

“CROWDED AIR”:

PREVIOUS MODERNISMS IN SOME 1964 NEW YORK LITTLE MAGAZINES

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In our “literary” listings and groupings
[...] we make constellations of the
works of poetry that are, if they are
anything, linked by gender, works of our
selves, drawings of our spiritual kinship,
of when and where what we are is
happening. —Robert Duncan¹

In the most recent issue of *Lana Turner*, Joshua Clover draws out the differences between what he terms the “genealogical” and the “historical” avant-gardes. The former, he claims, “is a diachronic account which takes genealogy for history”; in doing so, it necessarily suffers from “the affirmation trap,” which blunts an avant-garde’s political ambitions for “an enlarged struggle toward the transformation of basic social arrangements” by positioning itself (and whatever political claims it does make) “within the cultural sphere.” Thus an unavoidable contradiction arises: a genealogical avant-garde “has no choice but to affirm the very cultural continuity which it must also claim to oppose.” It preserves an existing social sphere and concerns itself not with social “antagonism” but with questions of form and the status of art—though it also requires “a matching of aesthetic practice to some corresponding and contemporaneous social content.”² In contrast, a historical avant-garde is “synchronic” and “align[s] itself first with the negation of the current social arrangement including the negation of culture both as a medium for transmission and as such.” Formally, it is distinct from previous avant-gardes.

Clover’s delineations are provocative and compacted; they describe the contemporary Anglophone poetry scene, and appeal for a genuinely historical “negationist” avant-garde that moves beyond the “affirmation trap” through a “direct engagement with lived social antagonism,”³ yet they also have a history. In this essay, I propose the 1960s New York poetry scene as one that navigates—sometimes deftly, sometimes necessarily messily—the genealogical and the historical avant-gardes, with the goal of avoiding “the affirmation trap.” Like Ed Sanders’s antagonistically and aptly named Fuck You Press, whose publication list

includes bootleg mimeograph printings of W.H. Auden and Ezra Pound, little magazines from 1964 serve as case studies for an avant-garde scene that grapples with the enshrinement of/resistance to previous avant-gardes (in Clover's terms, the genealogical avant-garde) and an engagement with social antagonism (the historical avant-garde). Ultimately, these scenes' interest in social self-documentation is, in some ways, propelled by an attempt to get around the problem posed by the relegation of poems (of whatever aesthetic genealogy) to the cultural sphere.

The early 1960s were a formative time for small press publishing in New York: between 1960 and 1961, publications include Donald Allen's influential anthology *The New American Poetry*, *Kulchur* magazine, and first books by Barbara Guest, LeRoi Jones, and Jerome Rothenberg; 1962 is the year of John Ashbery's divisive *The Tennis Court Oath*, which utilizes collage and juxtaposition in a form very different from his debut *Some Trees*, thus somewhat polarizing his audience; 1963 marks the founding of Ted Berrigan's "C" press and magazine; in 1964 Frank O'Hara's seminal *Lunch Poems* is released. All of this work serves as a foundation to a flurry of little magazine activity that crescendos through second half of the decade—New York alone sees the commencement and contrails of some well-remembered magazines like *0 To 9*, *Adventures in Poetry*, *The World*, *Angel Hair*, *Umbra*, *Caterpillar*, *The Floating Bear*, and others, often grouped together under the label of the "mimeograph revolution."⁴

The mimeograph revolution, as a term, describes the specific circulation and the technology of production of some magazines. But it is also, as Steven Clay and Rodney Phillips point out, a kind of comprehensive shorthand for a group of aesthetic practices or styles (including but not limited to spontaneity, collaboration, and appropriation) and their continuation in later magazines.⁵ Daniel Kane, writing about a more specific group of magazines than the ones showcased in the B-Side Modernism exhibit, says, "Much of the poetry and associated commentary in the mimeos tended to emphasize and articulate both the poets' allegiances to a historical experimental tradition (Williams, Pound, Stein, and so on) as well as to a heightened sense of the poets' fraternity and their marginalized relationship to the society in which they wrote."⁶ This is certainly true sometimes, but what's also evident—sometimes within the same magazine—is a contrasting desire to shuck the notion of poetic progenitors. The marginality embraced by 1960s small press poets sometimes validates itself by positioning itself within a lineage of experimentation (for instance, Ted Berrigan's first sonnet, an homage to Ezra Pound, ends with the couplet, "We are the sleeping fragments of his sky, / Wind giving presence to fragments,"⁷ drawing attention both to an indebtedness to Pound's formal innovations and to Berrigan's own furthering of fragmentation, his "cut-up" method of composition). But such a marginality must also emphasize autonomy and a writing of the present, what I call *contemporaneity*, in order to make itself distinct. That distinction sometimes

reveals itself in the magazines' content, certainly, but also emerges in the various production practices of the time: stories of mimeograph magazines production, frequently completed at night and on the sly with available office and church mimeographs, often sound similar to descriptions of protest press and underground newspaper production.⁸ As the decade continues, the spheres of production and circulation of protest literature and poetry small press publishing increasingly overlap, as in Susan Sherman's IKONstore.⁹ By attending to specific aspects of production (details of publication and circulation embedded in what Robert Darnton calls "the communications circuit"¹⁰), we discover that the mimeograph revolution's desire for contemporaneity is often more evidenced in sociality (gossip, anecdote, conversation) than in genealogical or even formal questions, which are often perceived as having their own retrograde temporality.

