

THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

No. 75 June/July 1980

Vicki Hudspeth, Editor

St. Mark's Church

2nd Ave & 10th St NYC 10003

**PROJECT NEWS:** The Poetry Project is pleased to announce the new members of its staff: effective June 13, the new Director and Program Coordinator will be Bernadette Mayer and Bob Holman. They will be replacing Ron Padgett and Maureen Owen, who have resigned so they can devote more time to their own writing, but who will be staying on in advisory capacities. Elected to their positions by the Project's Advisory Board, Bernadette and Bob are known for their artistic integrity, openness, and commitment, and we welcome them with open arms. They will be assisted by the magnificent Gary Lenhart.

After a summer's respite, the Project office is expected to reopen in mid-September, with a full program planned for its 15th year. Restoration of the St. Mark's Church should be completed by Christmas.

Ron and Maureen wish to say thanks to all those people--and there are many--who have been generous and helpful to the Project over the past three years, as well as the following: Consolidated Edison Company, Kulchur Foundation, The Foundation For Contemporary Performance Arts, Inc., Brooke Alexander Gallery, The Coordinating Council Of Literary Magazines, The Third Street Music School Settlement, The Cultural Council Foundation CETA Artists Project, Urban Corps, Foto-Ready Production, Town Hall Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, Downtown Community TV Center, The East Village Copy Center, WCBS Radio, WBAI Radio, The Alliance of Literary Organizations, Poets & Writers, Inc., The Poetry Center at San Francisco State, The Silkscreen Project, The National Endowment for the Arts (Literature Program), and The New York State Council on the Arts (Literature Program).

**HELP WANTED:** As we come to the end of this season here at the Poetry Project, we find ourselves facing a financial bind. We are appealing to you for help. If each Newsletter reader were to send the Project \$5, our deficit would be instantly eradicated. Just \$5! This is not money wasted on silly programs or administrative excess, it is money that goes directly to the most impoverished and defenceless group of artists in our society: the poets. Just \$5, roughly the cost of a movie! Through us that \$5 goes a long way, even in today's economy, toward helping clarify, freshen, deepen, and reinvent our language. Through the readings, free workshops, magazines, and newsletters such as this one. We're asking for your help.

**NEWSLETTER SPECIAL THANKS TWO YEAR LEGACY:** To Frances LeFevre for her encouragement and humor from the first moment when Rene Ricard said, "Oh, they gave the Newsletter to some girl". To Rose Lesniak for helping collate almost every fucking issue in two years. To Ron Padgett for laughing every time I got leaned on. To Maureen Owen for doing more projects than five people could do and putting everyone else's schedule into perspective. To Yuki Hartman for suggesting that it might be too much for one person to gather, edit, type, print, collate, and mail the entire thing. To Tom Weigel for inventing "Infantile Chic". To Gary Lenhart who likes accuracy more than just getting the job done. To the Mimeo Machine which will still be around when no one has grant money for fancy offset Newsletters. To the Bulk Rate window guys who always play swing music in the morning when you come in dragging 80 lbs of mail. So adieu and Stay Tuned!

John Ashbery was interviewed on the Dick Cavett show recently (April 25). Cavett was his usual nervous self and set up a number of unintentionally humorous volleys for Ashbery to eloquently hit home regarding what it's like being a real P.O.E.T. It was a pleasure to have John Ashbery in our corner!!!!!! Congratulations and Whew\*\*\*\*\*

**WORDWORKS**, Gallery Room 406, P.S. 122, 150 First Avenue, NYC: Saturdays & Sundays, May 24-June 15, 1 pm to 6 pm:::JoHanna Drucker "Letterpress", Karen Eubel "Typewriter", Susan B. Laufer "Collage", Nick Piombino & Roland Antonelli "Collage & Photography".

