the silent movie men wd call a shot. Like seeing thru a periscope & then the scene opens to

2)
walking down a city street . . . like the sentence here. The verb ‘plastered’ the moving into another locale – No stated shift. And of course – the intensity of the end – what makes it remembered ‘They were watching me’.

3) ‘A dark night. A deserted sidestreet.’ Again the same province. This dream almost my favorite. Because of after statement – “the blood will come & we’ll cry, I thgt’. Namely that ‘powerless feeling’ peculiar to the dream. & knowledge of event before it happens. SPECTATOR. Event in here most powerful. So that . . . one flees &

4) ‘A door opens & an aged negro woman ushers me’
Nothing much here for me but it casts image. Makes scene. & creates a ‘him.’ for

5) ‘I take his yellow bird on my finger.’ Just that this possesses quietness, beauty, a warm dream until – the struggle, the horror & the gradual building up of occurrence until it happens. Also friend here & 6) is My friend & I were working at a Woolworth 5 & 10. Now we are saved from the violence of the previous 4 dreams, the mystery’s over for we are delivered up to the keeper. OK that ain’t it. Just a sense for me. That protection’s here. I am not using ‘Old Casey is dead’ for somehow they seem to be similar in affect & like objects of this one better.

7) is the return from city etc. The tall one ‘full of ideas & concern’ over what has happened. Though I do object to Mother as capital M. ‘the ancient Mother’. She is of course, but I like to do the work in discovering her (as reader, ic.). You do not have it capitalized all the way thru. So advise me. Return. But the prize given. The 5 for the 1. Here was where I wanted to end it. But my greed forces me to include

8) A jagged rock in the midst of a dark, storm torn ocean. For again, as on bus – there is the sense you are held by/ held up by other powers – And it is the man in art . . . ‘have to hear what the voices say’ the in-conclusion. The no answer given. The doubt of ‘Why not fall in?’ Left actually as we are left in the day. And ‘Then darkness’. Sleep. Dreams over. Death/baby.

So please forgive me. Imposing things (scheme) on. them you didn’t have. But there are all kinds of other things going on that don’t relate to any of this. Also providing the pleasure. Robin Blaser very pleased here w/ them w/ give him copies (his request) & he’ll write you re them. He said ‘Such joy to read the well-written, ‘complete sentence.’

? 

I am in doubt over ‘bulls’. Think it shd. be used but can’t see an in yet. Anyway w/ let you know final places.

In every one – even ‘study’ I sense a significance. And the intensity is brought here. Sometimes the over-dramatic verb or adjective puts a pin in me.

‘body straining into a white wind’
‘mutely grieving’
‘blinding, obliterating’
These are all – and really only my style not in concord. Simply words I wouldn’t use.

‘Weeping’ I have always hated. But minor actually. And they present no interferences w/ body of any. I have said enough. They add up to about 6 pages –

19 Actually two lines dramatically arcing across the page.
20 Could be “white wine.”
And let me tell you very frankly, I believe the issue of 2 w/ the other has a significance now that all the poems in it w/o not give. A plumbline to a depth. Stirring up. Giving the chi-chi NYers ‘a materia poetica’ They starve. And don’t know how to ask. This lays out before their eyes. A direction.

Don’t feel they are flat, w/o drama. They cd. be stripped further even/ and nothing w/o be lost. Please let loose on any of this, if you want to. Also/ the Lilacs can’t go now. As is, Measure No:2 will be 64 pages, I am hoping.

Do send photo -- & trust me with it. Something w/ the eyes there.
Still I hold Lilacs for far future.
For Measure goes to 1960.
Please excuse pencil as I am at Lamont & nothing else is available. No:1 there middle of June in case I didn’t say.

Much love,
always

John –

I am well & very domestic. Did I tell you Creeley in No2, he says & surprise. Also resting a bit from the hump of getting 2 off in June.

Dear Mike:

The Last Addenda: At Home, a letter and 2 photos from Olson, so send yours, man, also he says:

By all means, ast Mike
if he’ll let you use
Section I (a page and ¾ single space
of a piece
called
The Use of Unconscious in Writing
(isnt it a beautiful title? and
section I of the whole thing is
a 1st class …. (something I cant make out)
richest wisest
finest
imaginable statement
-- & one all others (including
myself) have not
succeeded in

I’ve written him I think
section II & III steal fr
the unity and power of I,
exciting tho they are.

SO HAS CREELEY GOT IT ALL. Baby.

21 This quote is from a letter Olson wrote to him on May 17, 1957, which Wieners seems to have received between starting this letter and writing the “addenda”; his habit of adding post-scripts to letters often stretched the letter-writing process over days.
If not, send pronto. But I fear so….

Also he says if I can get a photo from Harry Redl22 of him in fuzz it is a wow, so I wd. write but no address, can you supply same?

TRY, because I want this page great. No biography shit. Also pass to whomever there who’s been in this fucking thing, to send photos. I am bushed. Spent three hours, answering O, & nothing, on my part.

We’ll throw you all in the Public Gardens.

Oh honey, though I have never been as tired, it is the greatest time of all for me, since I began swinging this measured stick.

OOOKAY.

He says ‘this piece (TUOUIW) in the sense you wanted for #2”

James Schuyler

[June 5, 1957]

Dear J:
You are I suppose as busy as I am. Anyway just to ease my mind, can you make the new poems here by a week from today? I got 5 pages set aside for you in 2, but please dont feel this a burden, if you cant make it. I want to send copy off by the 15th, the forin printer being so slow. Number One way behind his promises, tho I got loot, etc. MAGICK great, with 8 pages of dreams opening, and a bit on THE USE OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IN WRITING. Also enclose a photo of yrself, if available, as I plan a Photo-montage of contributors to Measure, no biographical crap, let the eyes tell the story, or the hands, not birthplaces, birthdates, etc. All you together with a common background behind, the Public Gardens? If you can take time & talk re yrself, & what of that you send you think most there, I wd. love, same

OK, My love

love - John

Robert Duncan

June 8 [1957]

PS – All the faults in poems – effect’ I never

saw this before – but bellydancer has this for

making her act –

June 8

Dear Robert:
I have tried three letters to you – ripped up a good 3 hrs writing – I send this off to you – that yr beautiful letter has made it impossible for me to answer – where you treat of major things / and I can rise only to

_____________________________________

22 Harry Redl (1926-2011), Canadian photographer whose portraits of West Coast writers and artists helped shape the public (and self-)perception of the Beat phenomenon. His portfolio “Eight photographs of San Francisco Poets” appeared in the *Evergreen Review* “San Francisco Scene” issue.
defenses – rip into the poems. I guess all – it is – that I answer thru the measure of the magazine – that I am too much engaged - #2 will be of some uncovering, I hope.

‘and loudly as we may cry for magic again!

(there is not much around).

Rumaker opens: The Use of the Unconscious in Writing & then 7 or 8 dreams — Kerouac

Festival: Perkoff – Feasts of

  Death, of Love

  Duncan – The Dance

Object – McClure

Schuyler²³

____________________________

of ladies —

I raise it to 64 pages – cd you send photo before a few more days — Deadline the 17th

Thank you for what I get out here – Love John

[vertically up left margin]: envelope for return of poems — OK —

Charles Olson  June 11 [1957]

Dear Charles:

May I USE, put into #2, the back side of the short note you sent me re Magic:

    white hands
    (on the ladies’
    white legs – no
dirtiness left

i.e. have that reproduced as you wrote it/ with

the drawing of the ‘fiery’ hand.

And have the ‘stress

    silk stockings &
    panties

²³ James Schuyler (1923-1991), American poet at the center of the New York School, alongside O’Hara, Guest, Ashbery, and Koch. His 1980 collection The Morning of the Poem won the Pulitzer Prize. Along with Frank O’Hara he worked in curation at the Museum of Modern Art, informing his poetry not just through an affinity with the art movements of the 50s and 60s, but also by intense ways of seeing; his poetry is notable for its close attention to the things of the everyday.
Dear Bob:

Yes – on the week – Say Monday – the 24th I believe mag. shd be made in all ways by what contributors do/fit to them. They make the measure. If you want more – let me know by then. I’ve got a ladies section & I hope what you do will help it up off its back. Duncan for his photo is sending the one of you & him in Mallorca that shd do – if you can’t find one – OK? if I just write whenever. The best in grad school.

John Wieners

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Dear Rainmaker:

Robert Creeley

6-18 [1957]

Dear Bob:

Yes – on the week – Say Monday – the 24th I believe mag. shd be made in all ways by what contributors do/fit to them. They make the measure. If you want more – let me know by then. I’ve got a ladies section & I hope what you do will help it up off its back. Duncan for his photo is sending the one of you & him in Mallorca that shd do – if you can’t find one – OK? if I just write whenever. The best in grad school.

John Wieners

---

Charles Olson

July 24 [1957]

Dear Rainmaker:
Hope this does not get to you too late. This time, it is me behind. The countryside also in terrible drought, everything brown & the heart’s up in strange air looking for a little cool taste. Measure I all paid for, LONG AGO, sample copy received two weeks ago, but NO BULK. So of course, Measure II held up. But it will be 64 pages, 400 copies of, including

SHE WHO HITS AT WILL,

Dana again fighting fires in Swampscott. Leaving me a city, so much of which I have never known before. But have had too much of now.

You will see us? If only for a little while. And I will show what has been done.

There is no place for books altho Blaser & I have racked brains to think of one: no place but my mother’s cellar, which I doubt will hold but must come to 30 boxes. Re yr future plans, no One knows.

I am a dried up prune.

And hoping that a lot of work on Measure will benefit both. The good thing about I is that there is plenty of room in it for the improvement that II will have. A surety, maybe present in II. Whatever, there will be no sense in continuing to make it unless I have the well of you to draw from. If I didn’t tell you, Projective Verse 1950 makes the beginning of this decade, for pace, and Measure I plan to end it, mark it 1960, but not w/o Charles Olson.

CONTENTS PAGE FOR II

Rumaker:  The use of the unconscious in writing, pt I
Blaser:  The hunger of Sound, 10 p
Larry E:  Poem
Creeley: Juggler’s Thot,
Rumaker:  Seven dreams
Kerouac:  5 choruses from Mexico City Blues plus ‘statement’
Olson:  Descensus spiritus #1
Duncan: The maiden, 3p
Creeley: They say; She went to stay (2 poems)
Kerouac:  A chorus
Duncan: The dance
Perkoff; Feasts of Death, feasts of love, 8p
McClure:  2 poems
Creeley:  2 poems The Tunnel & Just friends
Sansalito ➔ Richard Duerden: Musica #3 (i) 1 page poem, but a lot more coming
NYC ➔ James Schuyler: Joint & Shed market (2 poems)
Dead ➔ V R Lang: 1 poem
Stephen Jonas:  Books III, IV from A long poem for jack spicer [word cropped]
Spicer: The bridge game, 1 page poem. ??
because he insists I include another of his, which I can’t find in his collected ms’s, it’s that bad. Not even 10 lines to go along w/ it. & Dorn? who wrote some lovely: Notes from the fields: but he too insists I use ‘all or nothing’: but I can’t do this. Already I feel

PS: Do you remember a John Haines from Wash DC days. He remembers attending lectures with you & a reading in yr studio, long ago. Whatever, I sent him Origin IV, & Fennollosa, as he writes pretty good Chinesy & thru correspondence.

from Fairbanks, Alaska, has got some worth. A few poems in Measure III.

Gerry Van de Weile says to tell you: “He is my yardstick, John. I love to enter those familiar dances of his, but more still to recognize ANEW what comes at me during my days. Those pleasures he offers, ‘that [illeg] allows’. assure him of my attention”

Am passing out Fennollosa like I was a printing machine. Marshall is coming back to Boston in September. He arrived two weekends ago, after long absence & silence, since Feb. He discovered three pages of TUG OF WAR: the section beginning:

‘I too met you in the Gardens, a zoo at times’
The section ‘the id where your mother slid is complete here: so if Mike has additional 8 pages, there cd. be something. Whatever, I now have these three pages, which I will forward to you, or give, or get other 8 from Mike: and work on it from there. He himself is not adverse to trying ‘lost’ section again, but admits: he cd not duplicate what it was. He has not written in NY, & this I guess is reason for return here.

Address: 153 Ludlow Street
New York City

Dana & I plan to leave Boston for good September 15.

Hope all is well with you

& you are holding up under this last dispersal.

Much love

John

Larry Eigner Aug 17 [1957]

Dear Larry:

FINALLY, I am back, and even up to the letter E, now 4:30 in the AM, but I’m gonna get to Z if it means all today. First: big word from me that yr letter’s (all of them) such a boost, ask so much from me, that I turn away, there is that much to do with them, and that yr words on MEASURE were of utmost importance to me, that II will be so much broader, that you will be disappointed in what of you appears. BUT I GOT PLANS.

24 John Haines (1924-2011), American poet and essayist who spent most of his life in Alaska.
25 Ernest Fennollosa (1853-1908) was an American art historian and scholar of Asian culture whose Chinese Character as a Medium for Poetry was edited posthumously by Ezra Pound, to whom it was a central poetic text, in 1918.
Since I always on yr poems, if they aren't too full of crossingsout, send original copy to printer, so BRINK was from yr copy, tho I might have been lax, thinking how he go wrong, and quite a surprise, to me, having picked up the line he dropped out of Duncan/ and that he misprinted in Olson: 2\textsuperscript{nd} to last line: ‘clock’ instead of COCK!)

Not in proofs, only in finished copy, nothing to do \textit{abt it}, because proof sheets rather: page proofs are not a service he offers.