The term "mimeograph revolution" was coined as said revolution occurred; Eric Mottram uses it as a title in 1964 for a round-up review in *The Times Literary Supplement*, writing, "Kirby Congdon, the poet who runs Crank Press, calls [the flurry of self-published little magazines] the mimeography revolution, the end of the competitive approach to poetry and waiting and pleading at the doors of big time publishing."¹¹ Of course, little magazines were not new—modernism had been circulated via publications like *Blast*, *Poetry*, and *The Little Review*¹²—but emergent technologies and a changing social atmosphere in the post-World War II years gave the 1960s magazines new energy and form. Contending with limited resources and obscenity laws that dampened transnational distribution networks,¹³ the number of magazines produced in the '50s cannot compare to the exponential production of the next two decades. Still, some of the offset little magazines of the '50s—notably *Origin*, *The Black Mountain Review*, *The Fifties*, *Measure*, and others—both paved the way for the "revolution" and provided models against which to work. Decade-bridging little magazines include LeRoi and Hettie Jones's *Yugen*, which began in 1958, and which managed to circulate outside of the city primarily because of Hettie Jones's *Partisan Review* acquaintance with distributor Bernhard DeBoer (otherwise, to get distribution, "you had to have a spine and ours was stapled").¹⁴ Jerome Rothenberg's *Poems from the Floating World* commenced in 1959, circulating in and influencing the New York poetry scene. Robert Kelly, Joan Kelly, and George Economou started *Trobar* in 1960, after the three editors left *The Chelsea Review*.¹⁵ Looking at *Trobar*'s genesis gives us one window onto what is now considered a relative lull in and perceived stylistic bent of New York area little magazine production just prior to the mimeo boom. Kelly recalls:

At that time, in the late '50s [...] there was nothing to read; the magazines were very few and far between. There was *J*, the mimeograph paper that Jack Spicer ran in San Francisco, which hardly got to New York until 1959 or 1960—1960 I think we got it there, in the great Eighth Street Bookshop. There were a few other things [...] a few that were around and that were interesting—*Yugen* is one of them...¹⁶

Kelly refers to Bly's *The Fifties* as their "apostate," but explains and he and his fellow editors wanted to counterbalance the prevailing tendency toward translation in that magazine and elsewhere; the impetus behind *Trobar* was to "follow whatever was developing in the sense of an American aesthetic, an American poetic." He continues:

We had Emerson to guide us, and Whitman and Dickinson and Melville to guide us, and Hart Crane and so on to guide us—they were wonderful outposts of reality, maybe extensions of how far we could go in certain directions, but what we didn't have was a convincing sense of that's enough, that we can work with that, can go forward in our own language.¹⁷

Economou supports this present-oriented impetus when he says, "The title *Trobar* announced something about the longevity and pedigree of our take on poetry to go with the intensity of our commitment to its present moment." In addition to Crane and others, Kelly also cites Stein as a "master," and Economou credits Pound as the "inspiration" for the title, suggesting the ambition of maintaining a genealogical avant-garde while also hinting toward aspects of a historical one.¹⁸

In Economou's and Kelly's accounts, previous modernists seem to be both generative of ("guides," "masters," "inspirations") and inadequate to ("that's enough," "our own language") the publication of a contemporaneous poetics, one that is present-based and seeks innovation—though that innovation can occur by working with predecessor material. According to Kelly, *Trobar*'s conceptualization and advocacy of the "deep image" is indebted to Pound's "division of powers" (*logos*, *melos*, and *phanos*),¹⁹ though part of what attracts Kelly to the *phanos* is its apparent ability to encompass the social. Implicit here is the idea that contemporaneous social problems cannot be adequately explained within the frame of past influences, especially if that frame is aesthetic—too much is left out.

In other words, one way Pound's seemingly metaphysical categories may be relevant for the "present moment" of the mimeo boom is to see the image as reflective of "a particular stance of the poet as regards his material." The deep image is ultimately intended to generate a

“conceptual cognitive freedom” capable of explaining the present: the deep image was not, Kelly says, “about profundity in a religious sense,” but “about getting below the surface of ordinary reality to see what its sources are. Trying to get to know, to put it in social terms, trying to get beneath the social to see what the roots are of social behavior. Why are black people being discriminated against? Why are women so humiliated in our society?”²⁰ By opposing “profundity”—of religion, or even of what we might consider the traditional lyric—with “ordinary reality,” Kelly suggests that only a confrontation with the latter can reveal anything “beneath the social.” Kelly’s account of the deep image stands precisely in the contradiction where Clover locates “the affirmation trap”: an “image” is nothing if not aesthetic, and very clearly invokes imagism and previous avant-gardes, yet it seeks to understand its “causes” not in traditions of image-making but in unmediated social reality. It seeks to produce knowledge and a transformed sense of social practice. The unlikeliness that the deep image can actually operate this way is what marks the tension of an avant-garde in search of the ground of its contemporaneity and efficacy. *Trobar* is an early example of a magazine obliquely invested in a politics that is enmeshed with notions of aesthetic lineage and autonomy.