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

- \*\*RELEASE PRESS, 411 Clinton St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11231: The Sleepless Night of Eugene Delacroix by John Yau (\$3.00p/prose). Cover by Rae Berolzheimer. Intimate Apparel by Terry Stokes (\$3.00p/prose).
- \*\*BLUE WIND PRESS, 820 Miramar, Berkeley, CA. 94707: So Going Around Cities by Ted Berrigan (New & Selected Poems 1958-1979). This is one of those books that's going to sell out, a collector's item, with old favorites mixed in with new surprises. Photo on back is of Ted in his natural habitat. (\$7.95p/\$17.95h). Port of Saints by William Burroughs. Story of a man whose alternate selves take him on a fantastic journey through time, space & sexuality (\$5.95p/\$15.95h). Finite Continued by Anselm Hollo (\$5.45p/\$14.95h).
- \*\*NEW DIRECTIONS, 80 8th Ave., NYC 10011: Vienna Blood & Other Poems by Jerome Rothenberg (\$4.95p).
- \*\*THE SWOLLEN MAGPIE PRESS, R.D.2 Cedar Ledges, Putnam Valley, N.Y. 10579: The Mockingbird and other poems by Mary Ferrari. Beautiful light blue with green cover. Mary Ferrari is one of the spunkiest writers today. She takes risks.
- \*\*WARTHOG PRESS, 29 South Valley Road, West Orange, N.J. 07052: Progress Notes on a State of Mind by Patricia Fillingham (\$2.00p). Kartunes by Cornelius Eady (\$2.00p).
- \*\*CLINTON PRESS, INC., 20 Miller St., Plattsburgh, N.Y. 12901: Olympian Souls by Lawrence David Moon (\$3.00p).
- \*\*THE CAPILANO REVIEW, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, BC Canada: Number 15 has works by David McFadden, Ken Straiton, George Bowering and many others (\$3.00p).
- \*\*BLACK STONE PRESS, 108 Carl St., San Francisco, CA 94117: poison in the system by David Highsmith. Nicely printed interesting book, but NPL!! Sorry.
- \*\*RANDOM HOUSE: Denizens by Ronald Perry (\$5.95p). Winner of the National Poetry Series. Selected by Donald Justice.
- \*\*LUNA BISONTE PRODS, 137 Leland Ave., Columbus, OH 43214: Nips Poems by John M. Bennett (\$2.00p).
- \*\*SHEARWATER PRESS, Box 417, Wellfleet, Mass. 02667: The Wind and the Rain by Tom Galt (\$2.00p).
- \*\*SUN, 456 Riverside Drive, NY, NY 10027: Handwritten by Marjorie Welish (\$4.00p). Freely Espousing by James Schuyler (\$4.00p). Conversations at the West End 1966-1974 by Michael O'Brien (\$4.00p). Sens-Plastique by Malcolm de Chazal. Edited and translated from the French with an Introduction by Irving Weiss (\$5.00p). The Dice Cup: Selected Prose Poems by Max Jacob. Edited and with an Introduction by Michael Brownstein. Translated by John Ashbery, David Ball, Michael Brownstein, Ron Padgett, Zack Rogow, Bill Zavatsky (\$4.50p). Triangles in the Afternoon by Ron Padgett (poetry/\$4.00p). Knowledge by Michael Heller (\$4.00p).
- \*\*THE SPIRIT THAT MOVES US PRESS, P.O. Box 1585, Iowa City, Iowa 52244: The Spirit That Moves Us--Fall/Winter 1979/80: work by Morty Sklar, Jim Mulac, Allan Kornblum, Dan Sheets and many others (\$2.00p). The Farm in Calabria & Other Poems by David Ray (\$2.00p).
- \*\*MISTY TERRACE PRESS, 437 East 12th St., #17, NYC 10009: Nations and Peace by Michael Scholnick and Tom Weigel (collaborations/\$2.00p).
- \*\*MAG CITY, 437 East 12th St., #26, NYC 10009: MAG CITY 9--new work by Anne Waldman, Jim Brodey, Daniel Krakauer, Tony Towle, Charles Bernstein, Tom Weigel, Paul Shevlin, John Godfrey, Lorna Smedman, James Schuyler, Susan Noel, Bob Holman, Helena Hughes, Glen Baxter, Jeff Wright, Eileen Myles, Barbara McKay, Gary Lenhart, Greg Masters, Michael Scholnick. Cover by Louise Hamlin (\$2.00p).
- \*\*CRONY BOOKS, 437 East 12th St., #26, NYC 10009: Beyond Venus by Michael Scholnick. Cover by Steve Levine. (\$2.00p). Bulb in Socket by Gary Lenhart. Cover by Louise Hamlin. (\$2.00p). My Women and Men, Part 2 by Greg Masters. Cover by Barry Kornbluh (\$2.00p).
- \*\*BAY AREA POETS COALITION, 1527 Virginia, Berkeley, CA 94703: POETALK, views, interviews & reviews (\$3.00/yr or \$5.00 includes Bay Area Poets Newsletter).
- \*\*KULCHUR FOUNDATION, 888 Park Avenue, NYC 10021: The Bard Owl by Janine Pommy Vega (\$3.50p/\$7.00h).

\*\*LITTLE CAESAR, 3373 Overland Ave. #2, Los Angeles, CA 90034: Little Caesar 10: Another incredibly interesting issue with an essay by Lita Hornick on Naropa, an interview with Joe Brainard by Tim Dlugos, photos by Gerard Malanga, Alan Lewis Kleinberg, essay by Peter Schjeldahl, interview with Leif Garrett, poems by Tom Clark, Elaine Equi and many others. (\$1.50p/\$4.00 for 3 issues).

\*\*REACLE PRESS, 437 Springtown Rd., New Paltz, NY: Shamp of the City Solo by Jaimy Gordon (\$3.95p/\$12.50h).

\*\*THE WORLD #33, The Poetry Project, St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave & 10th St, NYC 10003: edited by Tony Towle with work by Paul Violi, George Tysh, Kit Robinson, Vicki Hudspith, Cliff Fyman, Ron Padgett, Steven Hall, Mike Heffner, Neil Hackman, Jeff Wright, Tom Weigel, M. LaBare, Charles Bernstein, Cheri Fein, John Godfrey, Jim Brodey, Art Lange, Rachele Bijou, Rose Lesniak, Steve Levine, and many more. Cover by Jean Holabird. (\$3 postpaid).

\*\*LITTLE LIGHT #1, 52 E. 7th St., NYC 10003: Edited by Susan Cataldo. Features 20 pages by Harris Schiff, 2 pages by Kathy Foley, Bob Rosenthal, Tom Savage, Daniel Krakauer, Susan Cataldo, Rochelle Kraut, Eileen Myles, Jim Brodey, Susie Timmons, and Bill Kushner. (\$1p).

\*\*TELEPHONE BOOKS, Box 672, Old Chelsea Sta., NYC 10011: The Temple by Janet Hamill (\$2p).

\*\*BLACK SPARROW PRESS, P.O. Box 3993, Santa Barbara, CA 93105: Cap of Darkness by Diane Wakoski (\$5.00p/\$14.00h).

