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REVIEWS & PRESS

Lewis Warsh & Anne Waldman, eds. *Angel Hair Sleeps with a Boy in My Head: Angel Hair Anthology*. Granary Books, 2001.

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Black, Noel. "Toeing the Lines." *Fine Print* (January 31- February 6, 2002).

This is John Ashbery (of a generation before) at his most accessible smugness, which isn't saying much. His "entries," which range from a laundry list of names and oil companies to faux diary moments, is made bearable by Joe Brainard's always gorgeous black-and-white pop doodles of cartoon rain, the toilet, bacon and eggs, and other illuminated mundanities.

The Angel Hair Anthology, edited by Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh, Granary Books, 2001.

Like Donald Allen's seminal 1960 anthology *The New American Poetry*, this collection of avant-irreverence reads like notes from a collective of disillusioned scientists furtively searching for a new feeling. Gathered from the archives of poets Waldman and Warsh's underground magazine and press of the same name, *The Angel Hair Anthology* rounds up works of brilliant then-young poets the likes of Bernadette Mayer, Ted Berrigan, John Wieners, Rene Ricard, Dick Gallup, and Joanne Kyger. Like all anthologies, the poems are hit-and-miss, but it's great to see works by many lesser-known and less-published authors like Mary Ferrari and Charles Stein. A great look into *Angel Hair*'s sphere of influences and progressions.

González, Ray. "The Writing Life: Poetry, Anthologies and Recordings." *The Bloomsbury Review* 22.2 (March/ April 2002).

This is a massive collection reflecting the mid-sixties poetry scene in New York and a 12-year publishing venture between Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh. From editing *Angel Hair* magazine to publishing more than 60 books, pamphlets and broadsides, Waldman and Warsh were a tag team that influenced a thriving literary community. The anthology includes work by Ted Berrigan, Frank O'Hara, Philip Whalen, Alice Notley, Kenneth Koch, Jim Carroll, and dozens of others. This is a historic document of an important period in American poetry.

Haynes, Esther. "Review of *The Angel Hair Anthology*." *Jane Magazine* (April).

Any book in which one of the editors (Anne) reminisces about an inspirational acid trip gets my attention. And it gets better. This anthology of *Angel Hair*, a '60s poetry zine and press started by Anne and Lewis in 1966, includes the funny/ surreal/ raunchy writings of Jim Carroll, Robert Creeley and Barbara Guest. Anne, by the way, started the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University in Boulder, Colo., with Allen Ginsberg in the '70s. I want to be like her when I grow up.

Highfill, Mitch. "Review of *The Angel Hair Anthology*." *Poetry Project Newsletter* (February/ March 2002): 25-26.

It was the Spring of 1966. U.S. soldiers were climbing into underground Tunnels in Vietnam. The body count was in full swing. Martin Luther King Jr. was active in Chicago. The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* was getting a lot of airplay. Lewis Warsh and Anne Waldman put out the first issue of *Angel Hair*. It included new works by Jonathan Cott, Lew Ellingham, Lee Harwood, Denise Levertov, Charles Stein, and Gerard Malanga. Later issues would typify the emergence of a group of writers who literally changed the rules and delivered on the promises of *The New American Poetry* (Donald Allen's anthology of 1960). This was where you would find the works of Bernadette Mayer, Jack Anderson, Ted Berrigan, Michael Brownstein, Lewis MacAdams, Dick Gallup, Rene Ricard, Kenward Elmslie, Ron Padgett, Joanne Kyger, Lorenzo Thomas, Joe Ceravolo, Tom Clark, Steve Carey, Bill Berkson, Jim Carroll, Larry Fagin, and, of course, the works of Anne and Lewis. *Angel Hair* was oversized, with simple letterpress titles (except for the last issue, Spring 1969, which featured a cover by George Schneeman).