Anyway, I will be much more careful in future; this is what shows of you in No:2. 
\textit{not 1\textsuperscript{st} line} → ‘it will (something) and silent

\textit{were} \textit{a-line I remember}
‘where the bulls are {\textsuperscript{1} shot’ at the end of poem,
also the poem called: (I cant remember title) but it ends:

‘nothing

I want room’ Oh I know now: \texttt{For Sleep.}

OK. For here are the plans: that yr reviews of Denise \& Ponsot show themselves in what is THE CITY ISSUE, and that Poem numbers:

- \texttt{u4/ t1/ a9/ s7/ u6/ 90/ f1/} will all be printed in FOUR: The state Issue. In fact, daddy, I will open it with ‘Think of me. I expected to write’ Now dont fret on this, if for nothing else, I am good to me word, and why, I have backfooted on poems like: Rolling: The Bohemian Stage, is that better ones of YOU have presented themselves.

I shd have put WAYS in magick, I see that now, well it will go in some future issue, I guarantee that, for MEASURE is going to end the decade that Olson began with his Projective Verse in 1950, & in all sincerity, I want you to be a part of it until then, that we all be exposed to same. Our process \& growth.

I cant make up my mind on: Cantelli (t4)
\texttt{I t s g e t t i n g x t h e r e (u2)}

(that spacing I never dug you meant, such ignorance here, man I cd have asked. I also wd. like to tie up s a m e t h i n g (r8) with W a y s, OK? if I take it out?

Also I am drawn back again \& again so that little one ‘a slumped woman’ (e) no title. I’ll still keep Bohemian (maybe for City Issue.)—09. Rolling I return, or I guess I

I have 400 words to the page or 580 if I reduce type and pay a little extra, so you havent even filled I doubt 580 yet, so feel you have a free hand with these.

I will print as is, simply because they have excitement, though I dont agree much with bases/ but I have found nowhere else such timeliness as you show here in the way you do it.
So continue and put in all the rest you have to say re Ginny, but we'll headline as you have Ponsot Levertov. As BMR 7 will have a critique of Howl, that is why I just as soon stay clear of him, THEN AGAIN,

you are the boss, its your baby. But I'll shudder everytime you give him cloaks for the queer shoulder, which he dont own ( the cloaks that is) he dont (I speak only of Howl, as I went for the short poem of his in Combustion and less so for the one in IR6, the Cambridge rev. that it is Howl I dont make, despite great sympathy with content. And glad the content, I am in what he howls on, but I dont like the sounds he makes. You'll see an Edward Marshall in Number One Measure, and you'll know what I mean.

Both the content/ and the verse driving ahead, in front of time.

Now, the violence I referred to was the surrounding business at Bm, not the course anyway, or anything concerned with Big Daddy, just some of the characters there. I was not there that spring, when he gave lectures, so I had to copy them (word for word) from his papers. I arrived in June, a different season for the Olson mind, I think, he seems best in spring.

I'm keeping the THE AGE OF ANN FRANK for the State Issue (no:4)

I wd. say the most trouble you ever have will have is to end a poem, simply when & how? But when you do this, fine, like the Ponsot. But most, I feel a lessening. A POEM called THE FIRE a case of one I dig except for those last two lines.

As always with your stuff, there is seldom a poem that I dont find sections, the thing done very pleasing to me/ and then I am stopped in places, it is always the eating up to something, what makes a poem? Stay Down has so much that makes it, and then I am stopped. But it dont matter here anyways, as there is much ( considering what is being done/ elsewhere/ CRAP CRAP ) that makes it totally. And not one yet has ever not had excitements (formwise) found nowhere, else.

So I take definite:

07 For Sleep (Magick Issue
s8 Ways (Magick issue
u4 Boxes (later
90 The age of Ann Frank (no:4
10 Rolling
09 The Bohemian Stage, though I am not as keen on it now/ and will hold off until 3, which I call The City.
fl ‘as I held the mirror’ (Magick
(Boy do I hate ‘intelligencers’, maybe dont just understand it in BOXES.)

Michael Rumaker published a largely negative review of Howl and Other Poems in Black Mountain Review #7. In his biography of Allen Ginsberg, Bill Morgan writes that Ginsberg “believed Rumaker was wrong and had missed a lot about the actual structure of the poetry,” but was gratified that “Rumaker had at least taken the poem seriously… However, he did fantasize about meeting Rumaker someday and correcting his mistaken ideas about the poem” (267).
Otherwise I think it the best of group I now have also A Prime (will go somewhere.

Shall I keep these copies? Or make ones from them and send them back? Anyway to avoid mistakes, I will type carbons and send them for your corrections before shipping off to printer. A private proof system.

I will get to Audience & Century before deadline. All the best, faithfully

Also Evergreen Review is a re-printing the entire Howl in their second San Francisco issue, and the editor wrote tonight that he is after Olson for mss. for a book. Also to reprint Call Me Ishmael as a paperback. Still tentative but the thoughts have drive-me wild.

Jonathan got a Guggenheim, so I wd. imagine yr book is set. Also it wd give me things to go on, if YOU TELL ME which of your own you feel is most successful, I know we aint no judges, but it wd. help if I am going to be in contact with Eigner stuff for two years, after all, this is a mutual aid association. And just a star on a mss. wd mean I look for things in it that werent in others, how this takes even 'the roof of my head off' the damsel said.

WIT! That’s what those reviews got. Thank you for all of it.

James Laughlin the steel magnate sent 3.00 then again Time-Life Inc took a year’s subscription, so what do I want?

Man in his mind that sees beyond the sky *

tall on the earth now even above the seas
measures the sunset and the dying pulse
drifting like ancient IO south by east
the sky king himself, her after him

kicking

* What Oppenheimer sd. stationary states, dynamic static, and thinking of electron orbits that arc in accord, that correspond. (Dont recall enough.)

Shapes are manifestations of and show conditions, energy, etc. There’s sights for one thing. But the problem of what’s outside or beyond the sky, or how finity is possible, is one of shape, gestalt, whereas conditions can’t be wholly conceived of as related and geared to one another, static. Heisenberg note you cant observe the static and dynamic both at once.27

27 J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967), American physicist known as “the father of the atomic bomb.” Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) was a German physicist, one of the co-creators of quantum physics famous for his “uncertainty principle.” In Human Universe Olson writes, Form is not isolated from content. The error of all other metaphysic is descriptive, is the profound error that Heisenberg had the intelligence to admit
Prometheus says that “systematic history wd take too long. “This after he tells Io what to do and what will happen to her. Before, as he’s abt to tell the march of event he is interrupted, by Okeanos, Genesis, beginning, then P tells what he done for man. Then Io, woman, nature, appears.

Likewise, Zeus, following the daughters of man, whom he wanted to destroy but whom [illeg - foreth?] (Pr) enabled to survive, debasing himself, will be sent underground as a result of a union (with one of the daughters) which forethinker, seeing what’s inevitable — the girl’s son being grter than his father — will prevent. (Action is a human attitude.) But not until tht is made more nearly equal with power. This is quite a process, as powerful sky drives forethinker crazy, just do as he does Io, who resists him, resists going beyond the first stage of womanhood and producing, but tries to stand still and cannot. Nature sticks by insane when offered no positive justice. Power dispensed insanity then sanity by school of experience. Descendant of Zeus e Io (hera-kles) frees Pr. and the wish of intelligence and power may coincide with truth. And Pr has his off moments, but ten thousand yrs is only an hour.

Connections and disconnections
Grk drama: how a known tale comes out in detail 28
Discontinuous: DHL’s godstuff, EP (a culture
   EP fluty, aethr, etc (in KP)
   H Crane: continuous. civ/n 29 rit der rest

in his principle that a thing can be measured in its mass only by arbitrarily assuming a stopping of its motion, or in its motion only by neglecting, for the moment of its measuring, its mass. And either way, you are failing to get what you are after — so far as a human being goes, his life. There is only one thing you can do about kinetic, re-enact it. Which is why the man said, he who possesses rhythm possesses the universe. (CP 162)

28 Wieners is talking about Prometheus Bound, a Greek tragedy formerly attributed to Aeschylus. In the play, Prometheus is chained to a rocky mountain by Zeus’s minions for standing up to the tyrant god and helping humankind. He is witnessed and questioned by Oceanus and a chorus of his daughters, who remain pious and fearful of Zeus. After Oceanus leaves, Io arrives, the poor former nymph turned into a cow by Zeus, pursued by a stinging gadfly sent by jealous Hera. Prometheus tells Io that she will wander the world desolate for many years, but will then be rewarded, changed back, and her descendents will rule Argos, with one of them (Herakles) freeing Prometheus. Outraged at Io’s suffering, Prometheus cries out that Zeus’s own son will one day destroy him. The chorus stays with him as the play closes, Prometheus raging at the storm of heaven.
PATERNON: Solid, res, fusing the ordinary debacle from the jnl [torn]

---

**Ed Dorn**

[Late Aug 1957]

Dear Ed  
This is a terrible drag because I LOST the postcard on which THE BANK GIRLS was printed.  
That aint the title, but you know the one I mean. So cd you send again. I am sorry. But I know it will turn up, only I dont want to wait particularly. Also Duncan has written THREE POEMS IN MEASURE: ONE: AN OPEN LETTER  
One of them Yrs: Rick, so if he dont send same, I will. Anyway, it’s great, if at times inaccurate. Also someone else hot on it. ➔ Marshall. Olson here: saw Connie again & the best time with her I have ever had. An easy go. She does not see Charles. So I was runner of Kate between etc. North & South Stations. / Shdnt tell you that but you tell no one else – I trust you anyway –

---

**Michael Rumaker**

Sept 11, 1957

Dear Mike:  
This is a terrible letter. Rec’d spec del letter this PM from JB May that Measure #2 mss airmaild ($3.50 postage) Aug 1st have can not be found at Villiers – NO WORD from Sankey – JBM promises OK, issue by Nov 1, -- if I airmail typescript – presses w/be cleared for it – I don’t have one –  
Could you send yours – I will insure same to London & they will be ret’d when proofs are corrected. I know it is a terrible inconvenience but worse here – mailing address after Sept 15 to Sept 19 at the very latest  
c/o Blaser  
61 West Cedar  
Boston 14,  
My gratitude –  
love  
John  
Letter re poems depressed me but it brought me back strong – & you’ll see but not with 60% of that on hand (to go out)

---

**Robert Creeley**

Sept 11, 1957

Dear Robert Creeley:  
This is a terrible letter to write but spec. del – this PM that mss. (complete) of Measure #2 – cannot be found at Villiers – tho airmailed August 1st (3.50 postage!) & it was

---

29 Pound’s diminuitive abbreviation for “civilization.”
James Boyer May who tells me not Sankey – still JBM says if I can air mail typescript immed/ “issue out Nov. 1” (?)

I dont have one – Could you send yrs if you do – I know it is a stupid inconvenience but worse here as I have to leave apt. Sept 19th mailing address: c/o Blaser
61 West Cedar
Boston 14 –

I hope they are with you & this copy will be insured from here & ret’d when proofs are corrected – My Best to you –
John Wieners

Robert Duncan
Sept 12, 1957

Dear Robert:

This PM, rec’d a spec delivery letter from JB May – (US rep of VILLIERS) that entire mss. of Measure #2 airmailed ($3.40 postage!) August 1st never rec’d in London. Where? P O cannot even return the “tracer” until “at least a month.” May promises if I mail entire typescript immed. they “will clear presses.” I do not have one. Believing original author mss wd prevent errors of ONE – So entire issue must be gathered again – I leave this apt Sept 15 – but mailing address until 18th c/o Blaser
61 W. Cedar
Boston 14.

While writing this – I thgt. poss. Robin in possession of The Maiden
The Dance

and I will call him at Harvard after he arrives this AM –

but that this dead thing shd come up amid other considerations. This is last letter out on matter – knowing you wd- be in time with copies. This (if yr last ones) will be insured anyway & returned immed. after proofs corrected.

I remember now you writing of not being able to find a copy of MAIDEN but I know also now Robin made photo of same w/ confirm tomorrow by aircard Yr photo being done 8x10 (2 for you or 1 for you, 1 for C

1 for me, 1 for R

The ‘set’ 1st 3/5ths to go – much to come as has in two last chapters in autobiography or how I cheated death.”

So there is no time to send copies – but hold as I will fuck no time.

Please have sanitarium ready, but this not serious. It is well – (Measure) – or was until late PM – we will show our strengths individual now, I suppose – “the panic is on”

Thank you for Denise. Do hope I can write soon for poems before it looks like Rosa Constable does.

love—
John –

and I dont remember ‘specialized’ (yr finger towards same) – but mine always has been – ie specialized I think? my Ken, Robert. Much as the Greater Mysteries are in participation – we yak pharmakos (only at the times now) bear it all? on ourselves. so many No s-pity – as I from joy this (Perseus showers) season manifests, allows me to enter // I think the “goat” is the priest (lower case) but he eats (bad aetiology JH wd & did say →
ammon –
so he must carry their sins on his back when the season demands –
--------but wait I’ll have it for you-------
some or a beginning

---

Ed Dorn

I meant this to be

one page

Dear Ed:

Today (Sept 11th PM) a special delivery letter from James B May (US rep of Villiers): entire mss. of MEASURE #2 airmail ed (3.50 postage!) from here Aug 1st (at latest) never received in London. PO tracing/ will not know for “at least a month.” 1st word received here – altho he had rec’d in interim letter asking ‘How much longer before proofs’ No Reply yet – so in all haste did you have typescript for Notes In THE I did not make any, thinking author’s own mss. safest way to avoid mistakes of ONE. I leave Boston Sept 18 – but have to leave this address – Sept 15th so from 15-18 mail c/o Blaser
61 WEST CEDAR
BOSTON 14, if necessary:

and I know its a terrible drag – to have this dead thing come up amidst other considerations –

JB May promises issue Nov. I if I airmail immed. typescripts they ‘will clear presses’ – for same. This copy you send prob. will be only one – it will be insured & returned when proofs corrected – if you have a copy at all – Somehow you’re the only one I feel who dont – & the one who least can afford ‘time’ to make one. Please advise tho immed. –

if you can - & if not – what of like mss you can send. (But I dont want anything else!) god – entire layout, etc – all has to be done

make it new.