\*\*STARE PRESS, Two Hands Bookstore, 1125 W. Webster, Chicago, Ill 60614: Spaz Attack by Jerome Sala (\$3.00p).

\*\*OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 200 Madison Ave., NYC 10016: Lives of the Modern Poets by William H. Pritchard. Interesting brief biographical accounts, character sketches and critical evaluation of the achievements of writers like Thomas Hardy, Yeats, Frost, Pound, Eliot, W.C. Williams, Hart Crane. (\$14.95h).

\*\*UNICORN PRESS, INC., P.O. Box 3307, Greensboro, N.C. 27402: Words for All Seasons by Jacques Prévert. Excellent! (\$5.00p/\$15.00h). Queneau, Selected Poems. Translated by Teo Savory. Only translation of his poetry in English. (\$4.00p/\$10.00h). Guillevic, Euclidean. Tr. by Teo Savory (\$5.00p/\$10.00h).

\*\*VISCERALLY PRESS, 118 Crain Ave., Kent, OH 44240: The Difficulties. A New magazine devoted to process-oriented language-centered work. First issue has work by Corman, Messerli, Enslin, Zavatsky, Sherry, Howe, Ashley, Waldrop, Callahan (NPL).

\*\*NALANDA UNIVERSITY PRESS, c/o The Poetry Project, 2nd Ave & 10th St, NYC 10003: Slow Waltz on a Glass Harmonica by Tom Savage. Filling Spaces by Tom Savage. Covers by Alice Notley. Dos-a-dos binding gives you two books in one. (NPL).

\*\*SCULPTOIDS, 614 Kentucky Ave, P.O. Box 1117, Paucah, KY 42001: Alpha Omega Entropy by Raymond L Roof, D.D.S. with photos by M. Madeleine Ullom & A. Thomas Ullam (NPL).

\*\*THE ELIZABETH PRESS, dist. by Small Press Distribution, 1636 Ocean View Ave, Kensington CA 94707: The Force of Desire by William Bronk with seven etchings by Eugene G. Canade (\$14.00p).

\*\*BIG RIVER ASSOCIATION, 7420 Cornell, St. Louis, Mo 63130: River Styx Number 7--Space & Movement issue with work by Lyn Lifshin, Wendy Rose, Ken Daley (drawing), Tom Savage, Allen DeLoach, and many others (\$3.00 per issue/\$5.00 per year for 2 issues).

\*\*OFFSHORE PRESS, 294 Mount Auburn St, Watertown, MA 02172: Clearing by Anthony Petruzzi with photographs by Daniel Weingrod (NPL).

\*\*L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E, 464 Amsterdam Ave, NYC 10024: Volume One edited by Bruce Andrews and Charles Bernstein, compiling the first 6 issues of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E magazine, so if you missed any of the first issues, here's your chance to get them all for (\$6.00p).

\*\*It's Spring & we're wearing our art on our sleeve. KOFF 4 is a very artistic teeshirt, front & back. \$6 -or \$7- by mail from CPL, 27 First Ave #14, NYC 10003.

\* \* \*

APARTMENT WANTED: Lewis Warsh and Bernadette Mayer are looking for an apartment 4-5 rooms or more, beginning August 1, in the vicinity of 10th St & 2nd Ave. Call collect: (603) 428-7278.

NEWSLETTER SPECIAL THANKS: The Merry Month of May was brought to you by: Maureen Owen, Ron Padgett, Gary Lenhart, Michael Scholnick, Eileen Myles, Rose Lesniak, Steve Levine, Greg Masters, Helena Hughes, and of course the staff...

WEDNESDAY, June 18 at 5 pm --- Gerard Malanga will be reading at B. Dalton, 666 5th Ave, NYC, as part of a Celebration of Black Sparrow Press.

the name, big name, i'm taking issue with in this letter, is an old acquaintance of mine, & in many ways, a fellow in the faith: i.e., robert bly, whom you interviewed in recent newsletter. i think, nay, believe, that he's a terrific translator of the swedish poet tomas transtromer: he literally put him 'on the map' for us: & of kabir, etc.: & of the silence in the snowy fields, etc. in no way wd i care, or want to, take issue with his assumptions of stature in american poetry...

what i object to is his final statement in the interview, viz. "return to form", equals, "return to right wing". i think that it is based on a complete (i.e., more than 'total') misunderstanding of both terms--"form", & "right wing".

to take the smaller one first: "r.w." does not mean shit in active contemporary parlance. it is, however, understood to encompass nitwits & charlatans along a spectrum from jerry faulwell & ron reagan to the kkk & the american nazi party: none of whom, i hope & trust, present any real threat to american poetry--if for no other reason because they are quite incognizant of it; any 'wider' description of it wd require far more detailed discussion than i believe mr. bly wd care to engage in (say, with mr. hugh kenner, or mr. john wieners, etc.).