The relevance of this short run was probably beyond the imaginings of either editor at the time, Frank O'Hara. Jimmy Schuyler, Kenneth Koch, and John Ashbery had already emerged and been given the designation, "The New York School." The critical stance toward their works was in development, but what these poets had in common was already being debated, pro and con. It wasn't until the publication of *C Magazine*, *Adventures In Poetry* (two other crucial magazines of the period) and *Angel Hair* that readers could really say what the designation meant. Obviously, there was a new attitude about daily life. Ted Berrigan and Anne Waldman were writing poems that simply listed the activities of their day(s). Ted and Larry Fagin were known for their top ten lists of things they did, favorite songs, favorite books, etc. There was a glorification of the mundane in these works, as well as another strain which reflected a more interesting set of activities to write about, namely sex, drugs, and rock and roll (in that order). It was, after all, the sixties, and there was a lot of consciousness expansion going around in those days. Imagine John Crowe Ransom writing on acid, or imagine Ted Hughes writing about rolling up a joint and smoking it with W.D. Snodgrass. A new bloom was on the rose, and these poets were enjoying a period of prosperity and freedom from the 50's mores that would have been impossible six years earlier. There was also a willingness to experiment with form, to focus on the plasticity of language (especially in works by Clark Coolidge, Aram Saroyan, and Bernadette Mayer). This sense of word play and abstraction in the midst of every day life was already

present in Ashbery, Koch, O'Hara, and Schuyler, but it became so much more pronounced in the works of the so-called second generation of New York School poets.

The magazine was not to be the only output of *Angel Hair*. As publishers of small-press poetry books, they would publish over 35 books and broadsides, including six or seven books vital to the development of a great deal of what has emerged since, such as Bernadette Mayor's *Eruditio Ex Memoria*, *Moving*, and *The Golden Book of Words*; Clark Coolidge's *Own Face* and *Ing*; Joe Brainard's *I Remember*; and Hannah Weiners's brilliant *Clairvoyant Journal*. Anne was running the Poetry Project in those days, and she lived nearby at 33 St. Mark's Place, where poets and artists would party before and after Poetry Project events. So she had knowledge of and access to an enormous array of writers, and *Angel Hair* reflected that range. Although considered a New York School vehicle, *Angel Hair* published books by Lee Harwood, John Weiners, Robert Creeley, and Charlie Vermont as well.

Holding this new book in hand, one feels a reflection, however distorted by the passage of time, of just how exciting it was to pick up Ted Berrigan's *Nothing For You*, hot off the press. Ted Greenwald's *Makes Sense* still does so. As Creeley says in the excerpt from *In London*, "The song of such energy/ invites me."

The Angel Hair Anthology includes work from all six issues of the magazine, as well as selections from all of the books that the press published (except *Eat This!* By Tom Vietch). So there are some odd entries, such as Kenward Elmslie's brilliant and baffling *Girl Machine* (1971) and Britton Wilkie's *Limits of Space and Time*.

Another marvelous feature of this book is the section "Angel Hair Memoirs," where most of the contributors write brief memoirs of the times, or the circumstances of being published by *Angel Hair*, or the specific entries themselves. Along with these memoirs are pictures. Frank O'Hara in 1964 in his Broadway loft. Clark Coolidge playing drums in 1967. A nude photo of Coolidge, Carol Clifford, Gerard Malanga, Tessie Mitchell, Dick Gallup, Tom Veitch, Katie Schneeman, and Anne Waldman, 1972, at the Schneeman's apartment on St. Mark's Place. A young Tony Towle at work. Anne Waldman and her mother, Anne Waldman and Philip Whalen, Bob Rosenthal and Jim Brodey, 1977 at Dick Gallup's apartment. I like a particularly wind-blown photo of Kenward Elmslie, Anne and Lewis on the beach in Westhampton in 1968. Everybody I've talked to about this book admits to starting with this section, even though it is in the back of the book.

There is a developing context for this anthology. In recent years, there has been a significant increase of interest and awareness of the New York School. Penguin republished Ted Berrigan's *Sonnets* and Joe Brainard's *I Remember*. They also published Alice Notley's *Descent of Alette*. There is a retrospective of Joe Brainard's artworks touring now; it just left NYC. Granary Books brought out a lovely bibliography of Ted Berrigan a few years ago, as well as the magnificent bibliography of the mimeo era, *A Secret Location in the Lower East Side*. The New York School has come to occupy a more robust locale in academia, and in the publishing world. The old *Adventures In Poetry* imprint has been revived as a book publisher, already in print with new books from Charles North and John Ashbery. Perhaps we will see more major works of the

sixties and seventies come back into print. At least some of this work has been rescued already, and can be found in this 619 page masterpiece anthology.