Please give

Dear Helene: a carelessness w/ word on my part if you got that sound. I KNOW better – that did I say that? I didnt think it. Nor ever could.

But did think of

Pound’s “This book is
for Mary Moore of Trenton
if she wants it”

so that

was my swing into “well then I’ll dedicate it to her” – “dont take the time to answer” – as Marianne Moore said I will see you soon if you are willing – that I dont want to say anything for hours – I just want to listen

Birds/ how long since –
how long any sound beside
the running pipes –
and the goat which I was born

under –

Ed –
O’Hara has $1.00 book out this week thru Evergreen Grove Press

Book of Poetry -- 795 Broadway
E-73
NYC 3,

which how would you like to say 400 words up or less words about for III or poss. later.

Don Allen was here last night & sd. he took 2 yrs and great – so he subscribes to Measure - & use mag name & they’ll send book free. Or do you want me to? order?

i.e. if you decide yes re same. I liked what you said – will come back later, I hope

love
John

Dont do it if no heart – but get book or tell me to – as we dont read his thing often – being so bony & aint;

he is limp but can smack
‘the mackrel does
not stink’ like a pharmakos –
Is it a scape-goat
or the priest who stole “ammon”

“FLAMEN
DIALIS”

he’s not – we are//both. wah.

Michael Rumaker

Sept 26 [1957]

Dear Michael:

Pardon handwriting but we are batting along highway 64 into Memphis. By now – I wd say mail is beginning to increase, if not overflow. So I do want to clarify what should be done or not done.

Enclosed find $2.00 M.O. this is to handle “postage due” on all newspapers, magazines forwarded from Boston. I have had all (4) classes forwarded as this was the only safe way. As it is – I am sure 25% will be lost.

Next we have sent 13 paper cartons of books addressed to you at 1430 Sacramento. They will not be delivered. You will receive notices of their arrival but it will be too inconvenient to pick these up. Simply hold them (notices) until we arrive Monday – Tuesday and we will bring same to PO. They will threaten you with notices saying: “Parcels will be ret’d unless picked up… 2nd notice” etc. Pay no heed. Also Railway Express has trunks, boxes etc addressed to you which should not be delivered as they all have been marked HOLD.

The purpose of this note is simply to warn you that they will apply pressure for these items to be picked up by or delivering to : you. Which I do not want // knowing the considerable drag this is. And how there is no room & not part of my intent.

---

30 “Evergreen / Book of Poetry / E-73” has a loose square drawn around it
31 In a similar square.
Accept everything. Pay fees out of $2.00. Go to no trouble. And allow none of this to be an interference.

Put off all demands until Monday “when Mr. Wieners arrives.”

I hope so far they have not bothered you. Thank you for sending mss and #2 of Measure is all right now.

Love,
John

I am recuperating and enjoying the cotton fields & pickers and Dana.

Charles sends love. Dana & I slept 2 nights ago at foot of gate to BMC –

---

Charles Olson

[Nov 9, 1957]

‘If a world-wide consciousness could arise that all division & all fission is due to the splitting of opposites in the psyche, then…’
The Atlantic (C.G. J)

John W.

---

Ed Dorn

Christmas 1957

[Card text: “Merry Christmas out there”]
Thanks for the letter. It boosted me. And pray I make it to you mid-January as I am going to Boston Christmas & am coming back mid-January thru

32 “Always” is written in orange crayon.
your parts. I feel
by saying it, I
put a curse on it.
BMR #7 is out tho
I aint seen it. I
didnt mean to
be dis-obedient
& thgt. the slur
wd. slip by.

Love

Don Allen 2-10-58

Dear Don:

Here is the Creeley sentence I wanted to say –
It is the last one of the 3rd and last paragraph: (now I see there are two I want to send. The whole thing is worth – )

“At some point reached by us, sooner or later, there is no longer much else but ourselves, in the place given us. To make that present, and actual for other men, is not an embarrassment, but love.”

Well, it loses out of context …
Measure not here. And disappointed.
Corso writes he has “abandoned” To Bring Back the Dead –
It seems there is still activity at the fronts.
Anyway one ½ the mail begins: “Allen Ginsberg told me about your poetry magazine” and the other ½ are poems by Louis Ginsberg.

My best,

John Wieners

---

33 Wieners is quoting Creeley’s “A Note on the Local,” published in First Person #1 in 1961. Creeley writes that “The local is not a place but a place in a given man – what part of it he has been compelled or else brought by love to give witness to in his own mind” (Collected Essays 480).

34 In his letter to Wieners from January 1958, Gregory Corso wrote that he had “canned the poem,” though he protested: “what you didn’t seem to dig was that in How To Bring Back The Dead I tried my ‘measurement of idea’. Did you notice it?” (Corso 72).
Appendix B: Incoming Correspondence Regarding *Measure*

Charles Olson

The Black Mountain Review
Feb 11/57

My dr John: It sure is the finest news (I felt it before, when you announced yr intention, and haven’t got back to you because I wanted to make it good.

But now I’ll come to you quick like this so no time more is lost

For wot pleaseth me is that I wanted to write you: go it alone. You edit it. Cut no one else in. & this seems to be true (?)

Who bringeth the responsibility! And be tough & hard, get what you want — also set what you want on grounds you have in the mind.

BOSTON. wow. Or what will you call it (?)

In any case depend on me for more than you can take! Or at least anything I think of I shall roll on to you. And the coming year (as soon now as this coast trip is out of the way) ought to be one in which I do push it out. So

Have one already (new) called THE WRIT which I better try to copy and off to you before taking off, but if I don’t, and you are ready, get to me and I’ll get it to you.

Think out the shape of the thing so you have the parts to fill in by demand assignment or whatever

And in such a plan if there is a way you want to use me let me hear abt it
Dear John,

I think you flabbergasted my sister-in-law by labeling her my mother. Actually the relation is clearly stated at the back of ORIGIN #20. But I think no one was the worse for it, unless myself: I am inclined to believe one mother is enough for anyone.

Perhaps I can help you at this beginning a little, but the real effort is your own and any successful little mag (which is not, needless to say, commercial) requires coherent intelligent editing and ruthless honesty (even if it hurts some friends). With BMR also on the way out, or so I assume, you might perform a very real service. And in any event, genuine editing and presentation of forward currents are rare. And so long as I feel genuineness and intelligence in what you do, you can be sure of my support – though largely spiritual.

In particular: I have asked my sister-in-law to send you the ORIGIN mailinglist. Please copy it, or what of it interests you, and return it to her, PROMPTLY. There will be others like yourself interested. And I dont want her to have to repeat labors already done. I think you can appreciate this.

Let me caution you via my own experience: NOT to figure on ANY returns from issue to issue! This is essential (unless you carry some paying ads), since returns are always minimal and retarded. Dont invest any money without being prepared to lose all of it. You will have hard sledding, if you are not well-to-do or are not well-backed-yet, if you really labor at it, you can make it go. I did and you can do the same. Private backers cant really be passed on: it needs much personal contact and conversation. But you must also keep clear of interference by money. If you are not prepared to risk the whole hog, forget about it at once. OK. I suggest also you have enough cash on hand before #1 goes to press for at least two issues (figuring on a quarterly per annum basis) and for three or four, if possible. Otherwise you'll be out of business within two or three issues and caught with your promises down. And dont get elated at the returns from issue #1; first numbers always sell decently and slacken off sharply thereafter. Each year is also more difficult than its predecessor, in every sense. (Keep the contents alive without being juvenile or slick.) Get as much advice as possible from those you respect, but come to your own decisions.

I think you are relying too heavily on BMC contacts. The faculty there has always been too strong for the impressionable students,
but no reason not to give a wedge to whomever you fancy. But open out wider. I suggest in particular the following contacts:

Raymond Souster, 28 Mayfield Avenue, Toronto 3, Ontario (for Canadian work)

Dr Gael Turnbull, c/o Ronkswood Hospital,  
Werchester, England (English work)  
Michael McClure (or James Harmon)  
707 Scott St., San Francisco 17, Calif. (west coast)

and such independent writers as:  
Ted Enslin, Box 473, Dennisport, Mass.  
Mrs Denise Goodman, Florencia 1915,  
Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.

These will lead you to others, if you are tactful and straight. Vin Ferrini in Gloucester is always open and if you get up to his countryside (you only have to ask for him in that town), he could give you leads, etc. Feel free to use my name with these.

Others will find you others. So be it. Be liberal with space when you have something good, otherwise be stingy. Dont waste pages and use the space even crampedly for maximal content.

Beauty of format will not sell a mag as much as good work. A simple clean format is the best: an unmistakable title and cover layout.

300 copies is a good figure. Dont increase the circulation, unless it is absolutely warranted. And keep your issues going where they will be read. Let me hear how you make out or if I can help you in any way more than these scattered ideas. (ORIGIN itself represents the best I can suggest.)

DeBoer is an idiot, and I couldnt stomach him from the beginning and finally let him go, but you wont find distributors for a small mag easily and though he will bring you in no more than $10-$25 per issue at the most, he does scatter the mag around. Dont mention my name with him, however. I suspect it’s anathema. I dont know any other distributors, but you might fish around. Jonathan may have leads for you.

Give my regards to Steve Jonas.  
*Good luck.*  
*Your—*  
*Cid Corman*
Cid Corman
February 26, 1957

Ferme Posta Matera Italy martedi 26 febbraio 1957

Dear John,

I dont know whether this letter of yours crosses with mine or is after receipt of mine.

Of course, as you must know, I am enthusiastic about your project and will help in whatever way I can. But mostly, I suspect, with occasional advice. I am too far off and moving around too much to be of help in distribution or in raising money for you. These are things you must get at personally in any event. Money wont come in secondhand. I doubt very much that you will find 64 persons at $10 a head, but try. If you find 20, you are doing very well indeed and may crow.

I advise also that you keep as independent a path as possible, both of Olson and myself. What we have done is done or is being done by us; what you can do remains to be seen. Find your writers: go read the other little mags at Lamont poetry room, as I did regularly. And dig up anyone that interests you. Let MEASURE be synonymous with you, not with anyone else.

If Eigner has 23 poems to your liking, dammit, print the 23. Dont fill up space with anything that doesnt take you. You have absolutely no excuse (outside of ignorance) to compromise in these things.2

I think you should raise $500 before you print anything. Then at least you can figure 4 issues and edit with genuine care. I hope you wont just throw the stuff in at random. (Your title has been used recently by another mag out of Chicago, I believe.)3

Jonathan must have a list of bookstores and in all this I would take him as your key man. But find good reliable persons in the major centers and have them handle distribution. Give them 25-50 copies apiece. There is no need to drop ten in one store: they wont sell anyhow; you simply want the mag SEEN. Fingered. (If I were staying here, I could do the mag at $75 an issue. But Im moving on in a few month.) 300 copies, as I wrote before, is plenty. Put them where they will be read. Olson will come through for you, but it may be irregular: give yourself space for irregularities. And be patient. It will take all your patience and stamina. Not a picnic and you will be moaning within six months. Eastern News I dont know. Inquire.

Do you know Nick Dean? He must be within shouting distance of you there. Praps can help you. Anyhow keep at it and hot.

My best
always
Cid Corman

1 This handwritten heading, as well as all underlinings in the letter, were added by Wieners in red pencil.
2 This paragraph has been highlighted with several red lines in the left margin.
3 “check” is written in red pencil after this.
Dear John,

OK. We seem on even keel now. Not much more for me to say, nor any point in harping on what's been said. It is your baby and I have no desire to offer any kind of interference. It should certainly reflect YOUR feelings, YOUR head, and no other – whatever influences are, of course, inevitable. No reason either why you oughtnt to be impressed by both Olson and Duncan. Both are impressive: only I suspect hard to grasp by the waist. You have taken their enthusiasm, but I hope you impose your very own upon it –for certainly an abiding enthusiasm is needed to stay with so wild a beast as a little mag.

Your contents, as far as I can judge, are fair enough. I must naturally wait and see what you have made, but I have no reason not to be optimistic. Only I keep cautioning, if you begin with inadequate funds, you wont keep the thing rolling for more than a handful of issues. Even those few may have great value, but a sustained effort can be of even greater value and it is the most important thing you can give a young writer, a secure outlet.

I have seen little or nothing concrete by the Frisco gang and I certainly cant measure Ginsberg as anything very important by his fragment in ARK. But with all these I am willing to wait the salutary five years. I have some time yet to live, or so I must be willing to believe.

My guess is that, apart from DeBoer, you will not be able to find a national distributor. I would advise against sending more than 10 copies to Paris: they wont sell, for one thing, and you wont get paid for the other. Not that the payment matters. (Best not to figure ANY return from the stores.) But I know the Paris shops: the mag will hardly be seen after the first issue. If then. But no harm to drop issues around for the offchance. A few scattered reliable souls will suffice, in the major cities.

Your vertical cover design is not going to be effective, the attractive enough as such. REMEMBER: most mags get placed on racks where only the top third or less gets seen. It would be better, smarter, to put the contributor names at the top margin, in fact. I’d put a sidebet, you'd get better sales results in the stores. As good as the later BMR format is, it kills sales in the stores by its lack of word-address. Nobody even bothers to pick it up. Inside, of course, it is a pleasure: but that’s another story. The party? That’s your business. I have no taste for such manoeuvers, but I’m sure you'll get fair results.

As for the Europeans, you will find them according to your energies. I havent had contact with Nick Dean for a year or more. A good person, apart from personal reactions, etc. I suppose I'll be coming back sooner or later (probably later), but I have Asia to live yet.

Always yours,

Cid
March 11, 1957
59 West 9th Street
New York 11, NY

Dear John,

I enclose Helen Adam’s poem “Apartment on Twin Peaks” which Jack Spicer asked me to send on to you. We are pressed for space in our San Francisco issue and have decided against included her for that reason.

The new magazine you are editing sounds very interesting. Allen Ginsberg told me how much he liked you and how great the magazine sounds. I hope you’ll put me down for a copy when it is ready.