"form", now, is something mr. bly seems to be a little more clear about: i.e., "english forms". it is true that the retrenched guild of academically employed poets (of whom i am one, albeit intermittently) has had recent spokesmen (i.e., richard hugo) who propose that the 1980s task (let's say, "task") of teaching poets, & writers in general, is to take on the burden previously borne by straight-arrow english & american lit. professors--simply, the task of making students, at whatever level, READ instead of phasing in & out of nighttime t.v. plus whatever social activities they might muster. & this, mainly, because of the dwindling enrollments in s.-a. english courses, compared to the steady interest in 'creative writing', combined with the general dearth of students in any discipline, however, in the present decade...

as anyone at all familiar with the texts produced & presented at the st. mark's project over the past 20 years shd know,--well: is it only 15?--, "form" cannot be understood in anything like the simple-minded manner mr. bly proposes. obviously, folks who like imitation shaker or art deco furniture, etc., marc chagall prints, etc., will also feel most comfortable with the kind of (soi-disant, i was going to say: but, well, it passes by that label) poetry that the new yorker, poetry (chicago), & most of the university-connected journals are printing these days (not to mention a lot of the 'rustic' stuff being put out by various--& numerous--'regional' little magazines). that, as they say, is quite true, & if that is what mr. bly is looking at, he certainly has every right to feel dismayed.

what mr. bly seems to be totally blind & deaf to, is the continuous & genuinely amazing development of formal concerns in what i, for one, see as the main & most exciting body of poetry being written in this country today. meandering on about 'sound'--as i've heard him do on contemporaries, i.e., competitors--, he obviously has not, ever, spent any time with the work of louis zukofsky, george oppen, charles reznikoff, & minc loy--to mention "only the dead"--nor, i believe, with the work of william carlos williams: & honestly, i do not think that anyone claiming to be an american poet could afford to be as negligent as that. carl rakosi, as a matter of fact, is still with us: so is basil bunting: i wd suggest apprenticeships, direct or indirect, to mr. bly, with these people--much more fruitful, i shd think, than any to third-hand kabir or tagore, etc. especially in matters of sound, & attendant form: & i cannot restrain myself (sorry) from mentioning three or four other people who do, indeed, "point the way": robert creeley, alice notley, ted berrigan, robert grenier...

truly, i welcome an opening-up of debate on this: & i think it is time for the new york scene to pay attention to the possibilities of a slightly more accurate vocabulary: as a useful text, i'd like to suggest the current issue of HILLS magazine, 6/7, titled TALKS, edited by bob perelman: a record of a group of people--writers, painters, film-makers, dancers, etc.--talking to & with each other in ways that seem little thought of, or even imagined, in either new york city or southwestern minnesota.

-- anselm hollo

Secret History of the Dividing Line by Susan Howe (Telephone Books, Box 672, Old Chelsea Sta., NYC 10011, \$2.00p).

"The more significant a work the more concealed & intimately tied to its subject matter is its truth." - Walter Benjamin

Writing poetry is more of a physical act than is generally acknowledged. Not in the sense of an acting-out of feelings & ideas, but rather as if the poet, standing at the center of a tornado, the world, reached out & plucked flying objects for arrangement on a companion table. A real process of pick & choose & placement finally ending in a selected viewing of life. Elementally random, uniquely chosen & true.

Susan Howe's work affirms this approach with a vision that is special not by virtue of her interpretation of reality, but by the unique choice of phenomena she uses to represent reality. More than mere images, these manifestations are her subject matter, the "Numerous singularities" of division, boundary, horizon, separation between objects places time & people. "becoming/ and perishing/ trackless/ timeless/ in time/ MARK/ border/ bulwark/ detail/ from vague/ infinity of/ background/ that haunts/ or hunts/ an object/ sign/ or token/ impression/ or trace/ THE HORIZON"

Of course it could be said that selective seeing amounts to a kind of interpretation. But analysis, the reasonable mind, while appearing occasionally - "The Perfectibilitarians were wrong/ not a single chamber in the old fabric/ that was not crumbling or tottering" - is of secondary importance here. Secret History is not a narrative work: a retelling with commentary where ideas are supported by described events. Secret History is a process of naming, of immediate experience. Meaning is founded on Howe's choice of subject matter, not her conclusions about it. By positing an array of phenomena against one another in a selective order she demonstrates how & why they are differentiated & simultaneously reaffirms the integral part each plays in the unity of the world - "all divisible/ and indivisible" - however dissected. "What's in a lake?/ Glass & sky." These poems manifest the invisible thread that ties the seeming fragments of life together into an interdependent whole.

The process of choosing from this whirlwind of objects & instances does tend to minimize any prearranged intent on the part of the poet. Poems made in this way are like life, filled with uncontrollable connections. It is the ideal way to deal with the more mysterious aspects of the poet's personal history that otherwise included would be either too arcane to understand, or if fully explained, boring. The poem remains subjective, but is not an anecdote shining a light on the ego of the poet. The poem is about itself. The autonomous dynamics of subject matter within the poem take over. The poem means more, is in control, & becomes a real view from an always-changing center of things - never able to say it all completely & forever, but able, at that moment of right choice to provide a panorama we have not seen before - "Spheres of Popes marked ramparts/ then wafted them away.// Deep river, darkness, horror/ stuck in the mire// I told them worse and worse.// Splinter in my sister's eye/ plank in my own// I cut out my tongue in the forest.// "Go" said Fact/ wide as the world and long as time.// The city shone like stone// there were savages, rough skins of beasts/ sailing and saying to the people// "We have been to those white cliffs." -- Will Bennett

\*\*\*\*\*

NAROPA INSTITUTE--Summer 1980: Since summer 1975 the poetics program known as the Jack Kerouac School has inspired a number of related local creations--a continuing group of magazines such as Bombay Gin, Rocky Ledge, and Departures. There have also been two anthologies of lectures entitled Talking Poetics: Annals of the Jack Kerouac School at Naropa Institute vols. I and II (Shambhala Publications, 1978, 1979). Summer 1980 Faculty and Visiting Academy include: Burroughs, Coolidge, di Prima, Fefferman, Hollo, MacInnis, Norse, Notley, Orlovsky, Powell, Towle, Whalen, Waldman, Ginsberg, Berrigan, Gallup, Fagin and many others. Everything classical to contemporary. What a great chance to let some of that inspired spirit rub off and get college credit too, if you are interested. Write them for more info: Naropa Institute, 1111 Pearl Street, Boulder, CO 80302.