I want now to consider some of the publications in and around 1964 in this social context—and particularly at moments when they reference previous modernisms, which weave through the youthful little mags of the ’60s in various ways. The Danowski collection, based in the concept of inclusiveness, is an ideal place to examine the reverberations of previous modernisms in the 1960s little magazines, especially short-lived ones that do not quite fit into historical narratives of fraternity and affiliation.²¹

If we are attentive to the social context in and around 1964, it becomes easier to see how engaging the lineage of experimentation (the genealogical avant-garde) and desiring to discard lineage entirely and embrace social antagonism (the historical avant-garde) may have become increasingly entwined as both social movements and the New York literary scene expanded. With the founding of SDS in the early ’60s, the urgency of the social questions “deep image” in part sought to address seemed to accelerate. Todd Gitlin points to the disappointment of the Atlantic City Democratic Convention, the murders of civil rights workers, and the Gulf of Tonkin as crucial events for the New Left: “Before, liberalism posed a dilemma. After, it was an obstacle.” What came next, he says, was

...the perfecting and proliferating of identities: culture as politics: the idea of ‘liberation’; the movement as a culture, a way of life apart. Cultural transformations already at work in the Fifties picked up speed. Subsurface tendencies showed

themselves, shaping the rest of the decade: campus reform; black power; seeds of counterculture; the women's movement; the withering away of nonviolence.²²

At the same time, the poetry and publishing scene in New York, especially the one affiliated with the Lower East Side readings at Les Deux Mégots and Café Le Metro, was growing considerably. This fact is evidenced not only in the contemporary publication of accounts and critical work addressing these years but also in the activities of self-archiving that occurred during or shortly after the first half of the decade, suggesting participants' awareness of the moment as one of increased artistic production.²³

One youthful new magazine was *Things* (eventually to become the magazine and press Hanging Loose, an enterprise that continues today), launched in fall 1964 by Emmett Jarrett and Ron Schreiber, who had met at Columbia circa 1960 when Jarrett studied with Schreiber, then a PhD student.²⁴ *Things* has a typically male masthead; however, it is unusual in that its first issue contains more women poets than many of its contemporaries—five of fifteen total. Though it's not a mimeo mag, *Things* nonetheless bristles with youthful ambition, asserting epochal separation and newness: "...a period in our literature has ended," Jarrett and Schreiber assert in their "Prospectus."

Ours is an urban, industrial, mechanized age. Williams foreshadowed a period in which the poet's voice must be the voice of the city, the voice of a society in which individuals seem to shrink from a world that may end. In this half-century, there must be a literature of direct statement because things need to be stated directly: facts have too long been muffled by private verse and public rhetoric.



Figure 1: *Things* Issue 1, 1964.

A sense of the Cold War era's apocalyptic atmosphere lurks behind their prose, and a kind of exasperation with not only academia (“[literature] should be a literature of assertion rather than analysis, statement rather than criticism”) but also the discussion surrounding current events (“Few essays on the Birmingham riots emphasized that individuals were beaten and bitten. Human content was lost in discussions of group conflict. The essays we publish will present human facts, not sociological generalizations.”). According to the editors, neither “private verse” nor “public rhetoric” will suffice—only “direct statement,” implying a frustration with public/private distinctions that are often extended to genres, and suggesting a middle ground that is perhaps more akin to person-to-person conversation or talk. In their description of desirable fiction, the ethos starts to feel one step removed from direct action: “The fiction we publish will relate experiences of one human being confronting another or himself. Stories in which a protagonist is smothered by his environment do not interest us. We are concerned with stories which relate the smothered man’s own feelings, explicitly and directly.” Alongside the “poet’s voice” as “the voice of the city, the voice of a society” this statement makes a sideways assertion—environments can be read either as saturated with institutions or as wilderness, but either way, they are removed from “cities,” which are the

province of poets. In Jarrett and Schreiber's vision, poets create a society conceived as a group of individuals, bound by their "direct" conversation—the city is a set of relations between individuals. The poet speaks from personal experience but is also authorized to be representative of the group.

Things opens with a passage from *Paterson*, a text that further helps illuminate the editors' conception of a city—and their indebtedness to William Carlos Williams.²⁵ The books of *Paterson* were published separately in the '40s and '50s, and finally as a single volume in 1963; Williams was thus a contemporary, the work received by young poets for perhaps the first time. *Things*' inner cover framing quotation actually takes a passage from *Paterson*'s preface and inserts under it the now-famous "no ideas but in things" line which first occurs a few pages later in the text—though given the way that incantatory phrase migrates through Williams's previous versions of the text, the mash-up would have been no great transgression.²⁶ Instead, it's the potential mis- or over-application of the line that prompts Levertov's "Admonition." Levertov writes:

"No ideas but in things" does not mean "No ideas." Nor does it specify:

"No ideas but in everyday things

modern things

urban things." No! It means that:

poetry appears when meaning is embodied in the figure.