Meanwhile, I very much hope you will send me some of your poems for consideration for Evergreen Review. I think we’ll be able to publish one or more in our third (next fall) issue, along with Denise Levertov, O’Hara, etc.

I hope to get up to Boston some time in the spring and will look you up then.

Best,

Allen Ginsberg

May 3, 1957

Dear John:

This be letter proper, have finished typing. Enclosed find 4 poems of mine:
Sakyamuni
Malest Cernifici
Over Kansas
Seattle.

The first 3 I had wanted to publish in my book but didn’t for various space and my being absent reasons. The last was written subsequent, it’s the latest unpublished solid piece I have. (I write in notebooks and go over them usually years later, so the I have lots of fragments & notes around, nothing recent but this finished.) Do what you want with the poems. If you don’t like them let me know, and I’ll try to write something new in the next half year – I can’t come up with anything sooner. I tried finally revising Seattle to send you, it’s been sitting around unfinished since 1956 Feb, and it looks final now.

Enclosed find also some short samples Burroughs prose. The first is from a letter sent me & dated as so, including a few sample routines (Talking Ass Hole etc.) & discussion of his problems & methods. The second piece is from INTERZONE, a long chunk we are
assembling new – it contains some interesting runs of images. This fits in with your

dreambook.

I can’t seem to organize a pithy explanation, so I leave it to you to figure for yourself.
My mind is wandering, I get prolix.

Burroughs’s trouble is obscenity but all this might pass. If you have or anticipate
trouble, can use initial letters of words like asshole & dots, as in Howl “The Parable of the
Talking A…Hole.” But try using it, really, (does it seem raw to you – it did when I first read
it but now seems quite innocent fun) – well, I leave all this bullshit.

I half the time can’t understand your letters/ writ in such cramped literary heptalk,
baby, but I’m sure it’s better than this vapid sprawl – write me – Peter sends regards – I’ll try
be more clear next time, let me know what you think the enclosed, send No. I, dig
Burroughs (Creeley took one earlier letter for BMR but nothing else so far has been
published and I want to get some samples like enclosed in circulation, showcase to speak, &
also place some with Don Allen & try move on from there & get the whole mass of material
published this year in Paris.)

I have nothing here I don’t think to fit dreambook – trouble is I am absorbed in
slaving for Burroughs and have few mss. of my own prepared & final. Enclosed a photo of
Burroughs, Baudelaire behind the flower there, I took in myself in NYC 4 years ago, great
eyes. (He has great powers of visual imagination, abnormal.) PLEASE RETURN IT.
Enclosed photo of me also. Why waste cash making pictures yet the?

Have Denise Levertov? poems? That’s all now.

Keep going, I hope this will make it, to 1960, excellent idea. A magazine is definitely
needed & there is material for one all around, that’s not yet used. You could make great US
literary history right now if you can assemble all the diamond points that do certainly exist in
many minds.

Love, Allen

Charles Olson

JAWN:

This time — on time! Thank you! (Property sold, I believe; thus,

freedom BEGINS shortly —

& NEW England (as well as a quick trip to old ENGLAND) — if I can find a passport!

Secret: for one line of one Maximus!! Law-
dee-dah!

Please write instantly what you mean by

“And the law you’re under / or were maybe some how per Blaser’s letter”

please explicate. Wld like very much (wld help) to know what you
think I was on, & the other statement “where you can go” ?? WOW. Tell me. I’m —
lookin’!

[…]

By all means ask Mike
if he’ll let you use
Section I (a page & ¼ single space)
of a piece
Robert Duncan  May 24  1957

Dear John/

Yr. letter gave a great boost to spirits this day. It’s the first one from you that has had a digression – right into the heart of the matter. Yr “that our word is waited for” I’ll keep by me. And as you write of Jonas later poetry dredging up ‘the mystical recurrence of things’ I have a sense of engagement – it’s what I’ve wanted MEASURE to be for me, a measure. An open challenge that I might face. As I do, the fact of Black Mountain Review: I know Creeley is demanding what I believe in – the beauty of the poem resistant, with maximum energies (O the beauty of that sound poem of Robin’s – how it shows proof, the testing of vitality thru out!) and then discipline which I take here, from Pound’s note quoted in the Venice Poem “to debunk by lucidity”:

it’s the excitement of form and measure
by which/ because of which
only the passion remains the rest is dross

Dross: = sentiment (sediment) as if it were
full feeling; pity (in place of compassion;
anger (in place of, as in dante true
judgment of evil)

I’d say Wieners keep the objects of your world – just look at ‘em straight on. Belly grinders, when all is in focus, is as real as trees. This focus, (a turning between subject and object; right declaration of where and when; exact placing and timing) needs more practice with belly grinders than trees?

What I sense as needed in your work is some not making too much of a good thing. Even perhaps an artificial impoverishment of wit (your mind is so ready with material) to begin with?

Mainly: if you take upon yourself the responsibility of printing in each issue of MEASURE the best work you are doing (that is, take the full measure of MEASURE on yourself) that would draw up your reins. I understand from Duerden you are dodging the issue.

Duerden’s REALS (REELS) I like very much. He (like McClure) never writes for effect but keeps up a struggle to discover source/ the quality. I urge you to define the new poets (in a sense that Olson and Creeley and I aren’t new) – Well, you seem to be doing that with Jonas.
It’s the adventure of a magazine, the risk and challenge of it. That you will be right, we'll see it as you define it.

And help however we can – Along which lines I urge the best where I see it. Put it this way – fight it out with McClure, Duerden (and a recent poem of Borregaard’s awakens my hopes) – and print them as seriously as you can. Give them room to grow in. Force them only / to lead out.

EYES will follow when I can get copy of fotos. And I’m sending some of Jess’s Morgenstern and also a recent poem or so that might give variety to material for a magazine.

Oyes, and
open it out for writing:
so that one can see how it holds all the way thru – prose/verse. writ at the same level.

I think the main idea I’ve got is this one that you must define your own generation. And set the gamble, the law, the chance on the board: that every issue you print at least one major poem of yours. That – damn it! is it really true or is it a sentimentality when you refer to your pome as “that dreadful one of mine, which took off from one of his lines.”

Fix your attention on that which stands the test in your work. Then: if you dare a magazine, fix our attention on that tested (even if only fragment) thing
my love and thanks for your excited (exciting! letter Robert morgenstern

__________
later

wonderful that you like The Maiden

---

Allen Ginsberg

May 31, 1957

416 East 34 Street
Paterson, N.J.
(c/o US Embassy Tangiers, Morocco)

May 31, if there is one, 1957

Dear John:

Havent typed out or selected anything to send you, got your letter & your mimeo announcement today, will answer these first & then rummage around & enclose poems with this letter, postscripting whatever seems necessary by afterthought. Sorry not answer yours of April 15 earlier but not had mss. ready. & got bogged down in other work so forgot there was a deadline or anything, excuse me. I am happy you followed up on Whalen Kerouac Snyder and woever else – did I mention Perkoff, I forget not – hope Kerouac’s is alright by you. Did you receive the whole Book of Blues? What did it look like. If you still have it around, perhaps you can cull enough from it to keep you supplied for awhile, with him – it’s 6 years unpublished work, or 4. It’s more interesting to me than anything else I’ve seen of my own or anyone unpublished. Kerouac I mean. I haven’t received No. 1 yet, send it when you can – thru Tangiers address if in the next 2 weeks – if after, send thru above Paterson address to be forwarded. I’ve written to Corso once already, if you haven’t heard from him maybe send him a postcard c/o American Express Paris. (I never met but dig Paul Blackburn and his address, Don Allen sent me, is “Cal Serra, Benyalbufar, Mallorca” – if you haven’t got it.)
I'll write my father & advise him to subscribe. He will, yet.

Lamantia – by all means find him, if you can – he has poems, new ones, I’ve seen before I left SF even, according to Don Allen, he’s somewhere in NY—but where I don’t know. Mail addressed to his house in SF should reach him forwarded – 1045 Russia Ave., SF, Cal. He has good friend painter Ronnie Bladen in NY who should be in touch with him, Bladen’s address is or was 5 West 21 Street NYC I think – or Knute Styles at the Cedar St. might know when & if you get to NY, or Don A. may have located him. (If you do get Lamantia give my regards and address & say I met & have been getting high with Bowles here & would like to hear from him (he knows Bowles here too & in N.Y.) Francis Bacon an englisher painter here, very interesting person too, & a rare painter. Were there poems of mine in Coastlines?? If so send it on to me, haven’t seen it. They’re 6 year old poems, shorts. Yes, yellow streak of love is alright – I didn’t really get what Blazer meant by his transposition except maybe – come on the sheet?—(loveboy the other morn said come on the sheet looks like a silvercoin) ) Joan dream poem – simply a record of all I remembered, boiled down to exact detail – of a great dream. I was innarested particularly in the sensation (Cezanne says “mon petit sensation”) I had, during the dream, at the moment when I saw her face dissolve & it was replaced by sight of her tomb. Tried to reconstruct this sensation (caused by the ellipse or jump between the two images I saw) in reader’s mind, by verbally reconstructing the images in as sharp visual detail possible. This ellipse or cosmic gap between 2 images, is practiced at best in Japanese Haiku, so Snyder taught me – for excellent examples see R.H. Blythe’s 4 interesting vols. of translation of Haiku – should be in Harvard library. Great funny interesting book – sample: (O Ant/ climb up Mt. Fujiyama/ but slowly, slowly.)

I'll look around for interesting photos, if I have any, will send in this envelope.

Now, what I been doing here is work all day every day almost helping edit assemble & type up a most monstrous interesting book by Burroughs whom I mentioned. Enough is done now for me to begin sending out samples of the prose. I wish you would dig & see if can in future or early number print some – a few pages sample or a short mad section. It's nearer poetry than prose anyway. The main problem is Obscenity, how much you can get away with, if your Measure is printed abroad by Villiers? Already they've seized my book (the Customs, though we'll win a court fite with ACLU on our side) -- & Ferlinghetti anyway just photocopied & reprinted a US edition evading the seizure – but you wont be able to do that so easily not having money. I enclose several samples of Burroughs (to be published under pseudonym William Lee.) (Permane nt penname.)

Pause to type up these burroughs samples & some of my own.

When you get to S.F. dig St. Francis stone front of church in North Beach.

Love Peter

Philip Whalen

June 18, 1957

Dear Mr. Wieners:

I have a letter (belatedly) from Gary Snyder praying me to ask you for the return of his poem “Tokyo-1956” as he is having it published elsewhere. In short, I goofed on that particular piece of business. If you don’t return the thing to me at least withhold its publication in MEASURE.
I trust that the magazine is rushing forward with vast élan & éclat. Mr & Mrs Joe Dunn are in high spirits. Creeley writes sad mystical but hopeful notes from his desert. Have you heard from Olson? His vibrations seem not to reach this Elysian region, for which I am most regretful. To coin an antient phrase, I dig O. the most. He’s a great sweating bodhisattva.

Most cordially,

Philip Whalen

Philip Whalen

On the Feast of S. Marina
18:VI:57

1624 Milvia St.
Berkeley 9, California

Robert Duncan
June 21 [1957]

dear John/ Don’t remember exact context of remark re. “going straight” – but at the moment I’ld take it don’t mean non-queen; you can wear feathers and go at a thing straight on. “That in writing it, a sense of freedom came” I’ll take as a criterion.

re. Joe Dunn. Don’t you have his Recipes? – What I was given by Jack was (were) “September 15” (In the Street of Saintess Desire) and “for Jack Spicer – in memory of the death and decay of a day” (This is how a letter gets lost) : I thot you had these already in Boston and didn’t send them in order to save meself post. I’ll be in North Beach tonite and will search out Joe and have him send off to you post haste more work.

Yes, get other $2.50 from Robin.

Then more on MEASURE – It’s exciting (A) that you will use us. Is us 1950? And dates and titles. Origin = 1951 (Spring) – 1956 a downhill push – but it was an “Origin”al point at which certain writers got into “movement.” Clear in 1” issue that Charles is setting the pace. (as where to go from WCW’s Paterson 1946-1941, and E.P.’s Pisan Cantos 1949)

Now 1957 MEASURE demands that we be of use; and closes ranks. BMR came into existence (1954) along with Creeley and Olsons distrust of Corman – it was inevitable at that point that Origin wld. end up as it did in issue XX; in the new non-descript academic. Corman was in search of literature.

Pound advising Creeley in 1949 said: be sure to keep the magazine alive with the odd (no, not a quote, a paraphrase). But you can see what he meant if you study some contrasts in LITTLE Mags.

Have Robin get the following samples from the library for study:

Little Magazines (these keep a high germinal level; they are extravagant and display forces)

Reviews (these keep a high literary level but are the source of nothing)
The Little Review OK
Transition
Contact 1932

The Dial
Hound and Horn

yes Kenyon R.

Partisan R.

Sewanee R.

Hudson R.

-------------- origin etc. etc.

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MEASURE

What I suggested looking at that one poem of Helen’s is that it has some extravaganze within its own form. Most of Helen’s ballads are a thing in themselves, a pure a-historical pleasure – and not of use for giving, taking or commenting on MEASURE. The “way-out”ness of a piece can be an activity in itself. Little magazines can go wrong (which Reviews can’t) but they can’t go dull (which Reviews wax upon).

Even in such suggestions (as re. also Borregard, etc.) I only pass it over to your word, to its possible “use” – Creeley sees everything of mine. He asks for what he can do something with – it’s An Owl that he senses will make the stir or whatever he wants; and he had no “use” for Light Song or True to Life, favorites of mine.

Well, then with Charles’s “use us”; and Robin’s “close ranks” – you give the campaign cry – “All that force in” ¿ and a silly march down Tremont St.” a Wieners Waltz.