It is appropriate that this review appear in *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, for so much of the work herein was conceived or performed at the Poetry Project, and some of the ghosts invoked in the book roam the grounds of this place.

Staff. "The Year in Books 2001." *Publisher's Weekly*. (November 11, 2001).

From 1966- 1978, poets Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh edited the magazine *Angel Hair* (six issues from 1966- 69) and published more than 60 low-tech, high-quality books, chapbooks and literary salvos from their Lower East Side press of the same name. The two poets have returned to their youths to cull angel hair sleeps with a boy in my head: *The Angel Hair Anthology*, which collects work from press and magazine, representing such poets as John Ashbery, Ted Berrigan, Clark Coolidge, Barbara Guest, Joanne Kyger, Bernadette Mayer, Alice Notley, John Wieners, and 62 others. The book is a beautifully produced snapshot of an extraordinary time and place in American poetry.

Terrill, Mark. "Review of *Angel Hair Sleeps with a Boy in My Head: The Angel Hair Anthology*." *Rain Taxi* 7.1. 35.

Poetry in America in the mid-60s was in an unprecedented state of upheaval and metamorphosis, having recently been challenged from several different quarters, including the Olson/ Creeley/ Black Mountain axis, the Spicer/ Duncan/ Blaser axis, the San Francisco Renaissance, the Beats, the New York School, as well as the still-nascent Language poets and "postmodernism" in general. Into this heady atmosphere of ferment and fervor was born *Angel Hair*, founded by Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh, two young poets from the East Coast who originally met at the Berkeley Poetry Conference in 1965.

From the very outset, *Angel Hair* was determined to be radically different, both physically and aesthetically, with its large 9' x 12' pages, colored tissue end papers, and artwork supplied by Joe Brainard, George Schneeman, Jim Dine, Alex Katz and others for the magazine as well as the books. At its inception, *Angel Hair* was influenced by such other seminal publications as *White Rabbit Books*, *Locus Solus*, *Art & Literature*, *The Floating Bear*, and Ed Sanders' *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*, but rapidly took on an identity entirely its own. Published and produced largely by hand on a shoestring budget out of their flat on St. Mark's Place in New York, *Angel Hair* soon became an important mouthpiece for experimental and avant-garde writing, serving as a locus for a newly emerging poetics. The thrust of *Angel Hair* may have been nonacademic, but it was not anti-intellectual.

Between 1966 and 1978, in addition to the six issues of the magazine, *Angel Hair* as a press also published some 80 books in a simple, low-tech yet distinctive format. While the core aesthetic leaned heavily in the direction of the first and second generation New York School, the *Angel Hair* network stretched from the St. Mark's Poetry Project on the Lower East Side of Manhattan

clear across the continent to Bolinas, California, straddling a broad spectrum of poetry and poetics.

This anthology includes generous samples of writing culled from all six issues of the magazine and 62 books, pamphlets, and broadsides, including work by John Ashbery, Ted Berrigan, Jim Carroll, Tom Clark, Clark Coolidge, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Barbara Guest, Joanne Kyger, Bernadette Mayer, Frank O'Hara, Ron Padgett, Philip Whalen, John Wieners, and many others. The result is an amazing wealth of innovative and idiosyncratic writing that bubbles with energy, verve, urbanity, and risk (remember risk?) on every page. While much avant-garde writing tends to eventually become subsumed by the mainstream culture it was trying to separate itself from, it's astonishing just how much of its initial edge this writing has retained, retroactively validating the editors' keen taste and timeless sense of aesthetics.

