

PhillyTalks 6

Oct. 11, 1998

Responses to (mostly) *PhillyTalks 3* (Derksen/Silliman) & Post-Reading Discussion

Responses

*Robert Harrison
Milwaukee, WI*

on train ridden cans, the Mast
grows toward back, list one,
canes peppered on the hovel

foment through

epistle cant quite get
the branch on the tree
of little tense verbs
into a puddle of noise
or the separate plastic
hold behind the coal.
bring its town beside its
language, of nothing more
then the exit can be long
over stones. pickup
the dust on top of your
crane backing. broken
worms in the colors of
every part of a day. its
meteor on the shower plane
beneath your childrens
frail counterbalances.
jet liners hold on the
music breaks over present
crusts, telephones, and
quadrilateral waves haunt
one ghost by the bushel

gun blue clouds

present arms of your function
lose attire, shaved walls on
7 5 3. thick stench of a rid
a glove pile, where they are
all buried. lasers, frozen kelp
into the stream you push above
little driven snow. pounce in
pronounce of crescent better
mumbled drain into a deer on top
of rabbits. stick ovens, brail
havent stepped on you... less
holed up in the back. puppets

night worn teeth. grave tender
on your axe, grind down auto-
matic hail. reverse. plantain
corner will you see... run cone

not A, B, epicenter Miff lot

drive to rodeo, line pusher
fuses might rent. accosted
feasible, talk wall for its
medical riot police. harp
metro linear casing went down
toward face presses. reset
cause of mixed racial boundary
enough is us. present letter
knee going down among line Q

midwest extortion. central
american digit kite. ive the
red letter mess, solvent crisis
over middle sections. silver
cost down town, fumes ready
harley. enough with a sore
crease, magenta leathers, a
beard stiff like the road. its
non-union. plane wreck autumn

present casing. rudiment of off
when NOR east, mile fraction on
staple coins. made in america
country. the bridge. dense you
stop HERE. stop on the fruit of
your peel chiquita. wane, john
wane in the wind. wan ocean blue
buckles. on a foot boot chain
the promise, cuba clandestine, IF

Fred Wah
Calgary, Alberta

Philly Talks Back

A method in the particular. Particularly counting, numbers. Moriarty's take on Bromige's *Tens* that involves a clustering of extended reading even to the specific "n's and c's." Or Mac Low's (naturally) "first three words of the first line" take on Levy ("as indicated by the initial lowercase 'a'"). Or Osman's *Periodic Table* followed by Darragh's visual lexical framing.

So, coming out of Olson's "minute, truthful, and particular" seminars in Buffalo, and still wondering about that "truthful," can I read poetics here, in Bernstein's "tools" sense¹ and Clark's "ordering intervention"² as an exercise in ethics, the tree rings of language, the invitation to know, for sure?

That kind of counting in Silliman's opening of "maple . . . redwood fence . . . bushtit . . ." – "Tree hung with dozens of plastic soda bottles, painted frying pans, plates, forms a rough altar. Tiny porcelain animal in each box of tea. By ear, he sd. Said." And, then, Osman and Darragh's discussion of the "fascism" of words as their own terms (the totalitarianism of "things," the "BAD consequence") indicates the word event as interval and as fuel for less-discernible always nebulous constructs (social, etc.).

Then how "meaning" is a notch. Bromige's "What could that 'this' refer to?"; Moriarty's "by meaning existing at all, by what is real . . ."; Mac Low's "as indicated by the initial lowercase 'a' and no antecedants or following predicate – seems to refer directly to the title"; Derksen's "the dollar rate is in relation to America, just as the Canadian identity is said to be"; Levy's attention to Mac Low's *fortitude*, *immunity*, and *innocence* as "three words about which . . . the first three poems invent themselves, and thereby, the meanings a reader may draw from them . . ."

Meaning the reader. Osman's attention to Darragh's concern for the possibility of "removing . . . the reader's ability to focus on the work in a relaxed way" or "disrupting the reader's sense of order to such an extent that she/he is unable to reflect on her life without needing an 'other' to tie things together . . ." Bromige's "marriage of writer and reader." ("Leap of faith: symmetry/cemetery.") Reception of the text important for mapping, tracking, charting, even believing.

Number five not yet missing. Mandel's *Prospect of Release*³ could be close enough. Biotext so song-like. Book within and outside book. After meeting Tom in Portugal this spring we were at the Dead Sea where I read his "In the time taken to articulate a letter / we live and die in syntagmatic opposition/ to God . . ." there 200 metres

below sea level the paradigmatic proffered layers of truth. Blake's Zion? I thought. The "you" that follows all saying waiting to be spoken to. Tom's M's becomes Ammiel's A's. The local, just that balloon.

Joshua Schuster
Berkeley, CA

Jackson Mac Low ends his penultimate paragraph on Andrew Levy's poem with the sentence: "The poet's 'business' is to 'animate the external and everyday life' – all that is real. Authentic thought as well as all other things of intrinsic value must be rescued from the marketplace." For Mac Low and Levy, the rescue mission is not for poetry but for the "business" of poetry. This business deals in animating all that is real: truly a recommendable stock.

Now that I've reinvested my portfolio into my other portfolio, I want to rephrase Ron Silliman as saying, in his discussion with Derksen: What writing by young poets actually rescues something of real value from the marketplace? From this perspective, to condemn young poets for not conjuring-up anything "original," "new," or "improved," would be like denouncing disco for not aiming its marketing guns at the right demographics. Disco failed because the world changed, not because it was anthologized too much, or spun-off too many great movies. Do poems fail when the world changes right under them?

There is always the possibility that something new in the world has not yet found its way into the poem. But the other option must be taken more seriously: poetry has increasingly found it difficult to find its way into the world, as if writing poetry automatically begins with separation and alienation from its topic. This second reality, a broken down version of the first reality, does not make poetry any less "real," or less valuable (as if one could fold use-value and exchange-value into real-value). Certainly, Silliman's concern is that poetry by young poets has become nothing but a secondary source. Yet, in an era in which almost everything young seems to be marketed by its opposite meaning, poetic danger hides in every misappropriation. In that case, a derailed train seems to be the only train on time and worth taking.

Thus our rescue mission becomes more imperative. It starts grappling one catastrophe at a time, and the state of the "new" could very well be the first catastrophe to confront (measured by little "catastrophemes" piling on top of each other). More and more, it seems the catastrophes define themselves by our failure to find any qualities in them. "Knowledge" might be one of these failures, in so far as it refers to an unspecified gambit at your expense. If the "new" is to be rescued, it must be done somewhere within the crime scene of such "knowledge." And all the while, this new know-how is being fostered by the mother of its own necessary inventiveness.