Cars and Other Poems by Elinor Nauen (Misty Terrace Press, 437 East 12 Street #17, NYC 10009).

These poems are so personal there's a phone number. We get them in the mail: "I thought I would mail this, so you would have the pleasure of/something in your box, and I would have the pleasure of writing/to you". There's brave public confessional: "wish I (we, both) had/more time to spend in each other's bathtubs" and plenty promise: "Without coffee we will sleep together", "tell you all my secrets". At her most romantic her language is still precise wisdom: "Cheap hotels don't have closets", "a town so peaceful the bar is up a flight of stairs", "there are no mysteries although plenty of subtleties", "It's the appreciation of tea binds the English & the conquered". Sometimes sense is left to soft unframed intuition or imaginative pictures: "you present the horizon to adoring shepherds", "dreams aimless as destinations". The rest is facts gone cinematic: "summers stealing cars", "I have her picture at home, which I revere as I ought", "She insists merely that manmade laws be obeyed by men", "I don't understand/but the answer is sex/therefore god exists". These poems were written to a 'you' out of her room for a minute: "when I turn around you'll be on the bed." A short gothic prose work is included that is so clear & haunting your wallpaper starts peeling. These are vital friendly poems, desperate & as demanding of love as she is brave in revealing hers.

The title poem, Cars, is a new epic which with a tear in one eye she uses the memories of all the cars of her life to chronicle youthful years of portable life - celebrating the restlessness & interstate desires the more adventurous of those growing up in the 60's & 70's shared. The author, in her poem now settled in NYC apartment, sings it all back to us, lamenting the 'pastness' of it and here is maturity. This poem epitaphs the free life "I want to go with anyone when they go anywhere" as most of us too now settled in some way belch (next line): "I used to go with anyone when they went anywhere". The simple pure lines evoke not merely detail: "I hitched tripping in a blizzard" or "I've crossed the Mississippi in 10 states". Her cars have names & breathe: "sold in Michigan for his unsalted western body/to a man with an engine." There is a life enclosed in these pages that promises to continue beyond the poem. Her life now fiction is subversive to the orderly American routine this decade the same way On the Road was in the mushroom cloud Levittown 50's. Yet here are the poem's last lines of acceptance: "I've left out much more than I've included, I can't think/of anything I haven't done in a car that I still want to do,/ & now I want to do it all again." Mothers love their outlaw children.

-- Greg Masters

\*\*\*\*\*

Total

Everything I do is extremely important.  
Everything I think is very valuable so it's a good thing  
I write it all down.  
The world is awfully lucky I'm in it.  
I am important.  
Everyone I see reflects my luminosity.  
I know many words few other people know.  
I am smarter than almost anybody,  
smarter than anybody, actually.  
Who could be better than me?  
I know the names of many attributes, all of which belong  
firmly & gracefully to me & probably me alone.  
I'm a person peoples' parents adore.  
I'm witty & sexually attractive.  
No one feels sorry for me.  
I do not fool myself.

-- Maria Mancini

HANDWRITTEN by Marjorie Welish (SUN Press, 456 Riverside Drive, NYC 10027, \$4.00/p).

HANDWRITTEN, a first collection of poems by Marjorie Welish, is the latest addition to the fine roster of books published by SUN Press. The language throughout this book is elegant, formal--despite the conversational tone of her writing. The reader is always aware of her thinking. She carefully selects the precise word to describe a quality of light, a certain sound. Her perception of the space and light around her seems sculptural.

Ms. Welish uses visual images as a starting point for further thought, or to make a point about relationships. In "Taking Up Slack":

"The test of Nature is to remain  
as when we are brought to our senses  
by heaped fruit and vegetables, our eyes  
breaking on the jetties of oranges".

She uses simple situations and commonplace objects as the basis for philosophical speculation:

Like the hill placed before us  
large and entire  
growing as our car draws toward upstate New York  
the issues become simplified: color verses drawing  
trees in autumn verses trees in winter  
one begins to find key terms in nature,  
the commonplace is filled with central ideas.

(from "Objects Which are Final")

Her poems convey a deep sense of the significance of things and places. They are gentle, imaginative poems, meant to be thought about.

Ms. Welish, an accomplished visual artist, also did the cover art for HANDWRITTEN.  
- Madeleine Keller

\* \* \* \* \*

On April 14th, the New York City Department of Employment informed all CETA artist contractors in New York City that their programs must be closed within six weeks. This drastic and unexpected cutback means that the most innovative artist employment program since the WPA will come to a premature halt on May 30th. 612 artists will be out of work. At the Cultural Council Foundation Artists Project, which employs over half of these artists, this also means the cancellation of workshops, classes, murals, graphic services, performances, dance festivals, and readings for close to 300,000 people in the New York City area.

Those least able to afford arts services will be the hardest hit. The literary program, which was about to begin a cycle of 150 outdoor readings through the CCF Poetry Mobile, classes for the elderly, oral histories, neighborhood documentations, the writing of commissioned manuscripts for community colleges and centers, and the editing of anthologies and magazines will all stop.