Some of the more titillating examples of the wide range of diversity and juxtaposition in this anthology include one-word poems by Aram Saroyan; all-over-the-page collaborations between Ron Padgett, Tom Clark, and others; the hilarious, sprawling *Bean Spasms* by Ted Berrigan; the deeply moving *Verge*, by James Schuyler, and the almost straightforward prose of Harris Schiff's *I Should Run for Cover But I'm Right Here*, a tragic-comic story of a wayward acid trip in the mountains of New Mexico. The underlying cohesion here is one of temperament and perspective, more than any particular school or movement, coupled with a strong sense of community and purpose. As Anne Waldman says in her introduction:

In retrospect, *Angel Hair* seems a seed syllable that unlocked various energetic post-modern and post-New American Poetry possibilities, giving a younger generation cognizance that you can take your work, literally, into your own hands. You don't have to wait to be discovered. And so-called ephemera, lovingly and painstakingly produced, have tremendous power. They signify meticulous human attention and intelligence, like the outline of a hand in a Cro-Magnon cave. Yet with the overwhelming availability of information—everything known, nothing concealed—that we have today through more and more complex technologies, I wonder if Lewis and I would go about our press now in quite the same manner. With the same naïve enthusiasm and optimism? I like to think so.

Aside from serving as an important archive for one of the more vibrant epochs in American letters, this anthology also helps point the way for future generations interested in alternative poetic strategies, making it a valuable sourcebook as well. Also included is a section of highly illuminating memoirs by several of the authors with many rare black & white photos, documenting the genesis of their work and their relationships with Waldman, Warsh, and others, as well as an annotated list of publications compiled by Steven Clay and Aaron Fischer that comprises a citation and photographs of the approximately 80 books, magazines, broadsides and catalogs issued by the press. Lengthy introductions by the editors help put *Angel Hair* into further historical perspective. This big slab of a book, with its 630 oversize pages, is destined to find a place in the upper echelon of groundbreaking and influential anthologies of post-war American poetry.

Russo, Linda. "Real and Imagined Muses: *The Angel Hair Anthology*." *How2* (Spring 2002).

For centuries women poets have struggled with, negotiated and besmirched the notion of the glorious muse, the celebrated source of men's poetic inspiration. The conflation of this mythic figure with real women who were involved with, even if only tangentially, relations of poetic production, blurred them; women were neither wholly real nor simply imagined. Establishing poetic identities for themselves was thus troubled. In the late 19th century Elizabeth Barrett Browning created a fictional poetic figure for herself—the hard-working and independent Aurora Leigh—to offset the muse, and though Virginia Woolf lamented that Barrett Browning's epic novel-poem left no successors, it was received with mixed praise—some felt its heroine and its form too masculine, its subject matter not properly feminine. Later Marianne Moore and Mina Loy were celebrated as "girls," H.D. as the delicate imagist, and so on through the 20th century. A struggle for clarity ensued when women, in poetic acts, sought to reconcile their writing practices with the roles they were given—by poetry, by the men around them who practiced poetry—to play. And for many women their poetic lives were, as Rachel Blau Duplessis termed it, a "career of that struggle." The situation had not changed terribly much when Anne Waldman was barely a young woman cutting her teeth on the possibilities proposed by the New American Poetry in the 1960s. In Joanne Kyger's recently republished *Japan and India Journals* [1] of 1960- 64, for example, we encounter a young poet mired in notions of feminine identity that explicitly discouraged her development as a poet: one can not be, she reads, she is told, both a woman and a poet—since she was a muse, she could not take a (feminine) muse. This would upset poetry's gender economy.

A record of women publishing, in the 1950s and 1960s, poetry written in the new, open forms is the record of women overcoming such prohibitive notions. *Angel Hair*, from 1966 onward, was to play a significant role in contributing to the vitality of this record. Even though, as Lewis Warsh remarks in his introduction, in magazines and books, *Angel Hair* published "embarrassingly" few women, with *Angel Hair*, Waldman and Warsh created a space open to continued change in the field of poetic production; it was, Waldman notes, a "seed syllable that unlocked various energetic post-modern and post-New American Poetry possibilities, giving a younger generation cognizance that you can take your work, literally, into your own hands." *Angel Hair* came to life in a decade when American Poetry was taken into the hands of unprecedented numbers of women as poets and editors, constructing through their work a productive relation to innovative poetic discourses. Throughout the 1960s, Diane di Prima, Margaret Randall, Rosmarie Waldrop, and Bernadette Mayer also co-edited little magazines and small presses (with men, usually a husband or lover). It is in the context of this history of the re-discovery of women's poetic agency—in the form of contribution to the construction of poetry as a public, social act—that I'd like to remark upon *The Angel Hair Anthology*.