The invention mode I'm thinking of is modeled after tinkering in the garage (learned from Craig Saper), not

¹ See "Optimism and Critical Excess (Process)" in *A Poetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

² John Clark. *From Feathers to Iron: A Concourse of World Poetics*. San Francisco: Tombouctou/Convivio, 1987.

³ Tucson: Chax Press, 1996.

form follows function. The rescue mission always takes place with inadequate tools and incomplete information and exploits these weaknesses. One stumbles over oneself trying to document an archeology of one's own junk mail. Invention has always been defined by anachronism, in that what is discovered could never have been understood or recognized before its appearance.

I say the word "knowledge," or "redemption," or "invention" and people presume they are superstitious terms. Superstition is either small-time ideology, small-time paranoia, or small-time legend. It is also one of the more neglected keys into the realm of allegory. More and more, it is that allegorical niche-world that calls our imagination out of our imagination.

Although re-invention of knowledge and of the redemptive plot of the rescue mission also holds the risk that we may re-invent catastrophe, this is part of the strategy. Obviously, nothing could be more futile than catastrophe theory and a wildly combustible poetics; no one is so terribly naive to say that it is better to have catastrophe on our side. But, if catastrophe is a given, a received historical tradition, it is better to have as many ghosts as possible on our side.

*Andrew Klobucar
Vancouver, B.C.*

I Used to be Amused. Now, I'm just Disgusted

Contradiction endures in American poetry, defining, in some ways, the dominant value of modernist writing in general since the late 19th century. It announces itself, as early as 1855, in Whitman as the key to the American psyche, and yet, as Ron Silliman points out, continues to inform many of the more innovative works of the $L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E$ poets of the 1970s. Of course in Whitman, any contradiction that occurs between the subject and its community comes more or less pre-reconciled as a new pluralist, self-generating form of agency: "I am large; I contain multiples." Inconsistencies between different, subjective interpretations of the real are reconfigured in Whitman's poetry as just another mediated effect of American democracy. For these later poets, working from a Marxist perspective, this reconciliation occurs in thought only, leaving social reality undisturbed, especially with respect to the status quo. In his introduction to Silliman's 1981 book, *Tjanting*,⁴ Barrett Watten helps contextualise Silliman's notion of "the new sentence" with reference to the medium of corporate advertising. Citing an older advert for "Camel cigarettes" which presumed to demonstrate "where a man belongs," Watten stresses the medium's innate detachment from social reality. "The male model in advertizing," he writes, "exists precisely to undermine the male. Limits are what any of us are inside of; the limit one is staring at is 'somewhere else'" (5). Silliman himself

sounds a similar note in *PhillyTalks* when he qualifies contradiction in poetry as more "apparent" than genuine and "difference just the next step in a larger logic that proves all encompassing." In this claim, Silliman aligns himself not only with Marxist theory, but also with a series of wider questions in modern thought, particularly with reference to Kant, who also put severe limits on the ability of the subject to apprehend fully the objective conditions of reality. In Kant, absolute forms are relegated to "subjective mediation," and the ontic foundation of social relations is recast as ideology. Read in this way, to participate in Whitman's particular intersubjective speech community is to submit, at best, to the effects of a single, ongoing mass hallucination and, at worst, to what apparatuses of coercion the status quo might deem necessary to maintain social orthodoxy. "I hate speech;" or so runs Bob Grenier's oft quoted declaration, signifying the poet's refusal to engage with this sort of community; "but," Silliman updates, "[I] like talks." Silence, these poets imply, is not necessarily the best response to coercion. Adorno may have announced the end of the lyric poem after the social reality of Auschwitz, yet to cease discourse altogether, or worse, to deny its very possibility via irony can signify consent as much as opposition.

As Kant informs us, the discursive intellect's access to absolute form, to the notion of the ideal, is not impossible, so much as it is incomplete. And it is this relationship to incompleteness, this hatred of speech that continues to supply the terms of opposition in both poetry and social relations. Such views might be useful, therefore, in outlining one of the more central philosophical bases of the discussion that has cropped up in the context of both Louis Cabri's Philadelphia series and the most recent issue of *Open Letter*, edited by Derksen. That is to say, in debating some of the contemporary responses to "the new sentence" and its various successor movements, some mention of the wider discourse of European Idealism and its enduring influence on western, now global, society seems practical. Contradiction, as Derksen points out, arguing from Althusser, can lead equally to "historical inhibition" or revolutionary action. With respect to Whitman's reconciled sense of contradiction as "multiples," it is clearly the former option that has prevailed within American writing. Derksen then sounds his own warning about the once radical social aspect of "disjunction" in poetry becoming aestheticised in later variations of "the new sentence." Without delving too deeply into modern phenomenology, it nevertheless seems necessary to re-emphasise here the exalted place that contradiction has traditionally occupied in western thought. The ideology of liberal capitalism and its market structures continues to mediate a distinct set of social relations in which the subject is permanently alienated or cut off from the objective conditions of its reality. Contradiction, in this scenario, does not retard self-consciousness, so much as it actually generates it. Hence, when Derksen admits an increasing interest in a conjunctive, i.e., hyper, as opposed

⁴ Berkeley, CA: The Figures, 1981.

to non-referential poetics, his terms seem best understood in contrast to the dominant, western sense of identity as an innately oppositional, self-contradictory structure. Although Silliman's work continues to use and re-use language in ways that foreground its role as an apparatus of social and political coercion, his methodology has perhaps never addressed adequately the complex manner in which these apparatuses function. In other words, with "the new sentence," Silliman provides an engaging, ideologically informed view of this syntactic unit, yet refrains from closely analysing the structures of ideology itself. It is no surprise, then, that superficial readings of Silliman's disjunctive poetry might falsely conclude that such methods are inherently critical of liberal capitalism. In fact, disjunction has always been a central quality of western speech and the many pathological subjectivities generated from it. So Derksen provides an interesting take on this aspect of ideology and discourse by shifting our focus away from contradiction and towards compaction as a poetic method. In order to counterbalance any additional tendency to confuse this interest in conjunction with some misplaced faith in universal value, Derksen refers us to Sianne Ngai's writings on disgust as a potentially enabling basis for writing and critique. Ngai's attention to disgust opposes, first and foremost, the many discourses of pleasure or *jouissance* that have dominated much radical aesthetics and activist thinking especially over the last thirty years. As with disjunction, emphases on pleasure in writing are often read as somehow escaping the ideological determinisms of liberal capitalism, yet radical desires, no matter how extreme, usually fail to disrupt the mechanisms of contemporary markets for very long. It remains to be seen if disgust, as a methodology, can successfully counter the logic of the market. Without an in-depth understanding of pleasure as an important liberal ideological tool, though, one shouldn't underestimate the potential of a category of disgust to function similarly. Niche markets are created more quickly than ever, and one might eroticise Ngai's programme as easily as defecation can serve as a form of radical sexuality. Marketed carefully, even disgust appears as a profitable medium by which the next set of manufactured desires and pleasures are transposed into new modes of subjectivity: I shit, therefore I am. That said, what remains interesting in these attempts to re-radicalise poetics, is the general sense of exclusion that continues to define these writers' respective positions both as individuals and members of a larger cultural community. And this may be the most valuable quality in their work and debates.