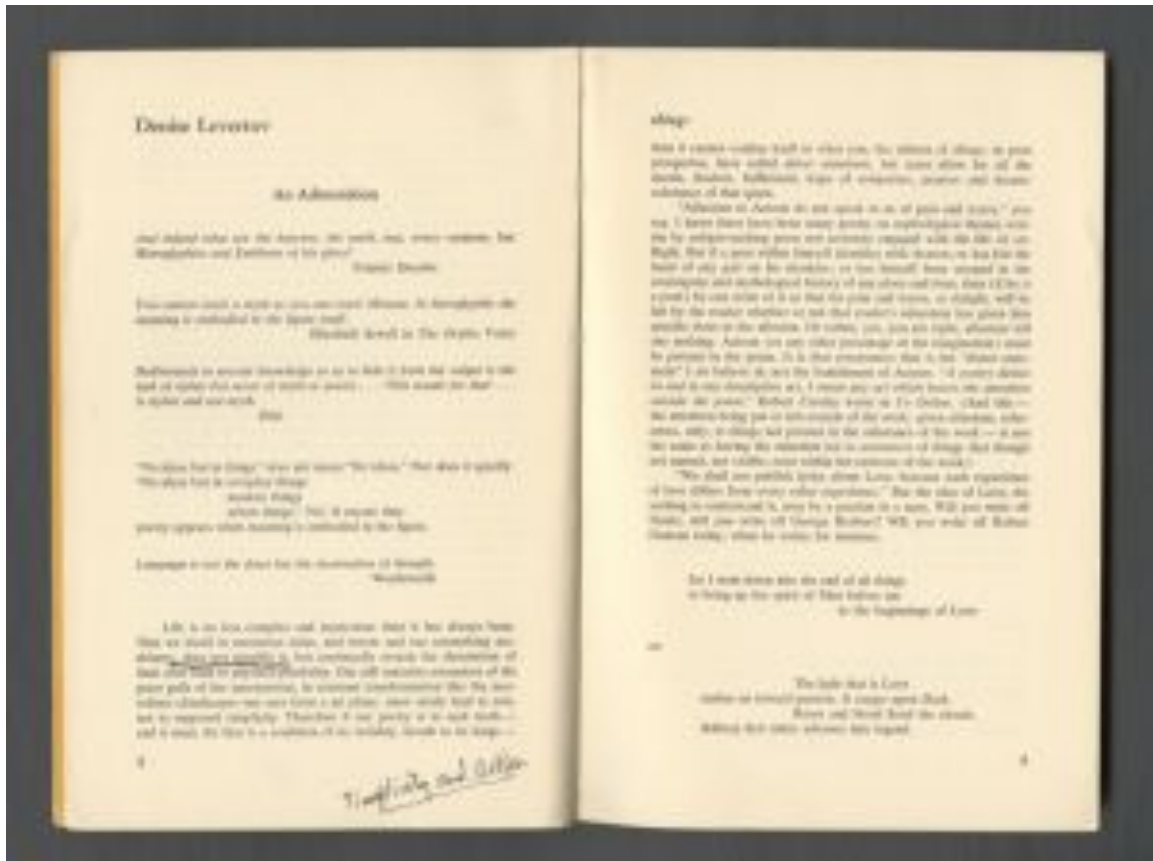


Figure 2: Denise Levertov. “Admonition.” *Things* Issue 1, 1964.

One of the deft moves Levertov makes in her response is to point the editors/readers toward Duncan’s discussion of “the school of rational imagination” in an excerpt from what would eventually become *The H.D. Book*.²⁷ She writes:

Robert Duncan [...] has pointed out how the poets and critics of the school of Rational Imagination [...] have regarded words “not as powers but as counters.” A misinterpretation of “No ideas but in things” can lead to a similar stance. [...] We need a poetry not of *direct statement* but of *direct evocation*: a poetry of hieroglyphics, of embodiment, incarnation: in which the personages may be of myth or of Monday, no matter, if they are of the living imagination.

Levertov does not mention—but assumes the reader will discover—Duncan’s description, earlier in the excerpt, of an “admonition” of sorts that H.D. sends to Williams. Duncan writes:

"I think you have the *spark*," H.D. wrote Williams in that 1916 letter about his *Postludes*, "and when you speak *direct* are a poet." The spark lies in, is, the word wherever it is spoken direct, directs what we are then, for we involve our selves in saying. In poetry we make things real by working with every word as *directive*, as the immediate condition of or presence of the poem itself.²⁸

By pointing the reader toward Duncan's text, Levertov seems to be warning against the over-instrumentalization of texts and against singular readings of authors. She nuances Jarrett and Schreiber's sense of what Williams could mean by "direct" writing, and in so doing points to a possible lineage of modernist influence in which Williams is not only progenitor but also inheritor. So on one hand, her "admonition" argues against the simplistic enshrinement of a predecessor; on the other hand, it does so by pointing the reader toward the codification of a larger genealogy. She does not insist that the valences toward social action in the editors' statement are misguided, but that they are potentially misplaced in relation to that larger genealogy.

Indeed, by nuancing and correcting the Williams account, Levertov reminds us that in practice, the idea of form always evokes *some* genealogical considerations. Or, to put it another way, the *Things* exchange demonstrates that the delamination between an avant-garde that proceeds in terms of genealogy and one that proceeds in terms of conceptions of contemporaneity is unattainable. Clover argued that the desire of the avant-garde to vindicate itself in genealogical terms is paradoxical, since genealogy merely re-establishes the domain of "culture" that the avant-garde sets out to oppose. But Levertov shows us that the idea of a truly historical avant-garde, one that "will not be identifiable via formal similarities to previous avant-gardes" is *itself* paradoxical. Clover concedes that a historical avant-garde might be "unrecognizable to the very culture in which it arises"; but for it to be recognizable *at all*, in any culture, it must be identifiable in terms that can always be seen to have—or acquire—a genealogy. Thus, in offering this moment as a pre-history of Clover's terms, I mean not precisely to vindicate the idea of a historical avant-garde, but rather to propose that the struggle (sometimes conscious, sometimes uncomprehending) with this very contradiction drove participants in this little magazine scene away from rich meditations on genealogy or powerful conceptions of form, and toward *self-documentation* as the field in which contemporaneity could be achieved or expressed. If, in the remainder of the essay, my examples gradually shift to focus less on issues of form and more on those that might be associated with gossip, it is because this kind of microhistory of little magazines comes closer to how this avant-garde sought contemporaneity—by embodying and documenting their own particular forms of sociality.