"Angel Hair" is the imagined muse in a poem by Jonathan Cott, a college friend of Waldman's, which prefaces the anthology. This is the imagined she, knowledgeable and sexy, accompanying the poet and "sleep[ing] with a boy in [his] head" (and not the delicate pasta) for which *Angel Hair* was named. It is interesting on some level that Waldman and Warsh were drawn to these

imagined figures (Angel Hair's boy-companion has no name)—"imagined" not only in terms of coming into existence in a poem, but being also imagined beings in the poem, figures inside the male poet's head who nonetheless exert an influence on his "real" poetic world. But more interesting still is the fact that juxtaposed to this imaginary-poetic realm were the real social and material realms in which Waldman and Warsh would effect their energy and influence through the realization of *Angel Hair*. The figure of the girl-muse Angel Hair freed from her fixed, figurative role becomes the namesakes of the magazine *Angel Hair*, which ran for six issues from 1966- 69, and Angel Hair press, which published 60 books, 10 catalogues, and 3 broadsides in the 11 year period from 1967- 78. Girl-muse Angel Hair comes to stand for poetic innovation enabled by the imagination and enactment women's as textual (rather than sexual) possibility.

The impact of all of this can be felt in this hefty anthology, which reprints the complete contents of the six issues and, from the press, either substantial book excerpts or, in many cases, whole books. 21 whole books, though the pagination, of course is duplicated in only a few cases, as in Clark Coolidge's and Ron Padgett's *Bun*, where the whole page is employed more for its whiteness than its wordedness. Kyger's *Joanne*, originally 39 sparsely texted pages, is here condensed to 14, page breaks signified by a triple asterisk. The 8 pages of Waldman's *Giant Night* here condensed to 5 pages similarly marked. But the whole "acquired mystery" of John Weiners's *Hotels 1970*, the whole of the whimsical and savvy *The Basketball Article* (Waldman and Mayer), and several others, make this collection remarkable and rare: most of these books are out of print (though Lewis Warsh is known to have a small stock of a few titles featured here).

The sense of organized, occupied space that was for many a generative aesthetic is recuperated somewhat in the editors' (and publisher's) thoughtfully executed decision to, as inclusively as possible, present everything. "Angel Hair" is thus less a collection of printed objects than an oeuvre, a collection of events and actions undifferentiated by time and space but reflective of it. I say "undifferentiated" because the publications that compose the anthology are auspiciously undated. This is a pointedly poetic record. Underscored, in the dual-running introductions (on a two-columned page) by Waldman and Warsh, and in a collection of "memoirs" (accompanying photographs) in a diverse assembly of voices, is the poets who comprised the historical moment that was both *Angel Hair's* and part of something much larger; larger than the collaborative vision that is *Angel Hair*; larger than individuals who provided materials or worked manually to print and circulate them. There is no distinct contributor's list (in the magazines or in the anthology) and the collected memoirs do not serve as biographies; they do not sing onanistic praises. All are not accounted for, but captured is a sense of the significance of the whole for which all are accountable in a chronology jumbled and jostled as this section proceeds alphabetically from memoir to memoir. For bibliophiles and those of us whose lives aren't indelibly marked by the particular moments that comprise the history of *Angel Hair*, the anthology includes a detailed list of publications, with cover images and specs (size, page length, date, run, and cover artist).

The result is perhaps the first anthology that successfully opens out rather than groups, camps,