Artists from all 9 CETA contractors demonstrated at the Department of Employment and at City Hall Park; on April 23 & 24, two "Art-A-Thons" were held to protest these cutbacks and to give the message to the City and Federal government that artists' jobs must be saved. Project directors, artist representatives, and Commissioners Henry Geldzahler (Department of Cultural Affairs) and Ronald Gault (Department of Employment) met with Assistant Secretary of Labor Ernest Green during the week of demonstrations to stress the urgency of this situation. Unless money can be found to continue these projects, every artist employment program in the City of New York will be over in less than a month.

The U.S. Department of Labor, in response to the demonstrations by artists, found emergency funds to continue the CETA Projects Program by approximately 40% of what was asked for. This means there are 50 people in the Artists Project who will continue until September when negotiations for new contracts spanning the fiscal year 1981 begin.

- Madeleine Keller  
Literary Coordinator  
CCF Artists Project

Interview with Michael Scholnick by Bob Rosenthal, December 6, 1979, afternoon, in Michael Scholnick's apartment.

Bob Rosenthal: This is not a question, it is a statement. A beauty comes to your poetry for being objectivist in substance and abstract in arrangement. Comment?

Michael Scholnick: pause

B.R.: I don't think abstract is the right word there that is sort of what I was hoping you would correct me on.

M.S.: Lorna (Smedman) told me she is never sure what to look for in my poems but is always surprised in a sense finding what she's reading acceptable. And she asked, "What are you trying to do?" And I said I thought it visual. And she didn't agree. She thought it was a sound I was after. Which is certainly the case in terms of writing. You're dealing with lines and the sound of each word. But in "Lucille's Love", I was conscious of trying to make several lines be readable visually as one chunk not so you could read six lines at a time, but read six lines and see one scoop.

B.R.: So that instead of presenting a picture from top to bottom or bottom up that arrangement comes in like a wipe and you have it there and you scoop it out and yet I always do get that concrete sense in your poetry. I wonder if there is a sense of direction in your writing a moving away from forms. I think about your poems in the New Directions which seem pretty objectivist and I know Allen (Ginsberg) edited them and was only interested in objectivist works that maybe he just picked them.

M.S.: Those are sort of objectivist in clearly representing a battle between mind and existence but I'd like to see and hear fundamentally existing arrangements externally if possible and be objective about pushing that nature into words. Or objectifying experience. Not so much be, necessarily, a vessel for an objective image even.

B.R.: So in that sense you're not abstracting anything you're personalizing.

M.S.: Yeah. I mean I'm personalizing in order to write the poem but the words are abstract. It's personalized in order to arrive at that understood moment in time where you have a chance to state it. And it is yours entirely. You create what you believe in. If you say the image is beautiful then the reader is personalizing the poem.

B.R.: I didn't mean that you were personalizing the images even so much as when you mentioned that scoop and that was your scoop it was personally your scoop.

M.S.: The new shape you give it.

B.R.: Does being a CETA artist encourage or discourage yourself as a private artist? I was wondering if there were subtle controls you had to guard against.

M.S.: Your frame of reference becomes the system which employs artists and not yourself as an artist in the system. You have to fight against their demand that it's not a job for you as a writer but a job for you as a writer to do something else. You also remain emotionally tied to your previous status as unemployed. Though it's not sound for an artist to resign his or her personal developmental skills in order to be transplanted into visual accountability, it's still egotistical to be possessive about your privacy. But it's a great job. Three day weekends. Great Benefits. The heady-blustering resentment you feel being treated like a hoodlum is the initial freedom.

B.R.: But once you get used to the paycheck what happens?

M.S.: Then you are free to write, more often than not. But the whole attitude emanating from the phrase "public work" about so-called elitism as opposed to public art or art for the public is unfair. Doesn't the artist's imagination include society's? You shouldn't cater your productions to individuals who are going to ignore the reality of your perception. Publicly displayed and appreciated art is baseless, in itself elite because it doesn't encourage individual craft to be used globally to create beauty. Art applied to everyone's capabilities.

B.R.: What is your particular interest in film that led you to organize the Poets Film Series?

M.S.: In Allendale, Michigan, in 1973, I saw a film about Dr. Williams and the loneliness I felt among the black & white trees, the tragedy itself involved in comprehending art, really turned me on. How do you make the film approach the reader's knowledge.



Interview with Bill Berkson (poet, living in Southampton, New York).

Vicki Hudspith: Aren't you working on a book manuscript now?

Bill Berkson: Yes. I've been working over the last two years on a manuscript of poems and other things which is called Parts of the Body. And that's finished now. The title would indicate that there was a thematic element, but I can't say there is one.

V.H.: How did the title Parts of the Body develop?

B.B.: A poem sequence which is part of the book is called that partly because I was reading a lot of books about the body at the time. It's a sequence of short poems that has to do with keeping the body in mind, the idea of the body. I was also thinking of Larry Rivers' series of paintings called Parts of the Body in which he incorporated other languages like Polish, Italian or French words for parts of the body and had little lines drawn from the words which were stencilled into the painting to those parts.

V.H.: Did Rivers' work inspire your poem then?

B.B.: Actually, I was inspired by reading a wonderful book by Walter B. Cannon called The Wisdom of the Body, about how the various parts of the body collaborate. I thought it was great that there was this signal system between the parts. I stopped writing it at a point because I read it aloud as far as I had gotten with it too many times and then found it difficult to get back to. So it stayed just a set of sketches.

V.H.: It seems that certain elements or themes can reemerge again in one's writing if they are still present in the unconscious.