Michael Magee
Pawtucket, RI

I want to write about the implications of, and perhaps offer an answer to, Ron Silliman's question: "For all the anthologies of younger writers, many of them

extraordinarily gifted, what do we find in the way of work that is actually new?" This question sparked an extended debate on the EPC⁵ listserv which included Josh Schuster, myself, Ron and others, and my thinking now is indebted to that debate.

During the listserv discussion, Jacques Debrot wrote something which caught my attention:

And it is this that seems to me to be the breakthrough of Langpo – a breakthrough that is more a matter of being able to *read* – in an entirely new way – the more radical passages in the New American poetry than it is of *writing* poems in a fundamentally new way . . . [the New American poetry]. The problem is that the critical language has grown stale – & like the radical work of the 1960s, there is no adequate vocabulary with which to describe the implications of these innovations. (Jacques Debrot, UB Poetics, Jan 19, 98 09:47:50 am)

What Debrot was suggesting, to my mind, was that coming up with a new critical language with which to discuss NAP (and by extension themselves) was in fact the "actually new" practice of language poets. This is not to diminish the impact or importance of language poetry, not in the least. But if the really "new" function of language poetry was critical, how does this disrupt Ron's call for poems by younger writers which are "actually new"? It strikes me now that this is in a sense what Ron was calling for: not so much poets writing poetry which is "actually new" but poets writing critical self-description which is "actually new." And here I'm in qualified agreement with him – without a new critical vocabulary it will be impossible to identify what constitutes "new" work by younger writers, though many of those young writers may "feel it in their bones." One great innovation of language poetry was the blurring of distinction between the poem and the critical essay. Ron's sense of the new is, I think, deeply informed by this practice. But is that practice necessary to new innovation? I would suggest that for the younger writer, it is not entirely viable, for two reasons: 1) the oppositional possibilities of theory are no longer obvious (they may never have been "real" but at some point they were indeed obvious); most of my contemporaries came up in an Academy which could quote Foucault and fry him up in a pan, and never, ever, let you forget you're a man, as it were. Which is to say, one's Academy was perfectly comfortable with and capable of promoting a class on postmodern critiques of hegemony while at the same time cutting a deal with hegemonists like Barnes & Noble who would be more than happy to order 18 copies of *Discipline and Punish* at \$22.95 or whatever. Under these circumstances the poet/theorist necessarily develops a "comic frame of acceptance" to use Burke's term. As Burke says, "By astutely gauging situation and personal resources, it promotes the realistic sense of one's limitations."⁶ Now, Ron, would, I'm guessing, in his more apocalyptic moments, find this preposterous – as he

⁵ <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc>

⁶ *Attitudes Towards History*, 2nd Edition, Boston: Beacon, 1959, p. 106.

found Jeff Derksen's description of "tactical networks" of poetic communities somewhat preposterous. But Burke insists that the comic frame of acceptance "is not passive. The comic frame should enable people to be observers of themselves while acting" (171). Here I'd make a distinction between being an *observer* of oneself and a *critic* of oneself. The self-observer is necessarily a comedian. The self-critic quickly becomes, by a kind of sleight-of-hand, the critic of THE SELF and, in that capacity can be unabashedly serious in his promotions. The self-observer has one great advantage I think over the self-critic: she does not get swept away by the mistaken belief that she is the key element in a grand historical narrative, a belief which is of course self-fulfilling – having invented the narrative, the self-critic can all too easily write himself in as protagonist. This was Pound's major error and it's an error we should not want repeated. I never appropriate anything from Pound without a positively bawdy sense of my own ridiculousness.

As a last note on this subject, I should point out two things: 1) that, as Ron indicated, it is impossible to understand language poetry's sense of the large and new project without contextualizing it in relation to the sense of urgency surrounding the Vietnam War – I don't believe my generation *can* contextualize that mood as such – its materiality resists us at every turn: the *thingness* of that historical moment, a thingness in which Ron participates but in which I do not, means that any historical narrative of it which I attempt to construct, inevitably "reveals its ironic essence: interpretation and distortion, or dislocation"⁷; this has major implications for how I read theory – I love reading Lyotard, for instance, but I cannot read his statement in *The Postmodern Condition*, "Let us wage a war on totality," without a certain amount of laughter: his war against totality is itself a symbolic totality, and this is the joke that gets me going; I can't help but be reminded too of that masculinist aspect of the anti-war movement which had everyone donning fatigues and "going to war against war." Ironically, it is language poetry which taught me not to trust such grammatical configurations, but their logic is latent in some language poetry; 2) I think much recent work by language poets has a kind of comic frame: Perelman's for instance, where the promotion of the poem as "place for pleasure" against "authoritarianism based on transcendent language" is forced to confront self-observation in the form of a joke: "Labile, the man / said, make mine labile."⁸ This joke about masculine authority and the discourse of labile-ness keeps the poem from drowning in its own potentially totalizing celebration of pleasure. But it *does not* sink the poem, *does not* negate all sense of the agency of pleasure against authoritarianism – rather, it allows him to cope with the incongruencies of his argument and "keep on keepin on" as Robert O'Meally has said⁹ of Burke's method.

⁷ Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity* (Baltimore, 1988), p. 62

⁸ *Virtual Reality* (NY: Roof, 1994), pp. 68-9.

⁹ "On Burke and the Vernacular: Ralph Ellison's Boomerang of History," in O'Meally & Genevieve Fabre, eds., *History and Memory in African American Culture* (NY: Oxford, 1994), p. 252.

My position is still ensnared in contradictions. I've tried to argue that Ron's call for the "actually new" is the wrong question, and yet I couldn't help but try to explain what's new – or at least different – about the approach of younger writers to "the Dynamics of Literary Change" to steal Steve Evans phrase. This contradiction plays itself out in my own writing, where my desire to do something new is always in the foreground, as well as in my new journal *COMBO*¹⁰ where similar desires are manifested editorially. I realize that, in taking Ron's bait, and in sometimes employing the rhetoric of "look at these fascinating new writers," I contradict myself, but ultimately I would never stake any claim to an agonistic model of lit. production.