or encloses. It might not be nostalgia for a time before-my-time that leads me to believe that the guiding spirit here is generosity, discovery, and kinship. For Warsh the bi-coastal nature of the venture—enabled by the two editors, both New Yorkers, having met at the 1965 Berkeley Poetry Conference—is partly responsible: "I... felt that we made our point in trying to define a poetry community without coastal boundaries—a community based on a feeling of connectedness that transcended small aesthetic differences, all the usual traps that contribute to a blinkered pony vision of the world." These connections were enabled by the meeting of geographical mobility and printability in the "mimeo revolution"—a period of poetic production captured in another Granary Books publication, *A Secret History of the Lower East Side: Adventures in Writing 1960- 1980* (1998) of which *Angel Hair* was a primary benefactor. Undoubtedly the liberation of machinery and the schism of contemporary poetry from the Ivory Tower initiated by Donald Allen's 1960 anthology, *The New American Poetry*, enabled women to try their hand at editing and publishing, but it was also the reconfiguration of social roles that poets of a generation were eager to continue, in their poetry and in their poetry-centered lives, that enabled the spirited Waldman, taking cues and inspiration from the few women poets then on the scene (Kyger and di Prima, Denise Levertov, and Lenore Kandel are a few she has mentioned). In a sense Waldman, a poet who celebrates the muse as an inspirational figure, could also have as real muses real women poets. This is why, I believe, for a younger generation, Waldman emerges (along with others—Alice Notley, Bernadette Mayer, and Rosmarie Waldrop to name but three) as a figure of possibility for continued change and continued connections that, despite the masculinist and misogynist tinges that surface here and there throughout the anthology, women would increasingly foster. Following after these few "seed syllable" women (Waldman's phrase), a sizeable history of women poet-editors has ensued; since 1970 women have started over 70 little magazines and small presses devoted to poetic experimentation, almost half of these since 1990 alone.

The Angel Hair Anthology reminds us that the mimeo revolution was much more than the sum of its parts—those old mimeo'd books we might come across, if we're lucky, the poets we might write letters to, or even meet—that the person-machine-poem-book assemblage that transformed poetry during the Cold War and throughout the 1970s was alive through a collective sense of possibility for living a poetics in politically troubled times. It reminds us, also, that Allen Ginsberg, so often an orchestrator, often referenced as such, needn't emerge as a centralizing figure; he is mentioned but a few times in the memoirs and introduction. The absence of his writing doesn't deny his importance or presence, but it does make room to notice that a politics other than Ginsberg's personal/ prophetic poetics are here in the making. The book-length explorations of a few women poets investigate a range of tactics: notably, the child-rearing complexities that compose Notley's "Incidentals in the Day World", "Mayer's hyper-experiential Moving", the investigative and statistical poetics of Tapa Kearney's "Cuba", Charlotte Carter's detective story "Sheltered Life", which, twisted through with issues of race and gender, evokes a Duras-like discomfort, and Hannah Weiner's visually and aurally disruptive *Clairvoyant Journal*. These few, along with Waldman and Kyger, are the women of *Angel Hair* books.

The Angel Hair Anthology is a significant collection, in that it signifies how, running alongside

the high times and antics celebrated in tales of the 2nd generation New York School, from many corners radical experimentation investigated differentials of political power that would emerge as central concerns for a generation of poets of the late 1970s and early 80s. While the work of individuals such as Ashbery, Berrigan and Coolidge might provide some obvious associations with the various strategies that would be taken up by Language poets, *The Angel Hair Anthology* brings to light various investigations that defined a decade of poetic innovative necessities, reminding us that it takes a community to raise its poets, and that lines of connection, lineages that so often favor male forefathers and heirs, though readily apparent, disperse complexly—by "leaving lines a gender," we might say—into multiple lines, into the lines of the many poems that constitute Poetry.

[1] Republished as *Strange Big Moon: the Japan and India journals, 1960- 1964* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2000). See Big Bridge #7, <http://www.bigbridge.org/preview/fictkygerreviews.htm>.

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http://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/archive/online_archive/v1_7_200/current/alerts/russo.htm

Tysh, George. "Stuff it and groove." *Metrotimes* [New York, NY] (December 12- 18, 2001): 26.

Whenever I hear the words "New York School," I reach for my funny bone, my thinking cap, and my johnson all at the same time. Since I've only got two hands, this becomes a Three Stooges imitation of a Hindu deity, a blur of imaginary arms grasping at the rays of poetic enlightenment emanating from a spot somewhere between the eyes of Daffy Duck in Statue-of-Liberty drag. Well, that's the effect on an otherwise reasonable person of reading the inspired madness known as New York School Poetry. And 2001, aside from being one of the strangest years on record, has brought to bookstores some excellent adventures in publishing that recall the glory days of said movement in American writing.