It’s when you’re coming to S.F. that will be the important information for local eyes and ears keeping a check on apartments. I doubt adds will tell much. Rents are high – average $50 – tho Don & Eloise found cheaper.

love
Duncan

Philip Whalen

July 14, 1957

Dear Mr Wieners,

I think what you are trying to say is this: “I am running a specific kind of magazine. These poems have nothing to do with the aims & purposes of MEASURE.” Or perhaps more pointedly, “You are writing for THE AMERICAN WEEKLY & this is, after all, THE DAILY WORKER.” Anyway, I appreciate your “agonized re-appraisal” and your invitation to send more stuff. I have lots of different things to say in whatever way I can… “reviews, bitches, Comment” … the hitch is this: I avoid writing anything, even a letter, unless it is absolutely necessary, I mean unless it is keeping me awake at night, keeping me away from the kitchen, the bar, the music scene &c. but yes, I’ll send you whatever comes out. Only one other publisher has invited me & I don’t like him (Jay Laughlin.) So look out, I’m coming &c.
August 14, 1957

Dear John,

Please don’t do anything about the Magic War piece until I write you; I haven’t seen Robert about it yet, I’ve been in the Sierras for a week & 1/2. Will see him soonest & let you know.

As for your objections:

The thing is a letter to Robert, not what I know but a message in terms of his own paideuma or what I dug was his, from reading his poems, plays, notebooks &c. I didn’t copy any of Faust Foutu into it, only the smell of it, the world of it. It is an anti-magical tirade, pur sang, sans blague, not about faggots, 37th St, starving toads &c. A demon is a demon, a homosexual is a guy with a hangup, I know the difference.

On second thought, send the whole works back to me. I don’t want it printed, any of it.

Damn, damn, damn.

LIST FOR JNO. WIENERS

1. I am not Coleridge.
3. Road to Xanadu closed for resurfacing.
4. Why can’t you decide what it is you’re doing or who it is you’re being? An editor makes a magazine to be read by other people. A critic is an unprintable fuckhead. Take your choice.
5. No charity; compassion: a self-disinterested, detached love (MILA REPA (the Tibetan one): “The notion of emptiness (of the Self) engenders/ Compassion/ Compassion does away with the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’/ The distinction of self and others, the service of others effective.” The indistinction of self and other renders the service of others effective.”)
6. Back to 4 again: Editor prints what he thinks is live material, don’t smash up the printing press with a hammer & die on receipt of letter from Cleanth Brooks Jr. saying, “It has come to my attention that the poem on page 27 had one too many feet in line 11; you are a booby for printing it.” Or he prints what he’s paid to, fucked into, bullied, whatever. What’s your choice.

\[4\] Circled in red with line leading to text in the margin, italicized here.
7. I have no quarrel with Olson or his poems. His theories are fine but I can’t use them. He & I understand each other just fine when we’re together, or did when I saw him last.

8. Rexroth has done many nice things for me and I appreciate them. This isn’t a blanket approval of all he does & says. We get along all right.

9. No quarrel with Robert, I don’t know him that well. This was only an abstract, an ideological scramble & a plea for calling the whole thing off, not a Celebrated Literary Attack, chastisement, snotty saying, rann, &c.

10. This isn’t an attack on you but on your indecision.

I have a new mess bubbling in the boiler & half of it spilled on the floor already. I’ll send you some later if you aren’t tired by now of this transcontinental hot-dry job.

And for the love of Jayzus, lay off the Matthew Arnold bit. Leave that for your elders and so-called betters, viz. some fuckhead like Yvor Winters who gets his living by doing it in Stanford University for the befuddlement of the young rich. I won’t curl up & wither away if you simply write a note saying, “No, I can’t use your poem, I DON’T LIKE IT.” You don’t have to give me a reason, I don’t care about your reasons, except insofar as they elicited 4 & ¼ pp. of your own sometimes delightful LONG BITCH TO PW. Try to stop being scared. What if I did show up in Boston with a meataxe? The police would stop me before I got to Russell St. (This is intended jocularly, & not as a veiled threat.)

You keep talking like I was a constant reader of Measure & other literary magazines. I’ve never seen a copy of M. and as for magazines in general, I prefer Galaxy to Astounding. I read the classics if I feel like reading, or history or biog. I’d rather play or listen to music than read, et cetera on an ascending scale towards sleep.

Observed sign of old age in myself: I care less now what kind of idiot other people think they see when they are looking at me, either in print or in propria persona. You are apparently younger.

Dear Baby,

This is a drag. I am out of cigarettes, and now I’ve started juicing for the evening, all by myself, pinching pennies, playing with my balls, my new beard, wondering if you are hearing me at all, if I am no, I’m not, after all, getting through, your last letter proves that or are you by nature an inarticulate analphabet which shall it be? I suppose it is my own fault, I turned loose the jeu d’esprit of a moment into a classroom full of undergraduates – I mean I put it to you that you have no funny bone, it was removed at H…..d. I am not communicating in spite of your protests to the contrary otherwise it wouldn’t have taken 4 & ¼ pp to contain your reply, happy as the last page is, the last page & ½, I mean Baby, if the police ever happen to come in while we’re doing this it’ll mean 99 years to life for both of us and all our friends beside. What it is: After a reading in San Francisco, several students from a Catholic university surrounded Allen Ginsberg and asked pointedly, but what do you believe in? A.G. said, “I believe in my cock.” They asked for explanation of this quaint term, and Mr. G. removed his trousers & shorts & showed them what he was talking about. (This, while several hundreds of people were milling about but not watching very carefully.) You aren’t watching either and it is just as well that you should be sheltered from the coarser aspects of life (“tumescence & detumescence”) which are all too frequently, alas, to be observed anywhere. I am not getting through except to a few old
farts which I have heard it already from Sheila Graham or Scott Fitzgerald or Michael Arlen, too bad. Without you singing beside me in the wilderness I must go to that expensive & sordid (old copies of Gentry magazine & a sound system that cheerily plays movie scores, Montevani, & occasionally the Liebestod) steambath in rowdy old San Francisco. You should never live so long as to see the corny-dust layed on so thick.

Now it is better, I rushed over to the drugstore & brought a package of Camels back.

Now listen, I know that the hair & the soup are all the same thing, I just didn’t think Duncan did, that was the point of the whole fromage:

that he thinks he sees a difference & the hair is more important to him. Do you see now. Oh well. I’ll figure another way to tell you all, as many lives as necessary, & all the patience in the world.

THE BENEFICENT (happy, jocund or some other adjective) BLACKSMITH, a sonata or what not for young pianists, by F.J. Haydn.

Did you never hear of a sirvente?

Damn it. I said & meant gasolene. Devils, demons & such like needing fuel, being that they are from a fiery environment, HELL. Real Hieronymous Bosch demons… you thought he was painting pretty imaginary figures? Read your own Cotton Mather, & the Malleus Malefica (in the translation of the Reverend Montague Summers) not to mention various Hebrew sources. There are six general worlds, those of men, angry deities, paradisal ones, hungry ghosts (the universe of Tantalus), hell, and the animal kingdom… this is Tibetan. There are actually a great many other times and worlds & conditions, but these are the closest & the general run, the one in which we spin.

What minute are you in. Find out.

The police in San Francisco are suppressing HOWL. The trial comes up Friday, The People vs. Ferlinghetti (the publisher & bookseller & poet who printed it & sold it)… lewd, obscene salacious literature &c. which will warp the minds of the young &c. being on public sale. I’ll let you know what happens there; I plan to attend the trial.

Oh, yes… at the center of that Tibetan world picture are a pig, a rooster & a snake… Ignorance, Desire & Attachment.

And I said in a poem I showed you, “And the mind, though changed by it ……… can change:/ A dirty bird in a square time” & you complain,

“I know nothing about you, I don’t know you, &c.”

5 “BLACKSMITH” circled in red pencil.
6 This line is in a jagged red circle.
I AM NOT GETTING THROUGH.⁷ Even if I came back to Boston it would make no difference except my new beard would be older & longer & I wd be distracted by the alien landscape (known to me only via N. Hawthorne, H.D. Thoreau, currier & ives & ee cummings). & (MAXIMUS) You would go on hearing your Bird records like nothing else was getting through.

(Jno. Williams, to yrs truly, in conversation: “I have to hear at least three or four hours of Miles every day, or…” referring to a celebrated trumpet virtuoso of our day.)

Shall I take up the study of the barytone horn in order to reach those who are 5 years younger, 10 years younger?

I havent heard from Kerouac. He had left for Mexico before the big earthquake & hasn’t been heard of since. I have a frantic letter from his mother inquiring after him; I suppose I must wire all his friends in Mexcity to find out how he is or not.

I am leaving Berkeley soon, either for San Francisco or Oregon or somplace, but direct your remarks, if any, to this same address; they will be forwarded & I’ll write you from wherever anyway.

Baby, I am beat. It isn’t a question of vocabulary. The answer is not in the flyblown, libelous pages of Wellek & Warren. The flannel poets, R…..d W….., R….t L….., & Co. aren’t telling the truth, all they really know. I only know for sure that writing isn’t really controlled completely by these creeps & their backers in the University… or by your own weird advisors. Or any one of us. There is too much to be done, and I’m still looking for a way to do a little of it.

Nevertheless, it is a pleasure, trying to write to you, whether I get through to you or not at all or only part of the time; you are the audience I want, the lost, the scared, the conscious one… NOT a Message of Salvation, that’s an all-day sucker, but to BE there, to make it, to know the difference between making it & not making it.

(from the latest “new mess bubbling &c.”…

MC**** came around &
We went over all the latest bonze jazz
& he has a new wife & V*** has gone off
to live the primitive life with some
Eureka cat
MC--- says, “I finally dig
That I’m making it
Right now
Or I’m not making it”)

⁷ This sentence is in a red square.
needless to say he wasn’t referring to the lady. (“more to a man than the contents of his jock-strap”… yr. obdt. svt.) And not forgetting that sexual intercourse between whatever two persons is an exchange of knowledge as well.

This is getting more & more sententious & absurd as the evening runs on, & there is no excuse for it, I have a great deal else to do, but you would write a long letter so I must reply at length. I will stop now.

Love & nothing,

Phil

Berkeley
14:VIII:57

Robert Duncan
August 18, 1957

Dear John:

When Robin was here we worried MEASURE. Was it true? solid? a coterie (queer)? or specialized (too limited a presentation to get full vitality). We asked all of it, that is. And by the glance. But given the time actually to read it, I see it as I hoped for it: a working ground for us all. I think both Robin and I have our appreciations to account for: often, as over and against our convictions. Here’s a passage from a letter I got off to Poetry today re. a “review” I had sent them of Broughton’s work: /

“I had written for Broughton fairly exhaustive notes on difficulties which seemed to me to lie in his poetics to date – and culled from that some of the observations that seemed in turn of general interest to any poet. But I was aware that, although the work provided a fruitful material for analysis, such an intensive reading is usually (and rightly, I believe) directed toward work that we know as durable. I would thank you for your perception here. Broughton has accomplishments, rewards and qualities; but my critical experience in poetry has been elsewhere. From what strength Eliot in his introduction to Marianne Moore’s Selected Poems can write: Living, the poet is carrying on that struggle for the maintenance of a living language, for the maintenance of its strength, its subtlety, for the preservation of quality of feeling, which must be kept up in every generation; dead, he provides standards for those who take up the struggle after him. Where this defines propriety – there is no vexing paradox to your questioning my writing on the work of a close friend. Intelligence and grace, which you so generously ascribe to the notes I sent you, are attributes wherever we have our appreciations; but judgment proceeds not from pleasure (what we ‘like’ has so little to do with it) but purpose toward necessity. Poetry, for the poet, remains finally a conviction.”

Part of this on the magazine I want to write to you (to be shared with Robin and those concerned) and part (to be shared with you) to Robin. – The directive, as I see it, is the great service of MEASURE right now. I need to see the work of Eigner, Jonas, Marshall, Williams—as I need to see the work of McClure or Duerden here: and the work of Denise, Creeley and Olson: not because it entertains or interests, but because these are my directives. (It is, in final things, more important to me that Rumaker is at work on what the poem is: provides directives – “A negative beauty,” or “humming dry air”; without dreams lighting what is stirring
in the veins
than/that (as he is) he is the barest beginner in poetry, and can be gauche as in Vanite toute
est la vanité which seems to this reader an unconscious vanity.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER IS: THAT THIS BE NOT A SHOW-WINDOW BUT
A RECORD OF WHAT IS BEING DONE; A WORKING GROUND FOR A
PROCESS

O.K. Give it some play tho. I think there would be gain if we can get some bringing
together of any and all arts where a process is working. You need notes from me, not on
H.D., but – I shall attempt it – what forces I can see at play and what shapings I read there;
in Webern, in the relation of tradition and process etc. You’ve got some sound directives:
Olson’s USE US; Robin’s CLOSE RANKS – and I would add again follow with the new.
Let Marshall, Blaser, Eigner, Jonas, Rumaker, Williams, McClure, Duerden and yourself use
MEASURE to shape what poetry will be. I don’t need to tell you this – one thing is clear to
me, and that is that your sights are set on THE WORK; that you lose interest when the
focus is set upon writers trying to make a place for themselves. I shall continue to send you
(as I do to Black Mt. Review) the central work. With the joy, for me, that you demand it.
Let’s ride the outer edge of the risk; the central work does. It’s the peripheral (like my Green
Lady in Botteghe Oscura) that rests in the sure thing of the accomplished.

Robin and I are mixd critters; “lovers of poetry” in part. Against which set this from Eliot:

“One of the tests – though it be only a negative test –
of anything really new and genuine, seems to be its
capacity for exciting aversion among ‘lovers of poetry’.”

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Our appreciations wax upon what has been done; our doubts, aversions, risks, courage
accompany what is to be done. Having done it, God said it is “Good” – well, but if we are
to have a magazine somewhere not of the created but of the process – then it is to be as all
things in the Process are, primordial, unestablished in the Good.

Can you send me a bundle of MEASURE so that I can get to the business of rounding up
subscriptions for you – it will help if they can have issue one in hand along with paying their
$3. And I hope to find some patrons.