I hope that the various forums for younger writers out there will assist in building a different vocabulary: one which might begin by trying to answer this question: how can something be "actually new" without being opposed to or radically calling into question the previous manifestation of the "actually new" in any given culture? I believe one possible answer lies in "vernacular criticism," a phrase which as I understand it comes out of Ralph Ellison's redirection of Burke's concept of "symbolic action" and is developed in the work of African-American critics such as Cornel West, Houston Baker, H.L. Gates, O'Meally and others – a criticism which is not *oppositional* so much as *propositional* – it "describes for the purposes of forecasting," to use Burke one last time. Such practices don't wage war against languages of the past so much as use their contingency as an advantage, as a way to make those languages more useful to new situations by agitating them, looking at them from new perspectives, etc., rather than simply rejecting them wholesale. In any event, that's what I see myself as trying to do.

Ben Friedlander
Buffalo, NY
January 1998

PhillyTalks #3 (Notes After Reading)

Jeff Derksen:

For the most part, Jeff's poetics, and even his politics, remain veiled for me in ambiguity. Tracking what he says, I find myself left, above all, with questions:

Politics. Jeff defines "nation" as a "contradiction": on one hand, "economic/imaginary construct . . . invoked for state policy"; on the other, "emotional marker for a citizen." However, since he declares that he doesn't want to move "toward an impossible outside," but prefers instead a "work that moves into sets of relations," I assume that he accepts this "contradiction" between "citizen" and "state" (if that's what it really is) as a necessary element in the "construction

¹⁰ 31 Perrin Ave., Pawtucket, RI 02861. Subscription rates: \$10/yr, singles \$3/ea.

of a national identity” – and that this “construction of national identity” is itself taken as inevitable. What, then, is his stance vis-à-vis Canada? Is he taking sides in the contestation between emotional citizen and policy-minded state, or celebrating the gap between the two – or something else? And how does that side-taking or celebration or whatever influence his positioning vis-a-vis the Canada-U.S. relation? Signals are mixed. Quotation marks around the word “our” in “our’ difference from Americans” suggest an unwillingness to reify the concept of Canadian identity; “erode” in “erode national differentiation” proposes just the opposite – a belief that Canadian identity has a reality apart from the discursive hologram “imaginary construct”/”emotional marker.”

Poetics. Jeff makes clear his areas of research but not a point of view: “my project takes shape within antagonisms toward existing relations”; “within my own textual production, I’m aware of being within both national and global systems and relations and the relations within and between them”; “I’ve tried to address this by using the ‘noon spot rate’ . . . as . . . a structure.” (This last statement illuminates the numbers sprinkled throughout “But Could I Make a Living from It,” a poem of Jeff’s excerpted alongside his letter, but apart from alerting us to the *fact* of this rate, little of substance is revealed.) In the end, the most specific disclosure Jeff offers is his identification with a “poetics of disgust . . . in antagonism to a poetics of pleasure.” Given, however, the pleasure I myself take in things which others find disgusting, I wonder if Jeff’s conception of those two terms is anything like my own.*

Circumspection and modesty work against Jeff, not merely by acting as a muzzle (“I’m wary of my own tendency to expand infinitely . . . or totalize”), but probably also by keeping him from exploring his position more directly or fully – a tendency I see in myself, god knows.

One place to refocus attention: the meaning, in poetry, of “contradiction” and “overdetermination”; the examples given from Ron’s *You don’t convince me*. The “contradiction” is more aptly described as an irony; the “overdetermination,” an accumulation of details whose emotional effect derives precisely from their *lack* of determining relation to the poem’s “you.”

Ron Silliman:

Perhaps because I have been reading and thinking about Ron’s work more deeply in the past three years than in all the previous fifteen combined, I find that his portion of the correspondence provokes a more nuanced response, and fewer questions, than Jeff’s.

Reading Ron is a little like peering into a picture window, realizing only belatedly that the difficulty I am having in seeing through the glass is the glare of my own reflection. (The light, I imagine Ron saying, is history – and I would agree.)

Ron writes: “Poetry, like so many cultural phenomena,

proceeds by apparent opposition.” For me, the key word in this statement is “proceeds”: it bespeaks a subordination of the individual work to its place in a larger literary-historical narrative, and implies that the value of a work is largely a function of that “place.”

My divergence from Ron and many of his peers is rooted in temperament: I mistrust such narratives on principle, even my own. Proposing their own counter-canonical reading of literary history, Ron and his friends have become rather too committed to their own story, at least for my taste: their narrative has become too fixed a thing, a pageant of progress in which the “younger poets” are invited to participate – as an encore. Am I wrong to sense a crude teleology?

More than a few times, Bruce Andrews and I have wrestled over this issue. “*My* gang pushed the envelope, he’ll say, adding, “*Your* gang is stuck in the past.” My typical answer, smirking: “I guess that means that *my* gang has chronological priority.” (Or else, pained: “What gang? This isn’t *West Side Story*, you know.”) Another version of the same provocation: “*You* guys aren’t doing anything *new*; it’s all imitation Langpo – or worse.” And me: “Are you saying that Langpo is nothing new – that you’re *obsolescent*?”

Once, at a post-reading party in New York, after my move to Buffalo, Bruce was jabbing as usual, and I, tipsy, turned to my left and said to Alan Davies (or maybe it was Charles Borkhuis), “You know, when I left California, I couldn’t afford to transport all my books; I had to sell off all the unimportant stuff. And guess what? *No more Bruce Andrews!*” A white lie that I instantly regretted, seeing the hurt look instantly engulfing Bruce’s face.

In our more serious exchanges, the absence of a shared perspective has made it all but impossible to move beyond our separate Ground Zeros. Ground Zero One: that *my* work, not being “new,” is indefensible. Ground Zero Two: that *his* work, however new in conception, might still be a crock of shit. That Bruce (the big fake) might actually *like* my work, as I in fact like his, scarcely makes a difference. Which is one reason the memory of these conversations makes me pine, California-fashion, for a couples’ counselor!

So stifling do I find this line of thought, I initially took Steve Evans’ pamphlet *The Dynamics of Literary Change* as a grave capitulation. I couldn’t believe someone as intelligent as Steve would go to such lengths to defend this attitude theoretically – and in the name of younger poets! Only when I registered the intense negativity with which he invested this attitude – *Aufhebung!* – did I begin to appreciate what Steve was up to.

* * *

If newness *is* a value, it certainly isn’t the only or even most important one. Of greater moment, to my mind, is uncovering the deeper resources of the “old.” Didn’t Borges say that writers create their own ancestors? Through such acts of creation, newness reveals itself as a product of

reading, and not something intrinsic to the work. Thus, reading Kerouac and Whalen through Clark Coolidge's eyes made those older writers seem contemporary (in Kerouac's case, not enough!), just as reading Coolidge through Barrett Watten's eyes advanced Coolidge far beyond Bernadette Mayer or Ted Berrigan – that is, until I began to read Mayer and Berrigan through *Coolidge's* eyes. The artificiality of these constructions is palpable, and part of their appeal.