Other little magazines published around 1964 seem to follow both Levertov's and Economou and Kelly's leads at the same time, choosing not to take their scaffolding from a single modernist predecessor but rather pulling content from numerous modernist sources while also showcasing contemporaneity. Howard Moody, minister of the Judson Memorial Church, uses Stein's sentence structure to illustrate the dislocation of the contemporaneous "fourth man" in an essay for 1963's *The Judson Review*.²⁹ Also that year, the first issue of *Signal* (ed. Bret Rohmer) prints "a new Hart Crane find," "The Moth that God Made Blind," a sort of Icarus coming-of-age parable written when Crane was sixteen.



Figure 3: *Signal* Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1963.

In the same issue, Diane di Prima (an associate editor of the magazine, along with Paul Z. Parish) publishes a poem called "The Moth," perhaps an oblique response. Crane's poem reserves the first person for the final stanza, whereas di Prima's begins with it ("I took a lot of / kleenex from the back of the store / to cry into, / if I had to.") and circles around a "he" figure whose referent is somewhat indeterminate, fluctuating between man and moth and both ("You wonder how long he can scrape the ground like that / while you pull him along on his stomach / and where it will end").³⁰ The indeterminacy of the poem's scenes and their connections risks speculative readings. Yet given the proximity of the poem to Crane's

in the issue and the play on “present” in the fifth section, which reads “The packages arent all presents. The packages / arent all presents. The / packages arent all presents,” there does seem to be a concern with the poetic “gifts” of previous writers and in what temporality they—and the current poem—exist. In di Prima’s poem’s final section, the moth dies when “they tried to pull it” off the speaker’s shirt, the cause being “Coronary thrombosis. / Or what is it / moths die of[.]” The moth is both hearty, clinging to the speaker’s shirt, and fragile, dying upon removal. With irreverence and slanted referents, di Prima redirects the modernist lineage sideways: she leaves open the possibility that the poem might address poetic inheritance without explicitly invoking it.

Other writers wrestled with the contradiction between genealogy and contemporaneity within the framework of the academy. Up at Columbia, in the fall of 1962, a group of poets was forming via a different tangential link to Crane. Michael O’Brien remembers:

First came the place, then the magazine. The Eventorium was thought up, and then made to happen, by the poets Hunter Ingalls and Frank Kuenstler. Hunter was a graduate student in the art history department at Columbia, writing a dissertation on the painter William Sommer, a friend of Hart Crane’s. Hunter spent his life making things happen; in this instance he wanted to set up a poetry reading, and wondered what poets were around. Over in the English department John Unterecker, himself a poet, was working on his biography of Hart Crane, and I suppose Hunter had introduced himself and they’d talked about Crane and Sommer. Hunter asked him what poets were around; names were mentioned—Erica Mann [later Erica Jong], Prescott Evarts, me. So, counting himself, Hunter had four poets. Now he needed a place. A friend from the art history department, Steve Pepper had rented a loft on the northwest corner of Broadway and 100th St. and installed himself there under the guise of Captain Steve’s Friendly Art Store. (I’m not making this up.) Hunter asked him if he’d sponsor a reading, Steve, who’d sponsor anything, one felt, said sure, and so it happened [...] Another reading took place, and Frank, who was living in the neighborhood, came to this one. It never took anyone much time to realize that Frank was something else. He and Hunter hit it off. They talked about how desirable this thing Hunter had started was, how it might be made to continue, and concluded that the way to do it was to move into the loft (Captain Steve was moving on) and start running programs on a regular basis. The name was Hunter’s.³¹

Readings took place on Sunday afternoons; two featured readers were followed by an open mic.³² The magazine, edited jointly by O'Brien and Hunter Ingalls, began in 1964, as an extension of the series and as a way to distribute work by members of the group. O'Brien explains, "None of us were getting published, so the next thing seemed to be to start a magazine—lots of magazines were being started those days, all on a shoestring. It was no big deal. It took some work, and the will to do it, but it was no big deal." Five issues were produced in the following three years, alongside three books by Kuenstler, one by O'Brien, and one by Barbara Holland. The magazine was the sort of DIY affair becoming increasingly popular in the '60s: stencils typed in the office of the art history department; issues printed "in a tiny offset shop downtown." O'Brien continues, "We sold them at the readings, we had a few subscribers, we exchanged issues with other magazines, including the gorgeous *El Corno Emplumado*, we gave them away. It was a world. I miss it." Rachel Blau DuPlessis was another member of the group, which provided her with an alternative to the downtown scene, and contrasted with downtown's "really strong dangers for juicy young females at that time."³³ She has called *The Eventorium* "surrealist-based"³⁴ though she explains that the interest in French encompassed other literary movements and translation;³⁵ O'Brien describes the atmosphere more as "anything goes"—"Surrealists were in the air, but it was a pretty crowded air."³⁶ The magazines themselves contain translations and surrealist plays—and, appropriately enough, the first issue contains O'Brien's poem "Hart Crane."



Figure 4: *The Eventorium Muse*, No. 1, Spring 1964.