Ushering in the second half of the '60s with a rush of poetic chutzpah was *Angel Hair* magazine, which turned out six issues from 1966 to 1969 and continued with books, pamphlets, and broadsides until 1978. Edited jointly by poets Anne Waldman and Lewis Warsh, who devoured literary and art connections with the endless energy of youth, the project brought together work by New York School ü-poets John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest et al and their second- and third-generation successors—among them, Ted Berrigan, Bernadette Mayer, Ron Padgett, Clark Coolidge, Lorenzo Thomas, and dozens of aesthetically whacko others—with art by the likes of Joe Brainard, Philip Guston, and George Schneeman. As Padgett and Tom Clark wrote in their collaborative poem sequence, *Bun*, published by Angel Hair Books:

Will we, in twenty years,
Look down at these pages

And ejaculate?
ADVERTISEMENT

Well, *The Angel Hair Anthology* might just inspire such a reaction, if you're poetically inclined and get turned on by verbal genius. This huge selection is chock-full of same, along with lyrical wildness, crazy humor, syntactical audacity, and other unexpected pleasures.

One of the more consistently great figures in the New York pantheon was the late Joe Brainard, an artist who never met a visual style he wouldn't appropriate for his own amazing combines, collages, comic reimaginings, and floods of luscious color. But he was also a touchingly funny poet, the creator of the *I Remember* series in which he turned his memoirs into liberating takes on nostalgia, e.g.:

I remember "God is Love is Art is Life." I think I made that up in high school. Or else Ron Padgett did. At any rate I remember thinking it terribly profound. (I recently asked Ron about this and he said that neither one of us made it up. That it came from an article in *Life* magazine about beatniks.)

Brainard collaborated with other New York poets on "poetry comics," produced countless hilarious variations on the "Nancy" comic strip and generally stood nose-to-nose with the art world, staring it down over the issue of "identifiable style," choosing instead to follow the path of attitude, concept, and spontaneity. All of this is made amply clear in *Joe Brainard: A Retrospective*, a catalog of his art and writing that's also graced with essays by Ashbery, Constance M. Lewallen, and Carter Ratcliff. It's the kind of coffee-table book that won't just lie there looking cool, because folks will constantly be devouring its radiant innards.

Actually, when it comes to Ron Padgett's book of writings on poetry, I lied—it was published in 2000, but no matter. *The Straight Line* will have you laughing all the way to enlightenment, with poems about poetry, prose works, and essays on teaching writing. From his long association with the Teachers & Writers Collaborative in New York and as editor of the Teachers & Writers Handbook of Poetic Forms, Padgett has made the education of young creative writers one of his top priorities. But *The Straight Line* is pedagogical in the friendliest of ways, like an invitation to sit, think, chuckle, and sip some joy juice while you realize the most wonderful things about writing, e.g.:

"Poetic License"

This license certifies
That Ron Padgett may
tell whatever lies
His heart desires
Until it expires

In luminous essays on French authors Blaise Cendrars and Pierre Reverdy, New York poet-dance

critic Edwin Denby, and "The Care and Feeding of a Child's Imagination," Padgett reveals himself to be that rarest of individuals, a brilliant writer whose compassion far outshines his sense of self-importance. This is perhaps the most generous, most entertaining tour that anyone will ever offer through the poetry landscape, with a guide who keeps handing out one after another pair of insight-binoculars: the crazy pair, the weird pair, the horselaugh pair, the tender pair, the pair shining with delicate realization.

Since Padgett so often believes in leaving 'em laughing, it's appropriate to close with his minireview of fellow New York poet Joseph Ceravolo's "Wild Flowers Out of Gas":

Joe Ceravolo's poems are like the old lady who helps a Boy Scout across the busy street. They are also like the truck driver who stops his truck to let them cross safely, toots his horn, and waves. They are also like the nickel in the Boy Scout's pocket that was not bent by being run over by the truck.

The New York Poets are in love with life and its words. Like Walt Whitman, their illustrious progenitor, and the city they call home, those impetuous wordiacs embrace it all.

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