B.B.: Yes and something can kick you back into them. For instance, I'm working on a series of pieces now called Young Manhattan. When I started it five or six years ago, it was called The Manhattan Project. I did a few pieces and then did some collaboration with Anne Waldman which is how the title Young Manhattan came up, that was her title. We did the collaborations through the mail, but she found that her memory was not operating as enthusiastically as mine at that time, so she stopped doing it. I let it go for about three years and then recently a story came along about elevators and so-called elevator men in the building I grew up in. Once I wrote that, I got inspired to write more memoirs, sort of. Though it's not necessarily all about youth, that was the kick-off for it. But that's a project that has had an on-again, off-again aspect.

V.H.: Do you keep regular working hours in terms of writing?

B.B.: It always seems quite haphazard. I don't get up at 10 a.m. and sharpen a pencil and proceed to my labors--though that always seemed a glamorous possibility. There are times when I don't seem to be working at all, I'm just writing in notebooks or waiting or reading or following up on other pursuits.

V.H.: Do you usually keep a notebook?

B.B.: Yes, I keep those little black sketch books and fill them up. Most of the writing I do though is at the typewriter. Lately, in the last 2 or 3 years, I've noticed this real distinction between the typewritten poems and the notebooks. Whereas I used to feel that I was using the notebooks for notations for poems, I now see notes as pretty much maintaining their own form. Poems seem to come on a different frequency.

V.H.: How many books did you publish under the "Big Sky" title?

B.B.: I started Big Sky in 1971 and published about twenty books and twelve issues of the magazine. The last issue of the magazine was the Homage to Frank O'Hara and that was a double issue. I did all the books I had in mind to do and then a few others that came along. Later I looked around and nothing really felt urgent to me and there were other publishers who were doing similar books and that's the way I feel right now so I'm taking a breather from publishing.

Interview with Charles Bernstein (poet, living in New York City).

Vicki Hudspeth: What are you working on right now?

Charles Bernstein: I've been interested in how various kinds of phrases and phraseologies tend to shape the ways in which the world gets seen, so that in writing I almost feel I'm exploring the way in which--the material with which--social reality gets created. It's as if by looking at these phrases and their combinations like they were in themselves coercive or controlling you could get out from under their compelling force. But it's not this idea about control that I'm working on, it's the material of the phrases and their combinations, seeing how the most common kinds of phrases put together create a fabric of expectation one to the next that links them together. And what I really want to do is to create this fabric, or, another way of saying it, to make a kind of music. Not music in the sense of using rhythmic or structural patterns based on musical composition, but rather, to use a phrase of Don Byrd's, a "music of content", of different kinds of meaning configurations. By moving from one element to another and seeing the different kinds of balances and harmonies that are created, the world sort of comes into an attunement, and that begins to be the poem. Certainly this is also true just of the actual sounds of words when attention is paid to each vowel and consonant and syllable. I'm very interested in what might be called fragmentation, although I don't see it as that. For instance the kind of expectation that develops when you cut a phrase off supposedly in the middle, which is simply using a kind of rhythm, using the expectations and projections--the momentum--that any given phrase has, so that if you stop something at any given point in the normal syntactical pattern or even in a more imagined pattern, you have almost a shadow which continues along or underneath, when you move on into the next series of words. That desire for certain sound resolutions creates the music.

V.H.: Do you work from the content first or from a formal problem you want to solve?

C.B.: I don't have any idea before I start to write what I'm going to write. I work from the inside out. When I'm in the middle of something certain formal things are on my mind. After I'm a few pages into it, I begin to become conscious of an overall shape the work is taking on. It is important to me not to continually rely on the same ways of making phrases and making them go together. In one poem I'll accentuate certain structures and in another they'll be very submerged. The genesis of the next poem is something I'm always concerned with. What the next poem is, how it's going to be different, or have I said everything I have to say.

V.H.: How does non-referential language fit into what you've been describing?

C.B.: Reference is a very central element to what reading is. You really can't strip yourself of the associative qualities that words have. It's interesting and inevitable to deal with the vectors of reference, but I think only a limited amount can be done with trying to totally block reference off.

V.H.: In terms of the magazine L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E of which you're an editor, I think a number of people would say that you were trying to fetishize a certain kind of style of writing....

C.B.: The magazine has actually been involved in exploring how writing doesn't have to operate primarily out of fixed styles. I always saw L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E as a method of exploring broader issues of poetry in relation to social consciousness.

V.H.: Even though I recognize a number of different formal styles in your work, the personal or referential element is always present.

C.B.: Having some kind of concern being there that centers the poem is something I'm very interested in. Not starting out with a given pre-existing conception of the style or genre, the vocabulary or the rhythmic patterns--but that all these things are the material with which the poem is made. What centers the concern has most to do with the process of composition, of writing, itself, and the kind of power any word added to another word has over you, as to bring a world into being.

Joni Miller and Eileen Myles interview Vicki Hudspith (poet, former Newsletter Editor) on a sunny afternoon in the Cornelia Street Cafe, New York City. Two Cappuccinos, One Beer.

Eileen Myles: Exactly why do you want to be interviewed?

Vicki Hudspith: I don't want to be interviewed.

Joni Miller: What relationship do your fingernails have to your art?

V.H.: Pink.

E.M.: That's very interesting especially considering the remark you made just as we were leaving your apartment, about interviewing being a cosmetic art form, and here we are basically working along the same lines. Could you help me out a little on that?