** The point is: if the new writers USE the magazine to work out their part of the process, if
it is a working ground; then the maximum use for us all will be there. If you use them –
presenting what you feel shows the process – then it will be limited to that showing – it will
be the show’s window, as all magazines tend to be, and not the working ground. Part of the
working ground thing is the development of individual responsibility. Duerden said when I
told him I had written to you to give the new writer full range: “If I had known that, I would
have sent different work.” Ask any of them to take that responsibility and if they don’t or
can’t, drop them; or resort to selection if something in what they are doing still seems a vital
part.

My every effort and conviction is here.
(The above to be supplemented in writing to
Robin. love,
Robert
Fri Aug 19       JOHN (JOY JOHN)

Crazy to have these things — to hear that voice, again. For it is yr. voice, and this, by god, is a primary.

I suppose it is this pleasure that the body is (greek art goes to-ward coitus, and all that) which one goes through literally, & ultimately, finally: that is, one gets through

Or one starts to pack it with all the other things also happening at the same time — and I mean more than the data accompanying same: I mean the equally overcoming matters (more than the mattresses)

I feel defenses here, which, I took it, the spring was the time to dissuade. (I dare say it is the environment? But you have the right to have what you have without fussing with the hypocrites

That is, when the deeper cause presents itself (Ma, in the bed — in the [illegible] she — you were in better waters: and I say that not to pull you back, but to urge you, that, once done, more study must intervene — the next time, the subject must be further advanced

Or in the lovely BITTER SONG, or what you call it, that the women — this one I like like a thing out of the Palatine Anthology.

That is, two delicacies: one which your lover has (and can be left there, has to, is anyway); and the lother (as Kate' pronounces it: in which all men share.

Exactly there: that you can assume that others have their problems. Thus the celebration — the poem as celebration — is good for one run, say. Or for THE SHEATHE, say. Once. Then off we go to the rendering, of the complex.

A poem is a syndrome like any of us. (You are.) It must occur of its own “diseases” — shocks. (So many of these refer outward, instead of turn inward like nails, turn on themselves, have that delicacy invention (fucking) congestion. The traffic, and all that. There. Then. No where (bare) else — even Rockingham (these are love poems for (1) him; (2) in the face of, Medford. The problem is, the rest of us (1) don’t know him; (2) don’t care abt Medford. We love you. We must love your poem.

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8 The Palatine Anthology contains thousands of short Greek poems. Initially collected in the 1st century B.C.E., it was revised and supplemented many times before it was gathered into fifteen books, since kept at the Palatine Library in Heidelberg. Ezra Pound was heavily influenced by the Anthology, incorporating its figures and epigrammatic style throughout his poetry, and publishing many idiosyncratic translations of the poems.

9 Kate Olson, daughter of Olson and Constance Wilcock. Michael Rumaker describes Constance as sensitive and elegant, with “dark eyes that had an edge of sadness and inward contemplation… a delicate bird” (Black Mountain Days 17). She left Black Mountain with her daughter as Olson and Betty Kaiser’s relationship became apparent.
Please: dig my lad Duncan. Get a load of his “Venice Poem”10 in his Poems 1948-49. Or page in BMR #5. (When you come I will show you his letters.)

I PUSH YOU TOWARD CONSTRUCTION.

Only if the larger intent (not size, but the way things are) is there, do the (1) lines get their body — his or hers is not the same and (2) does the “séance” — like Duncan puts it — of the poem occur (says he in letter to me yesterday as of Stevens death, him (Stevens) and Mallarmé come to the séance of his poems, Keres scuttering in!11

Keres, my lad. Yours.

Now with MR JR MORTON12 (morton morton morton), you are truly gay — getting off (especially, getting up and getting, fr the top of the Liberty Bell, Swedish — air: there are like flags, such poems. (All this tower biz, is good for, flying. Fly away, there

Or ON MISS STEIN’S13 TRACK likewise — even if it sprawls now, it will it will (you will:

we ought to go over this one. It cld stand all attention, to tighten extend make drunk buzz be more busy with that it is already busy with:

Ma deserves all you got, don’t you think???

(Now TRADE is what I mean by what you lose by not going for the fence: it shld be as BITTER TREE short sharp there, all that any man cld say. But even I sd this: MOVE OVER.

BUTTER TREE, qua poem, is the best.

ALSO FOR 100 Walt Whitmans is what I mean by defensive. And oh — with the tone (arête)14 just that little bit different, WHAT a pome.

_____________

10 Robert Duncan (1919-1988), major American poet, early gay liberation figure (his landmark essay “The Homosexual in Society” was published in 1944), and one of Wiener’s Black Mountain mentors. “The Venice Poem,” an open-form serial poem, was written in 1948, while Duncan was part of the small nucleus of poets, along with Spicer and Blaser, who became known as the Berkeley Renaissance.

11 Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), French symbolist whose ideas of poetic dictation were influential for Robert Duncan. In the 1955 Duncan letter that Olson mentions, Duncan writes that it is “Stevens and back of him the shadowy Mallarmé that seems to haunt my work, Keres from his world scuttering in to attend the séance of each poem” (qtd Martin). “Keres,” in Greek mythology, are death-spirits, the sisters of Fate, Doom, and other baleful entities.

12 Olson refers to “With JR Morton,” Wiener’s first published poem, which the magazine Semi-Colon had published at the urging of Frank O’Hara. Wiener had befriended the New York poet during O’Hara’s brief stay in Cambridge, while the two worked on the same John Ashberry play at the Poets’ Theatre (Gooch 279).

13 Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), foundational twentieth century modernist.

14 In “Maximus to Gloucester” Olson writes, “the only interesting thing / is if one can be / an image / of man, “The nobleness, and the arête.” Arête, according to George Butterick’s
Imaginatively, go tras-vers. Go all the way. From inside — the poem. Ok.

Great. Miss you. And such as there. It’s been a hard summer, simply that everyone and the College have been literally faced with where the next meal comes from. — And if, it don’t end soon, we all will. Amen.

Otherwise, of course, all is wonderful.
It'll be the greatest,
to see you: hope some-body will be here to see you

We close, as you know, the 3rd. So;

beware!

Love, O

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**Philip Whalen**  
**August 23, 1957**

Dear John,
I have got word from Snyder… he says to tell you, go ahead & print Toji & Kyoto Sketch.

What was I going to say. Oh, I have a big fat thing in the fire & will send it, steam, char & all quick as it is done. Meanwhiles, the idea of Measure, what Olson calls “the breath”, what Williams keeps chirping about “the line, the measure” : : : I suspect that is what you’re interested in for your book, & I, I want orchestration of ideas, sounds, whole masses of stuff (organs) that compose into a Monster that seeks whom to devour. I am Dr Frankenstein, not Oliver Goldsmith. I believe in breathings or measures, I hear them & they are there too, but they are a subliminal concern, cytological, embryological; what I want is the whole animal rushing around, complete.

This ain’t a theory, only a momentary apercu, a small boot in the ass to find out if you are inside those baggy pants. Interoffice communication, in Rexroth's phrase. The sun is hot & I am on, temporarily, so I will argue no further here but continue boiling & frying up this new soufflé. Watch & pray.

Oh, Kerouac is gone to Mexico, so communication with him is temporarily in abeyance, viz. hung up, but I will forward your mail to him when he writes me.

All happiness,
Whalen

Berkeley

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*Guide to The Maximus Poems,* can be translated from Greek as “‘goodness, manly excellence,’ (similar to ‘virtue’)” (608).
Robert Duncan  August 25, 1957

dear John/

reviewing your letter of May 21 I find that you were quite as bored by the Spicer as I am angry at his doing that Bird thing. Most angry because his lack of Measure misused the given experience, which had yielded otherwise a beautiful poem.

Leaning on the everlasting arms of Lorca, Jack has a form which contains that/ feeling and will not allow aberration. I lit into Spicer (I was fighting mad about that verse) and I think I made a dent. It may have occurred to Jack that he has to watch the line.

I found Madeline Gleason the other afternoon in a flurry of excitement (after my reading Marshall’s One the evening before aloud) – they are both Xians and respect the Word (see distinctions I make in enclosed paper twixt Word and word). To my joy she had tackled her poems, setting up measure. It has gotten across to her that the line is exciting – and I went over poems to be sent to Evergreen and to you, finding only minor adjustments. She has rock-bottom integrity and her respect for the beauty as it emerges in a poem shows.

I left her house as up-lifted as I had been flung down when Broughton flung down MEASURE and said there was nothing in it. Where I had already found the best in Marshall, Dorn, and Eigner; and had begun to read Rumaker with full trust.

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What are you doing with your Spring 1956? That poem has resisted my testy reading. Bring it into play.

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But what a wild scatter your letters are! I make my way with it as best I can. Wld you lose energy if all the boids in Bahston weren’t flying around your room?

Jess wants to send these himself. He has the flu and it will be within the week.

Enclosed: Collages of Jess’s – if you don’t use Tricky Cad Case 4 – return it. The foto collages are yours, whether used or not. In homage to MEASURE’s editor.

if you do use Case 4: have it fotostatted – so that the original can be returned to us.

Printers are so damned care-less with collages. Also: where is me copies of the foto sent of Creeley and me?

my love to you and Dana
– Robert

Allen Ginsberg  September 6, 1957
Amer Express Paris

Dear John:

Received your big letters, just got back from trip to Naples, climbed Vesuvio, walked in Pompeii, sunset at Herculaneum, pornographic statues in Naples Museums, overnite eating salami & milk at Capri, weekend on Ischia arguing with Auden who says he’s an old orthodox & what’s there to revolt about anyway & dont like Whitman & no democrat he
says, & afternoon sleeping under hilltop temple in ruins of Cuma where Cumaen Sibyl had caves and prophecies. Leaving day after tomorrow for Vienna to see Broughel’s pix there, & then finally on to Paris. – can be reached there in 2 weeks. c/o American Express. It’s straing seeing real Europe. Got the photos and am happy you will use Burroughs piece and his picture. I have sent his whole mss. to Sterling Lord for repository and he will send out fragments – I’ve sent him a list of places (or will send him such list) & will include a longer chunk for you to read, for your own kicks, and choose from if you wish. If you’re interested in seeing the whole mss. maybe can arrange that with him later, after he’s finished circulating parts around and it’s all together – or if you’re in NY over a weekend, maybe you can pick it up to glance thru. There are extended passages which are neither prose nor poetry but could pass for poetry, like the pages you already have. Thank god you’ll publish them. That was Peter with beard. Re Whalen, I still think his longer poems are the best – Sourdough Mt. Lookout among them – I haven’t seen the poem on Duncan. I always liked his poetry. Delighted you’ve taken so much to Corso & Kerouac as I said last time – I’m sorry I’m myself so difficult with mss. & will send you as much as I can as soon as I can, & as high as I can. Main thing is that while I’ve written some, I’ve not written a tremendous amount, and I’ve not had time to go over the writing, chose & improve & type it – travelling constantly, sightseeing – even sleeping madly on grass in Assissi. Also a lot of my free time is filled with writing letters. That gets buggy too, except they’re good practice.

Print the letter I last sent you, if I wrote it it’s me, there’s no point my looking at it & trying to censor it now. Besides I thought secretly you would anyway, while I was writing it – that’s one of the problems I find now, vanity & selfconsciousness – also the feeling I’ll be suddenly stopped in my tracks by some frightening fiery Judgment – come pitiless eye in an objective alley full of real bones. But I haven’t received no issues of Measure. Leaving for Paris, send me one or two there to circulate – I’ll give one to Genet – tho he can’t read English. Corso sees him, he writes – Corso painted up someone’s walls in some afflatus or maybe spite & the surrealist householder ran complaining to Genet who denounced (corso as a American boor why cant you even learn French & a juvenile shit, so corso yelled back Genet was nothing but a nationalistic hypocritical frog – that’s all I heard, also called him a hysterical fag too I guess. What wild times we live in.

I still say Seattle isn’t really good – because I was trying to get real hot rhythmically, but have no real insight behind the collection of facts – they don’t add up to much. I don’t know. Sounds to me like I’m trying too hard, there, I like parts of it. I thought maybe someday I might revise it. Use it if you want, actually.

Your right, I guess, Hollander’s too much – I saw a review he wrote of my book – but make sure he sees your magazine.

Is the last Black Mt. Review going to ever come out?

Gave measure address also to Careesse Crosby, 14 Place Vendome, Paris. Circulate her if she don’t herself write you.

If you’re lining up things in relation, re Dorn, Whalen & Snyder & maybe Kerouac, have also all written I think about same Skagit Valley, strangely. Poems.

If my father sent you any good poems, we’d both be glad to be in the same issue, I wish it could happen. If he sent you any good poems. If not return them & ask for better. He occasionally (writing a lot) writes a very sharp lyric. M. Moore in a book of essays even quoted one a short while back.
I am sure there is as much around you in Boston as in SF – it’s only a question of a group spirit & some outside audience built up there – but it may already (I suspect) be a little corny. I don’t know.

Have you written Williams or Pound for Bunting, or Zukofsky? Or perhaps even Eliot et Moore would know? Try U.C. library – they have a book published by Dallas Flynn in Huston (?) texas 1950 – perhaps they could supply you with publisher address; and could locate him thataway. UC Library, Berkeley, Cal. Perhaps Harvard has the book.

Nobody expects pay. Ferlinghetti strangely sent me $100 royalties, an unexpected miracle when I was broke. Seems the trial dragging on but improves sales. WSB aware, we are glad to get published under such auspices, that’s the pay.