The transformative power of reading is largely due to the ease with which we can alter the frame (Kerouac through the lens of *Howl*, through *Ketjak*, through “race, class and gender,” “the cold war,” “road movies,” “substance abuse,” “Deleuzian ‘becoming,’” and so on and so forth). When Pound said “make it new,” he meant that writers should labor to renew their art, something they do by creating their individual works. Insofar as those individual works remain what they are, however, readers alone maintain the power of renewal. In this sense, Ron's comments about “habit” are as dead on vis-à-vis poetry as they are for the culture at large: the habits of perception that rule our reading and the lit-crit narratives which ground those perceptions are effects of history to which poetry bears an oblique but important relation.

* * *

Ron's notion of history is at root synchronic. Thus, when he speaks of Bob Grenier's “I HATE SPEECH,” he refers in broad terms to the present in which that utterance was offered: to Nixon, to Kent State, to the nearness in memory of WW2. To be sure, he struggles against the determinism implicit in these juxtapositions (his recognition that “At the same time, there is no such thing as ‘at the same time’”), but by and large Ron's perception of history remains a matter of sequentially arranged moments of time, gathered up, unidirectionally, in a single meta-narrative track – with individual narratives linked up synchronically by subtle and not-so-subtle cause-and-effect relations.

My own notion of history – especially as pertains to poetry – is at root diachronic: events register for me in relation to their past and future as well as to their present. Obviously, Ron doesn't by any means sever the present from the past or future; nonetheless, his resistance to diachrony is evident, for example, when he writes, “To use the theoretical constructs of the late 1970s to try and ‘read’ the end of the 1990s seems problematic in the extreme.” Keeping to Ron's terms, the issue for me is not simply using the '70s to read the '90s, but using the '90s to read the '70s to read the '90s. What the '70s become in that double-reading is, in effect, a diachronic condensation, neither new nor old, a dimension of rain soaking backwards and forwards in time.

To give a concrete example: my dissertation is entitled “Emily Dickinson and the Civil War,” a reading of Dickinson that derives from a number of sources, both personal and intellectual. One such source is Paul Celan. Though I had already intuited a relation between Dickinson's poetry and the Civil War when I began to read Celan in earnest, his poetry became an important guide for me in understanding

how E.D. registers her experience of history. In this way, moreover, Celan's work came to function as a condensation of more than one historical moment: slipping backward in time into E.D.'s aporetic pre-modernity, and forward in time, into my own slow response to Vietnam, his poetics exemplify for me art's power to shape or shadow events far beyond the artist's own range of experience or knowledge.

* * *

I concur with Ron's sense that poetry in the 1990s has not coalesced in a movement or moment analogous to that of the 1970s. One consequence is that the loneliness of writing is accentuated, and with it the diachronic dimensions of the art. One writes, or I do anyhow, in relation to a past and future as much as in relation to a present, a “condition” of writing that corroborates a poetics and a project: the exploration and demolition of multiple historical narratives (historical agency a dim hope, at least in the short run); a querying of the structures of address (“materiality” now a given); a fascination with taboo topics and issues (instead of a stripping away: “persona,” “sex,” “the occult,” “nature,” “poeticism” . . .); modesty vis-à-vis political and aesthetic claims (less B.S. but also less ambition); short but dense poems which reward rereading but don't require a vast amount of attention in order to be understood the first time (a survival mechanism, à la Mandelstam: in the absence of an audience and without a publisher, one writes in the vernacular, avoiding visual effects easily screwed up by editors, expecting that the work will have to travel a long way on its own before discovering any readers).

I tailored the above catalogue to fit my own practice, but I suspect that the work I admire by my contemporaries would answer to some if not all of those criteria – poems very different from my own, written out of a shared condition of anonymity and isolation, a shared sense of the primacy of actual, lived experience.

Whether or not this equals “the poetry of utter habit,” I can't say. God knows I'm depressed by most of what I read.

* * *

Ron concludes by asking Jeff two questions. The first is why there have been no bursts of collective activity since the rise of Langpo. Echoing Bruce, Ron asks “what . . . [do] . . . we find in the way of work that is actually new?” Yet insofar as language writing is old news, synchronically tied to “the early '70s,” the question is not only why nothing new has occurred (accepting, for argument's sake, that that statement is true), but why our understanding of Langpo remains so old – why the work has not yet managed to elude its own original conceptual frame.

For this reason, I would echo Ron's question with one of my own: *What is it about language writing that it has not provoked an imaginative rereading by younger writers?* For all the invention and productivity of Ron and his peers, what resources do we find in their work apart from those they

themselves remark? What other future does their work predict beside the sickly one we now inhabit?

The question is in many ways unfair. Too little time has passed to *allow* rereading. I would guess that I myself am one of the oldest of the “younger” writers. Thirty-eight years of age, I began reading Langpo around 1982, immersing myself for about six years before taking a breather in 1988 (disillusioned by the “poetry wars” and exhausted by more personal upheavals). In 1992 I moved to Buffalo, and in the context of a new milieu, in light of a shifted intellectual outlook, I slowly began to reread works I had loved, hated and overlooked before. Only now, therefore, is it possible for me to conceive of a “reappraisal” of language writing.

For better or worse, Langpo’s readers – pro and con – have accepted the work more or less as given.

* Postscript, March 1998:

Now that I’ve had a chance to look at Jeff’s guest-edited issue of *Open Letter* and the essay by Sianne Ngai from which he borrows his argument, I see that his call for a “poetics of disgust” opposed to a “poetics of desire” (called a “poetics of pleasure” in his *PhillyTalks* letter) is based on a misunderstanding. Treating “desire” and “pleasure” as more or less interchangeable terms, he sees “disgust” as a more appropriate response than either to “the social relations that make us want to puke,” and asks his readers (in Ngai’s words) to “*Forget Desire*”: “Libidinal economists, we salute you! . . . But it’s time to get over your polymorphously perverse skins: an erotics is *not* emancipation . . .” Unfortunately for Jeff’s argument, insofar as desire *is* an economy – a mode of production and not simply a psychological state – disgust and pleasure are alike subsumed *within* it. Setting “disgust” against “pleasure” is a little like using “supply” to critique “demand.” More to the point, while there are, without doubt, a number of “poetics of desire” which equate pleasure with “emancipation” pure and simple, the political agenda of *Anti-Oedipus* (my own reference point for the discourse in question) is far more radical than Jeff’s paraphrase would suggest.