An interest in French modernisms was nothing new—especially for poets associated with the New York School—but that interest was also cropping up in the other little magazines not as directly tied to the New York School scene, yet linked through networks of local distribution. Robert Kelly appears as writer, not editor, in the one-off magazine *Pogamoggan* (1964) with “Three Organ Rituals for Erik Satie,” a piece that’s part homage and part parody (“This is for the dullest & most precious work of Erik Satie”). Another poem in the magazine, Anselm Hollo’s “A program,” expresses the speaker’s desire for musical sound, but it perhaps also mocks the tendency of previous modernists toward “statements” and “programs.” The poem, in its entirety, reads:

Enough of statements,
 or too much! I want
 just in a corner make
 one long, the same
 sweet sound (& by
 whatever means)
 then sleep. A simple
 flow. And when I wake
 make it again
 & eat my beans,
 let everybody know
 I’m here, not
 happy & not sad, but almost perfect.

The playful syntax of the second line, “or too much! I want” suggests that the writer desires too much at the same time that he or she proclaims to want only “a simple flow” between sound and sleep. The “one long” sound is produced not by proscription (“by / whatever means”), but its description as “the same / sweet sound” creates ambiguity. One reading is that the sound remains unchanged, the same, but another hinges on the line break after “the same” to allow the reader to momentarily read it as descriptive of the aforementioned “statements”: as in, the speaker tires of statements while also longing to make one him or herself. *Pogamoggan* was the effort of three Brooklyn College students, Harry Lewis, Leonard Neufeld, and Robert Shatkin, who were encouraged in their efforts by Jerome Rothenberg; Lewis also recalls being supported in the endeavor by their professor Ulla Dydo (then Ulla Eder). At 173 pages, *Pogamoggan* is substantially longer than many of its contemporaries, and was made possible because of a free printing job obtained by Lewis’s father, a rare book dealer, through one of his associates.³⁷ According to Lewis, distribution was a local affair:

“New York City at that time, you could go to five, six different bookshops and probably move as many copies as you needed to, and people would line up to buy copies of magazines with these people in it, because there was enough of a community.”³⁸ The magazine was printed by Omphalos Press, created for this purpose, and itself another gesture toward a previous modernism. Lenny Neufeld says they found the word—which can refer to a religious stone, often the one at Delphi, and also means “navel” in Greek—in *Ulysses*, on which art editor Martha Rosler (then using the name Martha Neufeld) was writing a paper at the time.³⁹

Pogamoggan’s tale of local distribution underscores a committed and supportive scene, even for one-off magazines that aren’t immediately legible as part of a lineage. For the two-issue run of the magazine *Nadada*, commitment to and placement of the New York scene alongside European modernism creates a distinctly American and contemporary note. With its focus on Dada, *Nadada* falls into the affirmation trap—but Dada’s aesthetic ideals also tend to undercut modes of cultural transmission. Gerard Malanga, listed as the editorial associate for *Nadada*, gathered much of the written content for that magazine. Malanga ultimately provided one issue’s cover image, which mixed traditions and eras, but kept the pop content vibe of Dada intact:

Nadada was the brainchild of Timothy Baum. He had a penchant for everything having to do with the Dada movement, and being a poet himself, he related emphatically with its philosophy. The magazine, I believe, was to reflect this philosophy; but overall, it was in name only. We went overboard. The first issue contained a wide assortment of disparate voices. Timothy brought me in because of the simpatico of our burgeoning friendship; and I think he felt I could come up with the goods. I’d already had a background in editing, having edited the Wagner Literary Magazine which was considered the best college lit mag in America at the time. By the time we met I’d already established a sizable base of contacts, so it was fairly easy for me to solicit contributors as well as pull works out of my files. Timothy listed me as Associate Editor, but my strongest hand was for the cover: Emperor Ming of Planet Mongo from the *Flash Gordon* series. I mean, how Dada was that?! It took a bit of coaxing, but Timothy went for it.⁴⁰

Nadada put work from René Magritte and Tristan Tzara alongside John Perreault and Ted Berrigan. It claimed everything and nothing under its umbrella, and the fact that the second issue contains the “First *Nadada* Retrospective” presages its short run. As a play on the coherence of visual art retrospectives, it undercuts notions of coherent and complete aesthetic lineages.