V.H.: I'd love to help you out Eileen. Could I buy you another beer?

E.M.: I guess it would depend on how much into dominance you are.

V.H.: Actually, that's what everyone thinks doing the Newsletter is about. They think it's like dominating an entire writing community editorially, of course it isn't.

E.M.: You mean like accepting poems by writers that were really bad and would make them look terrible? (laughter)

V.H.: Exactly. Some people think it's a great opportunity to totally misdirect people. Like putting down the wrong date or time of readings, changing locations, things like that. Or writing down all the wrong prices on the books received and changing zip codes in the addresses of the publishers. But an editor can't really go quite that far.

E.M.: Don't editors often fantasize about allowing only really terrible books to get rave reviews so people will go out and buy the book and end up thinking it's worse than it actually is?

V.H.: Well, maybe on a bad day. But what you're asking does pose the rather interesting question of taste.

J.M.: Weren't the good reviews only for the books that had good jackets?

V.H.: Though I am a very visual person, there were other criteria. I have heard of some instances however, if a book has a good cover, an editor will simply say, Review it!

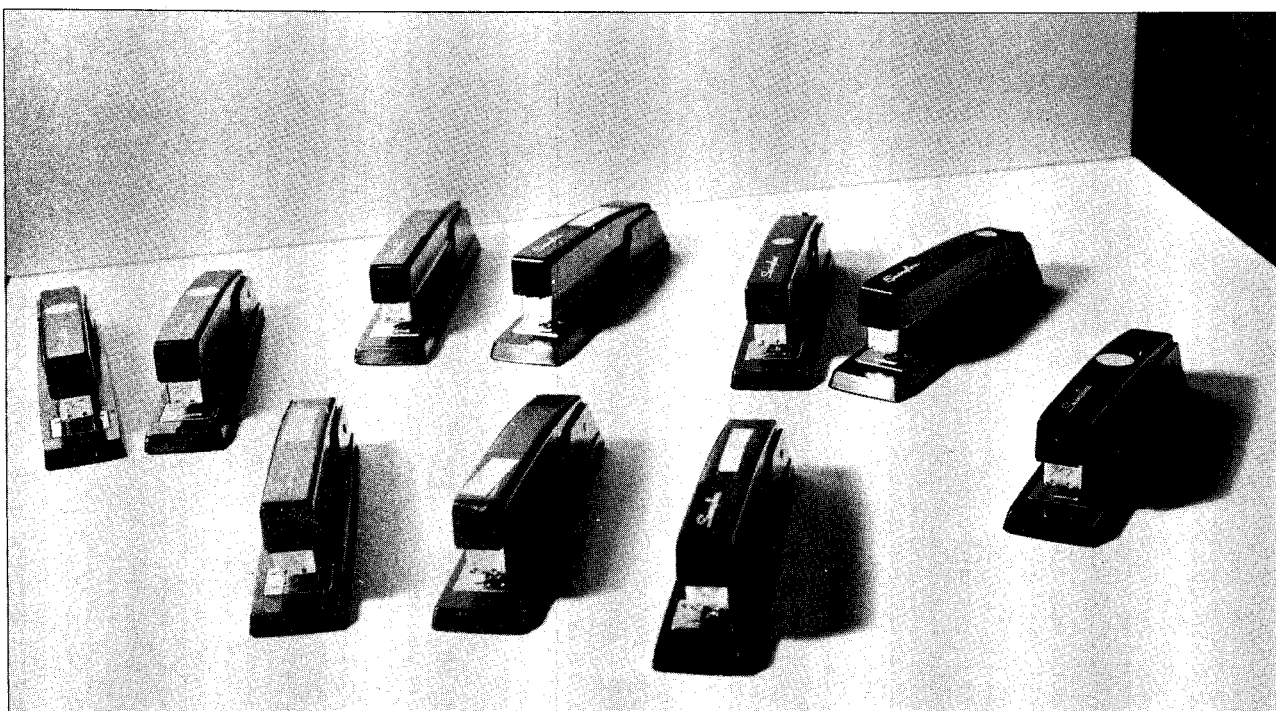
E.M.: That's a gorgeous aesthetic, Vicki. It shows real restraint on your part.

V.H.: Yeah, yeah.

E.M.: It's too bad you're not doing the Newsletter next year. You could save a whole batch of Novembers and send somebody November Newsletters every month for an entire year!

V.H.: I could still do that you know. I could xerox old copies and start sending them out with little notes on them like, "Remember this one?" But why would I want to do that?

Dorian LaPadura



Newsletter Staff (above) poses for photo moments before editor Vicki Hudspith bids farewell. The staff threw a Stapling Soiree in honor of next year's editor Greg Masters.

A DRAWING

We feel a little less  
than we used to, about  
as much as that couple  
in the drawing feel, so  
casual, sloped in some  
chair, probably stoned  
and happier that way.  
I bet they never know  
any more than they did  
the day they were drawn  
in each other's arms.

There are certain areas  
light hits more strongly  
than others - not us  
today, but all across the  
pencil drawing I bought  
last year in a fever.

It just lives with us  
now, staring over where  
we make love or don't,  
or we wander or sleep.  
And sometimes our eyes  
drift to it, more power-  
ful than us. It tells  
us all we need to know  
about each other. That's  
us in the drawing, in  
that light. That's life.

- Dennis Cooper

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
New York, N.Y.  
Permit No. 605

St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery  
The Poetry Project  
10th St. & 2nd Ave.  
New York, N.Y. 10003