Culmination of a countercultural project dating back to Bataille and Reich and ur-text for its present state of knowledge, *Anti-Oedipus* calls for an appropriation and redirection of the economy as a whole, not just an occupation of one or another job-site. From this perspective, the privileging of pleasure is (to borrow Jeff’s Marxist terminology) a “reformist” response to social control hardly radicalized by turning to the opposite term instead – hence the emphasis by Deleuze and Guattari on “flows” and “deterritorialization.” As Guattari notes at the end of his essay “Meaning and Power,”¹¹ “It is not a matter of aping schizophrenics, playing at catatonics, but of discovering how a mad person, a child, a homosexual, a prostitute, etc. shifts the components of desire about in the social relation.”

On a more mundane level, turning against pleasure (or

even, simply, reinforcing its opposition to disgust) cedes far too much ground to the arguments of the right, which are also based on a disparagement of the possible positive value of “hedonism” (in particular, of drug use, sexual promiscuity and socially unredeeming art). Indeed, Jeff’s desire to “register . . . an understandable reaction to social relations that refuse to recognize that they are disgusting” mirrors in a more sophisticated, liberal manner the vulgar, conservative responses of my students, who react with immediate disgust when faced with any hint of sexual perversion. Confronted this semester with Samuel Delany’s celebration of anonymous sex in porno theaters and men’s rooms – and more decisively, with his refusal to accept those “relations” as “disgusting” – they too want to “register” their outrage; they too “want to puke.” This is not to suggest, of course, that all outrage is equivalent – only that a highfalutin critical apparatus isn’t needed to support it.

Peter Jaeger
Toronto, Ontario

A Response To Ron Silliman And Jeff Derksen

Ron Silliman’s and Jeff Derksen’s correspondence raises some pertinent questions about recent shifts in critical poetics. I want to focus on Derksen’s claim that an emphasis on reading the New Sentence as a unit of structured text, where meaning is situated or produced in disjunctions, tends to overlook “a more ideological function of formally politicized texts: the radical *conjunction* of texts that makes or articulates links within social relations.” Derksen states that he now values texts that “enjam” sets of overdetermined relations; building on the critical writing of Sianne Ngai, he describes this sort of work as a poetics of disgust. Yet Silliman’s response to Derksen seems to sidestep this provocative approach altogether. Two adjacent passages from Deanna Ferguson’s “Still Life, with the law”¹² exemplify the inclination towards disgust and overdetermination discussed by Derksen. Ngai cites Ferguson’s poem as an example of articulated repugnance, and demonstrates how her “expression of inexpressiveness thrusts the base materiality of language into the foreground” (106)¹³. It is worth augmenting Ngai’s reading by re-situating her theory in relation to Derksen’s brief remarks on social enjambment. Ferguson writes: “Jury, guilt, religion, / the president’s daughter [from central casting], um, conditions, a warrant, words, / the police, toilet jokes [urinate on all four heels] experience defined” (n.p.). At the centre of this passage, which refers in part to both the repressive and ideological state apparatuses, Ferguson inserts the word “um,” thereby paradoxically articulating an expression of inexpressiveness in the face of the law, an utterance that Ngai presumably would label as the profanity of formless, nonrepresentational language. “Um” here sets

¹¹ *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*. Trans. Rosemary Sheed. NY: Penguin, 1984.

¹² *Rough Bush*. Buffalo: Meow P, 1996.

¹³ “Raw Matter: A Poetics of Disgust.” *Open Letter* 10.1 (1998): 98-122.

up a sense of disgust with the law that the text discursively echoes through images of toilet jokes and urination. In the following stanza, however, Ferguson further enjambes this negative utterance with a short dialogue based on a joke Lacan used several times to illustrate the paradoxical relationship between truth and deception. In the 1964 version of the joke, one character tells another he is catching a train for Lemberg: “[w]hy are you telling me you are going to Lemberg, the other replies, since you really are going there, and that, if you are telling me this, it is so that I shall think you are going to Cracow?” (*Four* 139)¹⁴. In the 1957 version of the joke, Lemberg is labelled Cracow, while Cracow is labelled Luov (*Ecrits* 173)¹⁵. The shifting city names emphasize one of the points of this narrative—that meaning lies not in a single signified but in intersubjective difference. Only one of the characters in the joke knows his destination, but in his attempt to communicate through language, his knowledge is perceived by the other as deception. In effect, the destination is overdetermined by its own inability to be read. Ferguson modifies the joke by replacing the two speakers in Lacan’s account with two “speech balloons”; when one balloon claims that it is opaque, the other one replies: “What a liar you are! . . . If you say you’re being transparent, you want me to believe your [sic] being opaque. But I know in fact you’re being transparent.” The dialogue indexes Lacanian discourse by literally translating his speakers into texts (word balloons). It also literalizes the communication process by replacing place names with the words “transparent” and “opaque.” Ferguson overdetermines these two terms by representing their capacity to be read as each other’s opposite, an effect that prompts one of the characters to react with anger and disgust. By positioning the affective overdetermination of the Lacanian-based dialogue immediately after the negative “um” and its surrounding juridical terms, the text finds different formal means to articulate social relations among differing sites for the Law of the Father. As Ngai argues, “desire has its own system of morality and thus its own set of legal parameters” (100); Ferguson’s enjambment of a highly institutionalized theory of desire with the discourse of the law, as well as with “formless” inarticulation, reconfigures that system of morality into a grammar of disgust.

Derksen includes Ferguson (along with Silliman) in his list of writers who are currently exploring a poetics of disgust and overdetermination. Yet Silliman neglects to address this poetics, and ignores Derksen’s discussion of social conjunction. Grounding his desire for poetic development in relation to the growth of a global economic network, Silliman claims that making it new “must be the challenge that now faces every younger writer.” Where Silliman wonders about what in the younger generation of writers is actually new (a question that rehearses a Modernist desire for originality), Derksen illustrates a shift

in perspective that is not based on a rupture with pre-existing forms and theoretical constructs (a generation gap), but on the expansion of these constructs within a changing social network. Of course, this expansion does not necessarily dispense with the New Sentence’s limitation and control of syllogistic movement altogether; Ferguson’s work, for example, continues the New Sentence’s suspicion of referential accretion, in order to offer a critique of Capitalist modes of representation. Yet her accentuation of the links among discourses binds revulsion to revolution, thereby extending the poetic formulations of the late 1970s. And by locating the work of Silliman’s generation (including texts by Silliman, Bruce Andrews and Steve McCaffery) among the work of younger writers, Derksen constitutes critique as a complex interaction of historical moments, rather than as an opposition between then and now.