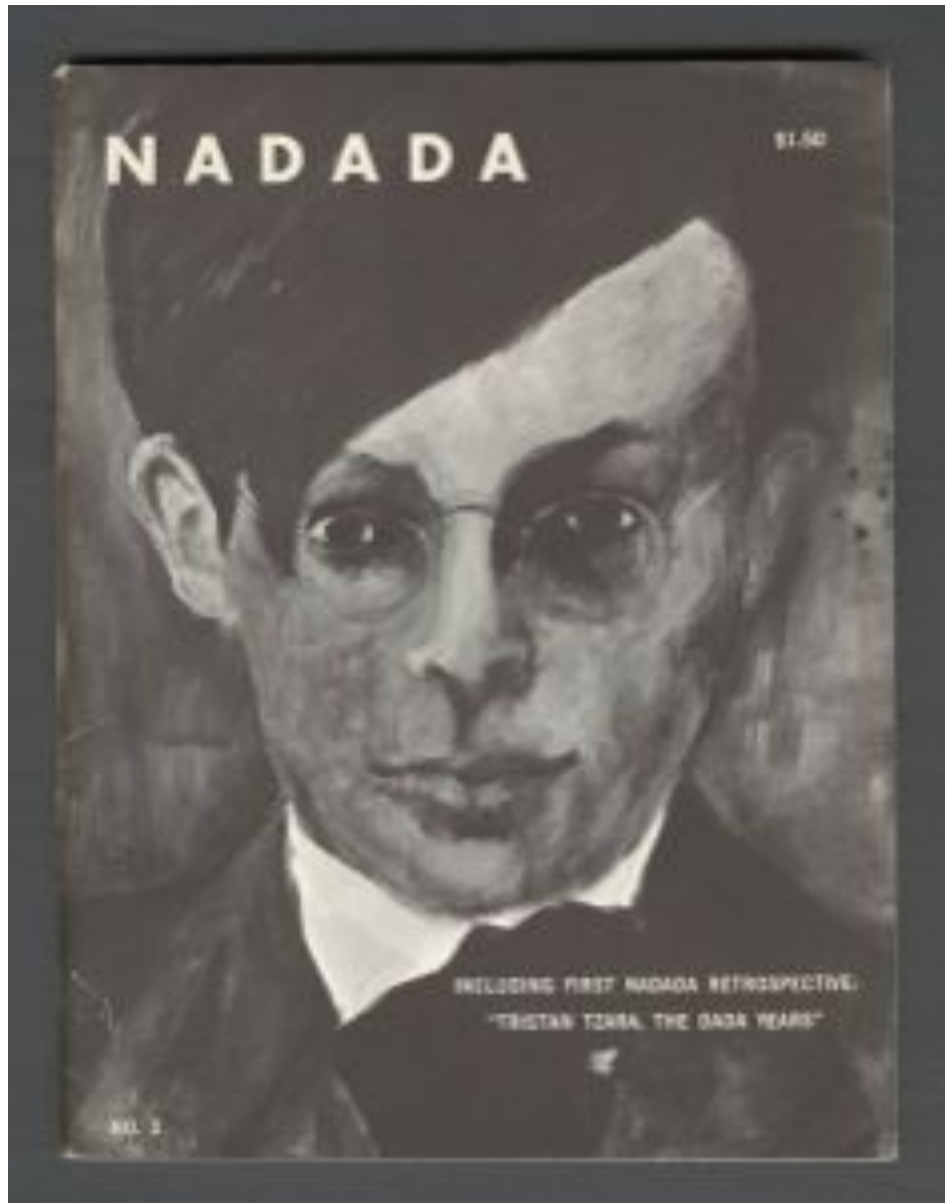


Figure 5: *Nadada* No. 2, 1965. "The Tristan Tzara Issue."

One might even say that *Nadada's* indebtedness to the Dada modernist movement and its desire to showcase "disparate" and autonomous voices created an unsustainable project. But then again, perhaps indebtedness is also what enabled such projects. I want to suggest that the unstable mood resulting from the tension between embracing an innovative modernist lineage and creating contemporaneous and socially antagonistic autonomous art was a driving force behind little magazines circa 1964. Such a mood fostered an outburst of overlapping affiliations whose links were often spatial and distributional, rather than inherited or linear. In her introduction to the anthology *Light Years*, Carol Bergé writes, "Poetry and fiction in

the 1960s could be viewed as compressed information, a ritual act of societal commentary, with writers as keepers of knowledge as were the Lindisfarne monastery school.”⁴¹ In Bergé’s arguably romanticized characterization, 1960s poets guarded the traditions of their predecessors while also using the poem to enact social commentary. The explosions of New York’s youthful little magazines around 1964 are, as Kane argues, often countercultural, but clusters of poets turned to modernists and modernisms as related and as various as Hart Crane, Gertrude Stein, Dada, surrealism, and others to reflect their versions of contemporaneity. Luckily for us, they would continue to do so through the next two decades in such great numbers that perhaps no collection can ever be complete, the air becoming more crowded still.