I been reading Democratic Vistas & further prefatory writing Whitman did. It’s the best statement I’ve seen anywhere on what american poet should be & do – surprise Williams hasn’t picked up on it – but perhaps it’s too bold and demanding – Whitman says that we poets should replace religion. And that if american materialism isn’t infused with vigorous poetic spirituality we be on the way to status of the “fabled damned” a great phrase. And not only that, the basis of this fantastic spiritual democracy:

“To this terrible, irrepressible yearning (queer???) (surely more or less down underneath in most human souls) – this never satisfied appetite for sympathy, and this boundless offering of sympathy – this universal democratic comradeship – this old, eternal yet ever-now interchange of adhesiveness, so fitly emblematic of America – I have given in that book, (Leaves) undisguisedly, declaredly, the openeist expression. ..the special meaning of..Calamus…mainly resides in its political significance. In my opinion it is by a fervent, accepted development of fellows, north and south, east and west – it is by this, I say, and by what goes directly and indirectly along with it, that the United States of the future, (I cannot too often repeat) are to be most effectually welded together, interrelated, annulled [?] into a living union.” – a note p.734 Holloway Nonesuch – from preface to Centennial Edition.

Most of the prose, like Demo Vistas, explains all this. It’s a wild idea – I don’t know if it’s just queer or not – I don’t think so at all actually – Jack Kerouac gives example of just such passion between men on nonqueer level in On the Road – it’s certainly what magnanimity & freedom exists in poet’s minds & all men as he says. Have you dug this side of Whitman? it’s as real & solid as Blake.

Seeing Europe & Assissi thru these eyes, with Peter. Whitman also puts down religious orthodoxy like Blake does – interesting in light of seeing Rome – I saw the Pope in St. Peter’s Sq. last week filled with millions of people.

To your letter – the it’s good to get a magazine full of people thinking in same direction – is it worth making a dialectic between their poems? That is, why not print all Kerouac’s & Marshall’s etc. together, rather than separating the poems & scattering them around the book – because, for one, individual personality of the poet more important than what ideas he illustrates; and for two, how do you know you won’t change your mind next month as to how all the poems interrelate in detail – if they relate in detail at all – I mean maybe you force a program. Like you change your mind about Sakyamuni. I’m not questioning the gestalt or general idea you have in mind – it’s just that to exemplify it like that (interweaving poems to make a point) begins-agh. Just a thought. I know I’d rather have 2 poems of mine together to be compared, rather than lonely on different pages of a magazine. It ain’t human. But maybe you have a point. I see the point as you interweave quotes. But I don’t think universal understanding – no, better said, I don’t think all the poets understand life in the same sequence of thoughts that you will – you’ll have your series, or structure, & they’ll all individually have theirs. That’s why it seems unnecessary to
set up a sequence of thoughts in the magazine by interweaving their poems in a series congenial to you. Though critics do this with quotes, & Zukofsky did it in a Test of Poetry; & Pound made anthologies of chronological discoveries to fit his understanding – and these are interesting & great.

A poem of Bogan’s (Come Junkies) sounds like Jonas Hymn—is he quoting? You might like the Bogan fragment.

I read in an English paper Lorca was queer. I didn't know.

Duerdan’s sound very sharp – the kneecap & bee. Most of the others sound quite interesting too. Alaska quote sounds like Snyder style.

Best not have any prose, useful as it be, unless it itself is beautiful.

Jack K. writes me Creeley is in NY, if you run into him give regards.

Have you anything or do you like Denise Levertov – Creeley knows her.

Write me anything you want, they never open letters. Been corresponding with Burroughs for 10 years, & Jack; longer – nothing ever opened. Who would & what would they do if they did?

Yes I see you mention Levertov.

I'm trying to figure out details of your letter per page, & answer.

I dont know about painters. Have they anything to state verbally that isn’t ephemeral? Van Gough & Klee & Cezanne wrote greatly though.

Are there any more combustions? I haven’t seen any since the one with Howl & [Essonis]? Maybe mailing difficulties.

God but I’d say between you – me keep away from Myers & I dont know Denby & chic world of fashion – no reportage like that, letters – nothing but statements to god, not to readers.

I have a copy of Edge 2 WCW loaned me, didn’t see #1, or others.

Even keep away from reviews of books, I’d say, unless they’re short (or long) great reviews of great books, & books not widely reviewed, and important to us (you me or anyone we know) to know about.

Can’t you get a copy of my book? Can get one from City Lights I should think – Ferl. will send you one free if you send a card & say I said so.

Excellent to have review as Eigner’s in which he quotes a lot if he quotes good poetry which reader otherwise wouldn’t know. “America” is sufficiently widely circulated to take up space which could be used for others tho.

I once read MC Richards Artaud theater book. I think he’s a great figure, & not yet widely influential – but he has a great grain of absolute saintly intensity unlike anybody else, moreso even than Genet. Guy Wernham did a translation of a stunning long poem “To Have Done With The Judgment of God.” He’s in Frisco, reachable thru your Frisco connections – Macclure or Dunc – or maybe Richards has a better one.

Blackburn (Banyalbufar, Mallorca) writes good poetry, why put him to writing prose?

FR Miller has disappeared maybe back into sidewalks of Pitts. & I only know him thru a few intense notes he sent me.

No postage problems.

Further thoughts, now that I’ve finished your letter. – I should think that longer works (poetry & prose), if available, be greater to publish, than short lyrical fragments, no matter how hip – unless the lyrical fragments are really good fast strange poems. Often they tend to be hip statements rather than poems. Evergreen review made that mistake I think, in relation to Whalen’s work, tho I also like his shorts, tho not as much. Evergreen by the way seemed weak – not enuf great.
Have you had chance to read thru in entirety Gary Snyder’s Myths and texts – 80 pages or more?? Whalen has them.

I wish you’d read Whitman’s Vistas & tell me how they seem to you, would like to check on my understanding of it. It’s only 80 pages.

No O’hara poetry? he had an ode to Movie business, remember, that nite, that seemed very free, & expressive.

Well write me at Paris, & I’ll answer, but let’s be shorter it’s maddening to write long letters – I’ll see if I can find anyone interesting there – must be some gaunt great unknown brooklyn soul stalking the Seine looking for heroes. (That’s I mean what Whitman seems to me to boil down to.)

Enclose also a poem by my host Ansen, Alan – the first two stanzas will interest you – the last I think is abstract & stinks from hunger – what I liked at beginning of 2nd stanza reminded me of your poems tho, which is why I enclose it.

As ever,

Allen

P.S. Lisson, god damn it, you leave my boy alone from all this hallucinating-leader crap – can only write poems in abandonness – in a lonely cave See you latter Love Peter –

P.S. Afterthoughts, rereading Seattle, it doesn’t look so bad. These few changes and print it if you can.

page 1 Strophe (or line) 3 – crying instead of the word tears.

6 – (,) comma between harborside, and rusty iron dockwork

page 2 strophe 2 – “a slow apocalypse of rot,” instead of just plain “a slow apocalypse”.

3 – “uncollected garbage” instead of “the un collected garbage”/ I mean, take out “the”

Also enclosed, a short long-line lyric from berkeley – done at same time & in fact on same paper as the Supermarket poem in my book – as good as that almost I thought. I would have sent it before but I gave it out elsewhere about a year ago & it still hasnt been used.

Allen

Answering in detail, I notice I have not said that the magazine sounds very good, in fact unique from the outline & excerpts you sent.

Cid Corman

September 13, 1957

American Express Firenze Italia 13 settembre 1957 venerdì

Dear John,

Because I never could be quiet. And that, from experience, I know that few will write you, apart from contributors. I am incorrigible, uncorrectable, in preferring Eigner, Olson and
Duncan to any of your new ones. (O'Hara is an old story and too slick for me: I can take Jonas better, not because he is better, but because he knows at root that he isn't a poet, but has pleasure in the play of an idea: no sarcasm here.) Larry Eigner comes cleanest to me: everything he does has a directness of perception, however curious the superficial look on the page. And he always looks stronger than his co-contributors. He looks weakest generally in his own bulk. You get the feeling always as though you want to untangle him: only if you try, you realize that it is you who are entangled, not he. I prefer Olson's theme to his variations: Rimbaud manages it all in many fewer lines and with what strikes me as more exactitude; still, there are satisfactions in watching the mind move. Duncan makes too much of his mysteries. But a liveliness that has ripeness. Marshall seems to me less effective than the little I've seen of Ginsberg, though I'm no proponent of the latter. Understand, I dont negative any stirring of air or ground. Aeration is a good thing. And enthusiasm is necessary. So that I am eager to have you go on and have encouraged the few people I know who might be interested to help you, if they care to and can. Blaser may come through. Why he just didn't just leave his poem without all the hemming-and-hawing that adds unnecessary stammering and a pretentiousness that the subject suffers from, I dont know. But I would guess that he is very uncertain. By the poem I mean:

When I –  
A crushed dog on West 9th.  
Sounds like a man.

when I lie in the sun, a bird passes  
over and the wings grow on me.

I chose  
the wings.

the face of love  
can be a monument.

There is a dead dog  
on my street.

I killed  
a monument.

the dog when I strangled him.

The rest simply does not serve. In fact, chokes what there is. It may not be much, but it is fair enough and straight. Spicer, again, could have made a poem if he forgot about Parker, who is irrelevant to what drives him here and, in fact, pushes him into a blind alley.

Dont (I hate to keep having to explain, or thinking I have to because I get so often misunderstood) lose my point in these things. I only offer opinions. Which are directed at you, not at others. Most of what I say may be crap, or if it means nothing to you, of equal unimportance. No matter. Chiefly to give you my concern and it is
no less than it ever was – no matter how far I move out, literally. (I expect to fly to Japan late this winter or early spring.)

I dont much cotton to your MAGICK second issue idea. Chiefly because the only thing magical about MAGICK is the word itself. The rest is a verbal lump of shit. Not even that. I take everything seriously as you may sense. No matter how funny things get. I think it is one of the confusions of our time, this magic kick, this symbolistic abstrusosity. Leo Stein, whom I happen to be reading, is a good example of the arrogance that kills: no one cries honesty more, etc., and no one could less face facts, even imaginative realities. He says that art is amusement and/or appreciation. Which is bullshit. It is like calling it “magic”. (I prefer definitions of poetry like those that Emily Dickinson and Housman arrived at, which arent perhaps definitions at all – but they realized presence and that is the essential matter.) {The caveman’s drawing was not mere amusement or appreciation: it was life itself and was as real, even more real, if you life, than the stone it was painted or carved upon. In short, “magic” and “symbol” are too fucking abstract as descriptions. And they are aspects of the flight, and fright, from belief. (And I dont follow this, I assure you, into any theology, which is another evasion, though not less interesting than science or any other work that has deeply engaged man’s attentions.)

Get something from Creeley, if you can. And keep in touch with Louis Dudek in Montreal, who is starting a new review and who knows the Canadian scene better than almost anyone. If you dont have his address and want it, let me know. Do you have contact with Louis Zukofsky? I met him recently here in Florence. A good mind and perhaps could be of use. Suggestions.

Regards to whatever friends. Please dont pass on what I say to others, unless you think they are capable of reading me straight. In short, I leave it to your discretion.

Yours—
always –
Cid Corman

Philip Whalen
September 23, 1957

Dear John, These are absolutely the latest words – one from today & 1 from last month & none of it about CITY, but I don’t have anything old or new on that subject, many apologies. well anyhow, hope you are digging the most in S.F. Give my love to Mike & everyone; tell them to write.

Love,
Whalen

Newport
23:IX:57

Cid Corman
October 7, 1957
Dear John—

I print since I am at a very small table at a small café – outside – on the Lungarno – and to take a train in another hour or so for a few days in Rome (to locate a possible publisher here for a book of poems on the Mezzogiorno (South) and to see the Japanese legation about a visa – I’ll be in Kyoto with Will Petersen (Frisco painter) sometime in late winter, I figure) –

Want to acknowledge a very kind letter. I like you from this note more than previous letters permitted. Editing is not work that one can afford to be more than humble about, believe me. I know I could do a much better review now than I did – but it probably would not have any more vitality. Keep the thing honest (to yourself), as coherent and cogent as you can. Don’t be afraid to say no (to a friend) OR to be “wrong”. A mag is not an anthology = it is a kick in the pants or a goose. Give space to those you believe in – even if all they do doesn’t altogether please you (but don’t fail to say your head to these) – for if they are young, if they lack outlets, you give them a constant boost (something Evergreen can’t ever do) – and don’t get caught in fads – S.F. is tricky, I suspect. But risk being unpopular, if necessary – and Christ, don’t be cute or clever. None of this probably needs saying – but this for emphasis – and hold on – energetically. Listen to Olson, Duncan, etc but don’t feel that you are committed to them as far as their opinions go (they will be as wrong as you as often – tho for different reasons).

Unlikely that you have seen much of my work (no one has) = have published several hundred poems over 15 years in some 50 odd (very odd) mags. My work is its own excuse for being. I find my stuff doesn’t groove with anything being done today – which makes publication difficult – but I don’t frankly give a shit = I am content when something decent moves out of me –

Yes, I’ll send you some things when I get back (one that is on Paris that is being printed in a small book here soon – but will hardly be read anywhere & is a good one) – I’ll fish around & see what else can fit “the city” (maybe one on sleeping in Florence) –

And I would like to do a review for you – but none of the books you list. (WCW’s letters might serve – but my responses to his work are in my extended correspondence with him for four or five years now). Would prefer something by Creeley. Either The Whip (which Jonathan has, I believe) or The Dress = neither of which books I have (but I have read just about all his poems from his juvenilia till Aug. Poetry – so that I can set the thing up – from many notes I have made on his prove & poetry) – whether you agree with me or not, I take him to be my most important contemporary in the art – also – for a personal reason – I feel I owe him an article in which my reactions to his work can be fully explored. (Maybe prose & prose together = they are of the same fabric) – I say “fully” – but I am a concentrated writer & it won’t run for more than five pages, probably less. But if there is a space-limitation, please let me know in advance -

If you send books – send them to me = c/o Rubenstein, Venelles, Bouches-Du-Rhône, France (I expect to be there in a few weeks & stay there until I take off for Kyoto – in January or February. I imagine).