Tom Beckett
Kent, OH

KISSING/HOLES

1. A poem, as risk, is like an unsolicited kiss.
2. Many years ago I inspected a house to see if it qualified for federal rehab money. Upon entering the structure I was greeted by a tenant seated in a recliner located in the middle of the living room floor. The floor was made of oak and riddled with round, perfectly formed holes, each about a foot in diameter and each placed a couple of feet apart. Crossing the floor like a minefield, I literally had to step over a succession of holes, in order to draw near to the tenant. I managed a straight face and said, “There’s sure a lot of holes in this floor. What’s the story?” “Well, we weren’t getting enough heat from the basement. Thought this would improve the circulation.” The tenant was serious. He, of course, didn’t have a clue about how to fix a furnace, so he did what made sense to him with available technology. He must have worked hard at making such perfect openings in the hardwood floor. I remember one night laying awake wondering how anyone could walk that floor in the dark. I thought too of Alice’s rabbit holes.

* * *

As poets we kiss at the world, often disappointed at not being kissed back, while negotiating hazardous ground of our own making, within imperfect structures that we did not ourselves build and that we do not understand. *PhillyTalks*, in its exemplary format of poet responding to poet, enacts this lip-smacking, hole-hopping dance. That is its beauty and its worth.

Love,
Tom

¹⁴ *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1977.

¹⁵ *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. NY: W.W. Norton & Co, 1977.

Post-Reading Discussion January 22, 1998. Writers House, Philadelphia

RON SILLIMAN: I want to preface my two questions by saying that Jeff's somebody who's work has interested me for at least twelve, thirteen years? He's currently living in Calgary, which is a town to which, but for one of my grandmother's more extravagant nervous breakdowns in 1962, I would have moved. To some degree he is living in the present and future a life I might have had in the past, which I find intriguing. I was totally excited about the idea of this particular combination, and I really like the work that you read from tonight.

I have two questions, and they are on a totally different scale. One is simple and practical. It has to do with the use of the noon spot rate between Canadian and US exchange. As I understand it, that's a daily rate, and as I understand your usage of it, you identify one example from different years. I'm curious as to whether or not you picked the same date each year, the way, say, Ray DiPalma in his Birthday Letters always uses September 27th, or whether or not you just went around and picked, because of course over the course of a given year, in fact over the course of a given week, the rate can go up and down.

Then the other, which is more problematic, and a truer, deeper question: In the email correspondence that we exchanged prior to Christmas, you write about a poetics of disgust that is in antagonism to a poetics of pleasure. I have two feelings about that, that I want to broach with you. First is the simple question of the pleasure I take in reading the work and hearing you read, and the problematics of that. That pleasure seems to me very direct. Then, the second feeling is one that I've had going back to when I first began writing, when I was ten years old. I take it that one of the functions of writing is (and this may be an ideological presumption that I'm making that you're now allowed to shatter] some form of unalienated labour, that is, as a result, deeply personal. In that sense, the concept of a poetics of disgust seems to me highly problematic. This function of writing is, I think, true for all of the arts, and for a few other activities in daily life, but I think probably more true for the arts than anything else, and even there only fragmentarily and in places.

When I contextualize it in larger historical terms, and talk about a world in which we sit here today in the fifth term of Ronald Reagan's presidency, having watched every single strand of the social safety net pull out from underneath us, I can understand the contexts of these problematics, but I have problems with understanding the *experience* of the concept of the poetics of disgust.

JEFF DERKSEN: I went to the financial library at the university where I work, where I'm studying, and I looked up the annual rates of the dollar which they pick at a fixed date. I used their picked fixed dates: I can't remember what

the exact dates were, but my intention was to choose enough of the percentages to cover the length of the poem, so as to set up a structure or grid with them for the poem. They probably come up every twelve to fifteen lines. I've used that structuring device – of the decontextualized statistic – before.

I remember trying to take a span of years where there was variance between the dollars. There was a time where the Canadian dollar was higher than the U.S. dollar, then it plummeted, and went back up. I tried to catch some of that arc. Otherwise, the numbers wouldn't have shown the relational activity between the two currencies.

Disgust and Overdetermination: A Poetics Issue is an issue of *Open Letter* that I've been editing over the last two months, and I've been doing co-terminously with our emails. The phrase "poetics of disgust," that the issue is built around, is the title of a long essay in the issue by Sianne Ngai. She does situate a poetics of disgust in antagonistic relationship to an aesthetics of pleasure. I think it's a rupture with and challenge to a poetics of desire that, in Sianne's view, is no longer self-reflexive.

The term "desire" has become so enveloping. Any oppositional activity deemed to somehow spill over its borders, or become excessive, is claimed to be a libidinal economy that leads to change. Sianne notes there are so few terms for the "disgust" people feel with regards to existing social relations. She produces a grammar of "disgust" that includes: pointing, lingering, being drawn to it, being disgusted yet transfixed, unable to draw away, then finally turning away. I find it a compelling argument, because it does challenge and initiate a rupture with a poetics of desire and libidinal economy. It also initiates an act of pointing, which I see a lot of in work of my contemporaries. Their work points to particular social facts usually, that are disgusting – not so much that the facts are disgusting, but that people are disgusted by the facts, disgusted by their economic situation, that in Canada how, "following the fifth term of the Reagan administration," the U.S. and Canada have to mock the same thing, and how arts funding is being ripped away, and how essentially a gospel of facts from the right has been initiated that we can't spend because there's a debt we have to get rid of before there can be any social services.

I hope the "poetics of disgust" issue gets taken seriously, picked up and discussed, because, having spent time editing the issue, I think it's an interesting collection of people. I think it's also a contingent poetics. A contingent poetics is something I see emerging across many different communities, where the kind of plans that lead to larger work are being shunted aside, in order to have a contingent poetics based on a momentary set of social relations. We could invoke, again, the homology of social relations and text, where social relations have sped up and one's poetics aren't locked in either. How are you going to address a rapidly transforming social sphere with a static poetics?

I see this as a move from desire to disgust, as well as from a more stable long-term plan, which de Certeau would

register as a “strategy,” towards a shorter-term “tactics” of the contingent.

RS: This is going to be crude because I haven’t read the issue. I know the work of most of the people in that issue, except for one of them. I had never thought of them in terms of a collectivity, which is one of the constant underwriting issues that goes on for poets of my generation looking at poets of your generation. Steve Evans today in an email to the Buffalo poetics listserve told me to change my song about this. I responded that I will when it’s warranted.

It feels to me in that sense invariably problematic, because I’m one of these people who tends to think that we want Brecht and Artaud constantly talking to one another at the same time. That is, having reinvented a Brechtian poetics, there is a positing of the inverse: Artaud. I don’t know what gets to be “Artaud” for my generation, whether it’s my generation generally, or a specific phenomenon within it.