NOTES

1. "From The Day Book," *Origin*, July 1963, 4.
2. For Clover, labor provides the occasion for such matching. See "The Genealogical Avant-Garde," *Lana Turner*, no. 7 (2014), <http://www.lanaturnerjournal.com/print-issue-7-contents/the-genealogical-avant-garde>.
3. *Ibid.*
4. In particular, the mimeographed *The Floating Bear* (ed. Diane di Prima and LeRoi Jones, who later became known as Amiri Baraka), distributed as a newsletter, was an important precursor to much of the later little magazine publication.
5. Clay and Phillips are thinking more explicitly about content: "The 'mimeo revolution,' as a term, is a bit of a misnomer in the sense that well over half the materials produced under its banner were not strictly produced on the mimeograph machine; however, the formal means of production are not as important in identifying the works of this movement as is the nature of their content." See *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side: Adventures in Writing, 1960–1980: A Sourcebook of Information* (New York: New York Public Library and Granary Books, 1998), 15.
6. *All Poets Welcome: The Lower East Side Poetry Scene in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 59.
7. *The Sonnets*, annotated edition (Penguin Books, 2000), 1.
8. See the introduction to John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). It's worth noting that the two scenes—poetry and alternative press—shared no small number of participants, especially through the late '60s and early '70s.
9. Susan Sherman, *America's Child: A Woman's Journey through the Radical Sixties* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Books, 2007), 178–180.
10. *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*, 1st ed (New York: Norton, 1990), 112.
11. "The Mimeograph Revolution," *The Times Literary Supplement*, August 6, 1964, 714.
12. For an excellent resource to little magazines published between 1890 and 1922, see The Modernist Journals Project (www.modjourn.org).
13. Magazines and books could be and were seized by the post office under obscenity laws: though the censorship trials regarding the City Lights publication of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* in 1957 are the most notorious, many magazines, including *The Floating Bear*, *Fuck You! A Magazine of the Arts*, and *Big Table* experienced suppression by the post office or the universities with which they were affiliated.
14. About *Yugen* and *Totem*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, September 10, 2014; *How I Became Hettie Jones* (New York: Grove Press, 1996).
15. George Economou to Stephanie Anderson, "My Response," September 2, 2014. Kelly and Economou met "in classes in medieval literature at Columbia."
16. About *Trobar*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, September 4, 2014. Bob Wilson's Phoenix Bookshop was also an important resource for little magazines.
17. *Ibid.* Elsewhere, Kelly says, "The poetry we publish, God knows, the poetry we write, is new and it is American; the important thing is that it gets written, that it stands." See David Ossman, "Robert Kelly, an Interview on *Trobar*," in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie (Yonkers, N.Y.: Pushcart Press, 1979), 402.
18. to Anderson, "My Response."
19. Ossman, "Robert Kelly, an Interview on *Trobar*."
20. *About Trobar*.
21. A note about the principle of selection for this inquiry: I set out to examine New York magazines that, to my knowledge, had not been indexed elsewhere—primarily, in either Christopher Harter, *An Author Index to Little Magazines of the Mimeograph Revolution, 1958–1980* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008) or Clay and Phillips, *A Secret Location on the Lower East Side*. I was hoping, too, to find publications that reflected aspects of New York scenes not obviously part of the "New York School."
22. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, revised edition (New York: Bantam, 1993), 162–163.

²³ See Carol Bergé, “An Informal Timetable of Coffee-House Activities in New York,” *Magazine* 2 (1965): 21–25; Allen De Loach, ed., *The East Side Scene: American Poetry, 1960–1965*, First Edition edition (Anchor, 1972). The introduction to the De Loach anthology lists several contemporaneous anthologies, as well as magazines doing retrospectives of the scene through the late ’60s and early ’70s.

²⁴ Dick Lourie to Stephanie Anderson, “*Things*,” August 20, 2014. Jarrett entered the Episcopal priesthood in the mid-1970s and became a peace activist. Schreiber went on to cofound *Hanging Loose* with Dick Lourie and Robert Hershon, and remained with the magazine and press until his death in 2004.

²⁵ Williams’s opening note to the text begins: “*Paterson* is a long poem in four parts—that a man in himself is a city, beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding his life in ways which the various aspects of a city may embody—if imaginatively conceived—any city, all the details of which may be made to voice his most intimate convictions.” See *Paterson* (New Directions Publishing, 1992), xiv.

²⁶ Thanks to Patrick Morrissey for helping with this observation.

²⁷ Levertov is working from the excerpt published in the July 1963 issue of Cid Corman’s *Origin*.

²⁸ “From The Day Book,” 4.

²⁹ He writes, “As Gertrude Stein might put it: ‘The deracinated Jew is like the deracinated Negro is like the deracinated European is like the deracinated American.’” See “The Fourth Man,” *The Judson Review*, 1963, 67. The magazine was edited by Al Carmines and Don Katzman, with associate editors Robert Lima, Allen Katzman, and Robert Nichols, and poetry editors Ted Enslin and Paul Blackburn. Carmines created the Judson Poets’ Theatre; the Katzman brothers had also edited the mimeo magazine *Seventh Street* (1962), and went on to be involved with the alternative press publication *The East Village Other*.

³⁰ The seeming discontinuity between the poem’s numbered sections perhaps reflects di Prima’s then-interest in other arts, specifically film; she writes that she was “[...] reading Eisenstein’s Film Forum, applying montage straightforwardly to the poem.” See *Recollections of My Life as a Woman: The New York Years: A Memoir* (New York: Viking, 2001), 148.

³¹ Michael O’Brown to Stephanie Anderson, “EVENTORIUM,” August 20, 2014.

³² Of the open mic portion of the readings, O’Brien says, “Hunter believed, deeply, in things like open readings. He was a populist. He believed in people, and in their being heard.”

³³ Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Maria Damon, “Desiring Visual Texts,” *Jacket2*, March 25, 2013, <http://jacket2.org/article/desiring-visual-texts>.

³⁴ Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Jeanne Heaving, “An Interview with Rachel Blau DuPlessis,” *Contemporary Literature* 45, no. 3 (October 1, 2004): 411.

³⁵ Rachel Blau DuPlessis to Stephanie Anderson, “Eventorium Muse Query,” August 8, 2014.

³⁶ to Anderson, “EVENTORIUM.”

³⁷ Harry Lewis, about *Pogamoggan*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, August 15, 2014. The issue arrived with several errors—the editors had to hand-letter the spines, for instance, and stamp Anselm Hollo’s name above his poems.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Leonard Neufeld, about *Pogamoggan*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, phone, August 12, 2014.

⁴⁰ Gerard Malanga, about *Nadada*, interview by Stephanie Anderson, email, August 16, 2014.

⁴¹ *Light Years: An Anthology on Sociocultural Happenings* (New York: Spuyten Duyvil; Santa Fe, NM: AWAREing Press, 2010), 7.

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