Best luck always – and if I can help you in any way – let me know. (I believe Paul Blackburn has just returned to NYC = he likely has poems gathered = a good

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15 This letter, unlike Corman’s usual typewritten ones, is handwritten in all caps, which I have changed (for readability) to the standard formatting that Corman uses when he is typing.
Cid Corman

October 12, 1957

American Express   Firenze   Italy   sabato   12 ottobre 1957

Dear John,

You can catch me here till just about the end of the month, and thereafter (until I leave for Japan, early in January, I figure): c/o Rubenstein, Venelles, Bouches-du-Rhône, France.

I find that I have more “city” poems than I realized, but maybe these three will serve, on NY, Paris, and Naples. Two of them are being published in a forthcoming book of mine. If for whatever reason you are reluctant to print them, don’t feel embarrassed to say so. I prefer that you take what genuinely pleases you. If you feel you have something pertinent to say in regard to any of them, ok. But no need to explain.

Opinions, though open to discussion, are bound to be individual, if they are honest and intelligent. I have heard of your leaving Boston from several sources, which is good, since it means you have been active in contacting people. Expose yourself to others as much as possible and listen. Enough. I offer more advice than is warranted. Excuse me. It is simply a reflection of my interest and concern.

Let me hear how things go. Eventually, in a few years, when I return to the States (as I still think I shall), it will be by way of Frisco, so that I would like to maintain close contact with events there, artistic and otherwise.

Yours —
always —
Cid

Cid Corman

December 3, 1957

chez Rubenstein   Venelles   Bouches-du-Rhone   France

mardi   3 decembre 1957

Dear John,

You are so far wrong that there is no point in arguing. It is far better just to wait until you care to see. I would send you others, but I have been through this before, and I know there is nothing you would like, if you don’t like what you’ve seen.

No bitterness, I assure you, but just that realization that best to leave you to your own devices. I’m sorry too that after your enthusiastic desire to have me do an article (review) for you, you let the subject drop without another word.

Look forward to your new issue, especially the Creeley and Duncan. Keep it going.
Cid

I expect to be at this address for at least another two months.

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Philip Whalen

Dear John, I’m returning your letter but not my Magic War thing. No strain, no pain, I don’t want to print it. I’d still like to keep (& am keeping) your letters except for that one you must have for yourself. Thanks for MEASURE, it looks good and is full of good news. I’ll subscribe for it in a little while, when I get some money. Don’t go away mad.

Phil

Philip Whalen
c/o Judge Richard AndersonLincoln County CourthouseNewport, Oregon

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Philip Whalen

Mr John Wieners
33 South Russel Street
Boston 14, Mass&c.

Dear Mr Wieners:

Here are poems by me & Snyder. All of Snyder’s best stuff is in the gritty grasp of Don Allen… a whole book of poems called Myths & Texts… and Don Allen has gone away to Yaddo & I don’t know if he has that book with him. Anyhow the stuff of Snyder here came to me in letters from Japan & I am sending them on to you as is, & as it is it is good stuff. My own stuff, well, these are things I would like to have printed, I hope you can use it ALL, ALL. If not, I shall suicide again &c, the usual routine. Listen I gave your address to a real nutty girl, I can’t remember her name & I don’t know how she writes, I’ve only seen her, not her poems anyhow she is supposed to have written for a long time, all I know is she is beautiful and her name is Virginia.

Jack Kerouac says he wants to send you this 3-line poem:

Pulling off the human drawers
of girls:
Leaving whole pussy-willows
unblown!
Because I’m a breathless tree!

(JK & I are sitting here drinking port wine & lemon-juice because it’s cold & windy outside but the birds are making it anyway.)

Also enclosing a dim carbon of Gregory Corso poems (typed out, Jack says, on RANDELL JARRELL’s typewriter in Washington DC) because Gregory is in Europe now
& got no agent otherwise & is defenseless &c. The poem of Corso, The Last Wrmth of Arnold, JK is a great Miles Davis Moscow unobtainable poem. He ought to be writing this, I hate to type & I aint got any more to tell you anyhow except I hope MEASURE is an enormous success.

KEROUAC again (lying flat on his back now, composing haiga:

Birds chirp,
Fog
Bugs the Gate.

Listen, this is absolutely the latest & best news you’re going to get right now. Voluminous love & goodbye.
1624 Milvia St. Berkeley 9, Calif. Whalen

Robert Duncan [n.d.]
dear John/

You can have “The Dance” and herewith typescript. Do try to get from Charles his satyr poem for #2. I am sending on to you a section from notebooks that I had that appropriate to the “magic” theme. There is plenty of time for your decisions on contents for #2 and [???] all with you that it be the best in your lights that you can find in my work. “The Dance” is for me the nearest to an alive poem.

Robin has sent “Hunger of Sound” his 2 – which leaves me restless to tackle my own poetry with that blaser (trail blaser) – but it is not the new-ness of this poem it’s the hewing it to a beauty. The process of language shown forth in time-cutting, stone-licking-rightness so that image glistens. This writing now of Robin’s is writing that challenges the best in me – or the desire for the best out of me.

I feel San Francisco poetry (outside of McClure, Duerden and Larry Jordan who seem to demand something of themselves and of the language) is literary – shaped for that Evergreen anthology. It’s Renaissance poetry all right. translated as “band-wagon.” I can’t (never could) get Jack to consider the form of a poem. He always thrills, bobs up and down, shivers, to psychological suggestions (ideas) running thru a poem. But when a poem is about something he aint thrilld about, he can’t “hear” it. And cares zero for the time of, the beauty of the making itself. The Magic Workshop bored me finally because it is all subject and no mystery. The mysteries of poetry lie in the world of time forms – in the “measure” that you take for title of the magazine.

I am going back to the notebooks, to the abstract to tune my ear again from the din of these environments.

Have you seen Denise Levertov’s book? put out by City Lights Bookshop (Here and Now) Why no Levertov or Creeley in magazine plans? I’ll write to Denise and urge her to send on poems for #2 – Especially, if not printed elsewhere, some of these lake things – “The Sharks” or “The Peppertrees.”

contemporaries
These people give me my examples of the poem, of the “beauty” of it: Charles, Denise, Creeley, Robin. I can expect it – as one has for so long of Williams, Pound, Marianne Moore, H.D. – that something more and other than self-expression is at play.

Like Arthur in the play I’m sick of people including

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it is the “scene’s scene” that is beautifully true.

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This “beauty” of it is not the whole story of poetry, is it? There is excitement – Marshall excites. And disturbance – Spicer disturbs or provokes (as you so aptly compare him to Rexroth who also disturbs) –

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O before I close – on my mind is a caution. This Pound-Mussolini thing is a dead horse. There is no issue in making Measure an agency for Pound. But Robin wld. be good counsel on this.

con amore

Duncan

[enclosed: typescripts of “The Maiden” and “(THE PROPOSITIONS)”]

Allen Ginsberg

[June 19, 1958]

Dear John:

Long time no hear from you – think I wrote you last. Received Measure 2, seemed very good. Enclosed slightly revised version of Seattle poem, if you still want it – please use the new version, a few small changes. Will send you something new sooner or later when I get to typing up whatever I’ve written here, maybe when I get back to US – will be returning to NY see Peter in a month, or sooner, soon as I raise the fare – broke now & don’t know what next move, except try return soon as I can. When is Measure 3 due? I will be reachable at 416 East 34 Street Paterson NJ after July – if we lose touch meanwhile. Gregory has been writing a lot, very interesting – 2 or 3 years advanced from Yaah, & good deal advanced from Gasoline. What did people there think of it – Spicer, Duncan, etc? any liking at all? Received some letters from Ron Leowinson whose poems seem very good – great sincerity, & the awkwardness in it ignorance rather than overliterary consciousness. Gary Snyder is around the area – have you met him? (back from Japan) – he’s in hospital for operation on his balls – his address 346 Montford, Mill Valley. What are things like in SF now? Been reading a lot of Dada (Motherwell book) and met a lot of them – Duchamp, Peret, Man Ray, Tzara – Tzara’s manifestoes are very interesting poetry – I’d never realized that before, most of his work is untranslated – supposed to be good (tho many here put him down as a boring old stalinist washout now, but I dont believe it, but dont know anyway). I’ve been writing more but not getting anything fiery, tho interestingly looser I guess. Homesick, havent seen family in over year. Guess I’ll set up apartment with Peter for a year in NY, he has to take care of sick brothers, and after that take off again, maybe Far East, Burroughs finishing analysis here & heading to India this fall. Long fragmentary mss. of his is with Ferlinghetti at City Lights now – please look it over – perhaps there is something you will want, other than that page I sent you. Meanwhile Chicago Review says they’ll try to serialize his new work & print it all themselves if no publisher can be found.
The more I read that long poem of Marshall's in BMR the more I like it & he seems so pure. Was in England twice, and read it through to a group at Oxford who strongly accepted & dug it immediately. I read them also a lot of Olson, Creeley, Levertov, Duncan, Whalen, whatever I had around in a few books with me. Please send circulars or sample copies, asking for subscriptions to the following:

W.J. Lucas, Wantage Hall, Redlands Rd, Reading, Berks England
David Archer, The Parton Press, 34 Grove Street, London W 1
Dom Moraes 9 Apollo Place Cheyne Walk London SW 10
Hebert Read c/o ICA 18 Dover Street London W 1
Alistair Southward 22 Princeton Street WC 1 London
Kay Boyle – Greycote, 98 Wilson Ave, Rowayton, USA (Conn.)
WH Auden – 77 St. Mark’s Place NY 3 USA
George Barker – 9 Westbourne Terrace, W 2 London

(By the way could you send Raymond Bremser Box 500 Bordenown, NJ – some back issues – he’s in jail, is an interesting kid sends me wild poems)

D.S. Carne Ross – Talks Dept BBC London W1
Cyril Connolly – 20 Chesham Place London SW 1
Herb Gold c/o James Brown Associates 22 E 60 Street NYC 22 USA
Jacques Stern – 8 Rue du Cirque, Paris France
Christopher Logue – 18 Denbeigh Close, London W 11
Simon Taylor – 33 Tregunter Road London,
Gary Scrimgeour English Dept Wash U. St Louis Mo. USA
Carl Solomon – 3120 Wilkinson Ave Apt #J NY 61
Charles Tomlinson – Old Rectory, Hinton Blewitt, Temple Cloud, Somerset, Eng
Edith Sitwell – Sesame Club, 39 Grovenor St, London

Have talked to or corresponded with all at one time or another, except Tomlinson & Connolly, mentioned or shown them a copy of Measure, so should get a few subscriptions out of it. Archer, Carne Ross & Stern almost surely would subscribe if asked. Maybe Stern who’s rich send a few dollars extra if you send him a copy with request for patronage, ten bucks maybe anyway, can’t say – how’s finances. Also, should ask Sankey to place copies at Better Books & Zwemmers stores in London, or Hand & Flower press woman, who handles City Lites. Also do you sell any at 8th St Bookstore in NY? They do a lot of business.

Do please look up Burroughs mss. at City Lights – tell anybody who might be interested to look at it – Duncan & Spicer, or McClure, or Lamantia if he’s around, or anyone else. Enclosed find revised Seattle. You have 2 poems now? What’s new? Oh, also Robert Lavigne, painter out there – do you know him – lives in the Wentley (Polk & Sutter, Wentley hotel) – look him up if you can? he would be interested in meeting you, I think you might dig his work – McClure knows him – says he’s having an exhibition, or trying to organize one. Used to make very startling posters for poetry readings for us.

Write when can

as ever

Allen

9 [illeg] Le Coeur
Paris France
June 19, 58

Changed Seattle to regular paragraphed prose poetry instead
of long-line, which it really isn’t. That had been bothering me — I originally wrote it this way anyway.

Charles Olson  Black Mtn, 1957

TUESDAY
My dear JAWN: Measure arrived yesterday and for my money it’s hand-picked — the editoring is impeccable. Wow: so far the hits for me are that 1st Marshall (preferring his more personal poems but allowing this is a stunner — an Illumination fairly, the way he swings the bat

and (surprise) the Spicer Bird, who is pure delight to me — witty real and personally authentic. A damn great pleasure

Ok to announce I am here, hardly settled (with two places at the moment, both on the Sq over the harbor) — and want to see you, here.

But this has come up: that I am to take Kate for a week’s excursion to Maine, and I am to receive her from her mother (via cab) Monday AM next.

Now, it’s a long trip, and maybe the trains are such I will have to go right out fr North Station, but if not — or if so, and I ought to come in Sunday night — may I either bunk at yr place, or have Kate come to yr place Monday morning????

It wld be fine. In any case, may I give Con yr telephone number so we have a central, in case there is a mixup? (Con doesn’t obviously want to be in direct touch with me)

Hope Measure II is open still — wld like to have something more substantial than the DS alrwady sent, maybe (have to keep traveling with that Marshall!

Or maybe I’m ahead of myself, now that I smell this town again! For I’m all on fire but feel tubercular I so jumpy and thin (I mean the run is

Love, Charles
28 Fort Square
(no phone)

[...]
Bibliography


—. “Seventy Years Ago in the South.” *Big Bridge* 2013.


Archival Collections: Robert Creeley (Stanford); Robert Duncan (Buffalo); Cid Corman (Syracuse and UConn); Charles Olson (UConn); John Wieners (Boston College, Syracuse, UConn, Delaware, Louisville, Stanford); Diane di Prima (Delaware, UConn, Syracuse); Larry Fagin (UConn), Allen Ginsberg (Stanford); Irving Rosenthal (Stanford); Robert Wilson (Indiana University, University of Delaware); Duncan McNaughton (UCSD); Auerhahn (David Haselwood), City Lights (Lawrence Ferlinghetti), and Black Sparrow (John Martin) presses (Berkeley); Anne Waldman (University of Michigan and NYU Angel Hair Papers); Wallace Berman (Smithsonian Institute); Robin Blaser (Kevin Killian Personal Collection, Simon Fraser University), Michael McClure (Simon Fraser University), Gordon Cairnie (Harvard).