It also seems to be problematic to think of the tactical as an advance. I’m thinking of some of what you say in your letters to me, especially towards the beginning of that one about “historical inhibition.” This is a question that goes on in society in a variety of different fashions. It even shows up in the phrase, “the five terms of Ronald Reagan.” The fall of eastern Europe is a very odd phenomenon. No leftist I know within the U.S. – with the exception of about ten retro-nostalgic CPers – ever imagined that the Soviet Union was anything other than this massive deformation of socialist discourse, which also had the funds to subsidize enough people in any given country to screw up their political discourse too, and therefore its absence would only be an opening in which much greater discourse could then occur.

In the decade since the fall of the Berlin wall and the changes in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe, what we’ve seen in the west has been more or less the evaporation of all of the leftist centers of organization, which has left people feeling extremely problematic, you say “historically inhibited.” I would think that it would be demoralizing. Yet, at the same time, if one looks at it in broader historical terms, as maybe a five, ten, maybe twenty year deep breath, that may in fact be occurring as people get the gunk out of their ears so that they can speak intelligently, going forward. But the idea of moving from a strategic poetics – I actually like that idea as a concept – towards a tactical poetics feels to me to some degree to be “giving up the battle before you fought it” and that’s what feels problematic.

I was prodded today by some of the discussion on the Buffalo poetics list. Some people on the list subscribe to *Philly Talks*, and my correspondence with Jeff was posted there out of context – a fair amount in the past forty-eight hours or so.

When I talk with my peers – I’m thinking of Bernstein, Watten, Perelman – we often wonder how there has been an almost anti-group ideology that has emerged among

younger writers. Probably the first expression of that was the two volumes of *O.blek*, which came out of a conference in Buffalo six, seven years ago. It has been an ongoing phenomenon that I think to some degree you are articulating in a different fashion with the word “tactical.” I am constantly wanting to see the new strategy that will come and put me in a historical context, saying, yeah, what you did was interesting, but that was 1975. Instead, what’s happening is this sense that that’s not a project anymore. I’m curious about that – deeply troubled.

JD: Of course, if you’re the old, and I’m the new, then you’re supposed to be troubled by it; that means someone’s doing their job correctly [laughter].

Part of it for me is that I don’t want to engage with the tropes of old and new. My reaction is to throw up, well, throw up examples, of collectives and group formations that have worked over the years. I’ve been a member of a working collective of writers for over ten years. Group formation is something that’s articulated more in Canada. We’ve seen in Canada in the last ten years a rise of coalitional groups that aren’t quite recognizable in the same way that groups have been in the past by a unified aesthetic stance. Sometimes the groups will cohere around shared ideologies. That was certainly the case with the group I’m involved with, the Kootenay School of Writing, where from its inception it was very different from past examples. Writers with almost opposed aesthetics had a shared ideology. These kinds of coalitional formations, which might not seem like groups from the exterior, actually function interiorly as a group; so it depends where the gaze is coming from, as to what gets defined as a group or not. I do agree that there seems to be a tendency in the U.S. – not to totalize the States, but we like to do that in Canada – toward an anti-group thing. I think the problem with the *O.blek* issues was that there was a kind of liberal pluralism happening, that if a mass could be accumulated, somehow a “new” could be seen, or group could be seen, by sheer numbers, rather than there being some sort of cohesive ideology happening through a group.

Now I see coalitions happening through tendencies in work rather than through the fact of being in the same geographical vicinity, or of publishing in the same magazines. That happens because of changes in the ways we communicate – via email, for example – and in the political economy of how magazines function. I know a lot of little mags that have shut down in Canada because the postal subsidies were pulled from magazines; it now costs twice as much to mail you a magazine as it does to produce it. So, seizing the means of production only gets you production; it doesn’t get you distribution.

To address the idea that the shift from the strategic to the tactical is perhaps a giving-up of the battle before fighting it. I’d like to think that maybe the definition of “battle” and of where the battle takes place has itself shifted: not a gearing-down to the local, but a thinking of the local in terms of the global, and of seeing how quickly things

change at a global level now. Maybe that's where the shifts from strategic to tactical end up happening now. It also depends how we want to define the duration of a strategy – five years, or five hundred years? – and of a tactic. The strategic shifting-down and rethinking of the local in terms of the global, not just as a bumper-sticker, but as a way of organizing, is just in the process of being articulated.

RS: How does the local intersect with this transgeographic sense of community?

JD: It means that as a poet you have more cities than couches to sleep on, first of all, in a practical way – which is always nice when you're living on as few wages you get as a poet, or grad student, or whatever.

I haven't thought of that so much. It could be that texts are now shifted around in different ways, not so much as magazines but rather as people mailing things to each other, and things like that. I don't have an answer

RS: There's a publication here at Penn called *Crossconnect*, which, as I read it, and I've published in it, appears as a website first, and then later in hard copy, which feels to me a reversal of the expected. Seems to be working for the people who are actually producing it.

JD: Brian Kim Stefans had a hard copy of a magazine that he is now moving to a website, called *Arras*¹⁶, which seems like it's going to be interesting. It certainly is drawing together this more – I'm not sure if we'd call it – “transnational” group of people, who are not defined in terms of where they're situated in terms of the nation, and who are finding coalitional links in terms of their poetics.

It's part of the reason why the new and the old and the generational antagonisms get complicated. I think part of what's happening with the “new” is a kind of refusal, not so much to name themselves as a group or to organize as a group, but rather a refusal to make an ultimate rupture with a previous generation. I don't want to say, Ron, your poetics are shot, and I've got to go back to the lyric in order to find a “voice” for myself. I want to take what's useful from your poetics, move that into my own geopolitical context, and see what other aspects I have to pull in, what other people I have to address, what other antagonisms I have to work through, whatever coalitional linkages I have to make. So it seems this idea of communities in antagonism to each other is giving way to coalitional links between communities, whether that's occurring just within poetic communities, or within different disciplines as well.

There was a euphoric moment that lasted for about four years in Vancouver, where poets were working at an art journal, and all the artists were going to the readings – this wonderful moment of trying to find a shared vocabulary and a shared politics and political economy for the work. This kind of coalitional linking spreads out through different communities and makes it harder to recognize how groups are formulated, because they're not all gathering at the same

place and time and not defining themselves in the same way; yet, nonetheless, there's a discourse happening between them.

So, I think what's happening is articulated links are forming between communities, rather than the formation of one cohesive community that then moves as a block through time, through history, until it gets recognized from an outside, from a discursive exterior, as a group, which then grants it identity. That's what I mean by things being more coalitional and contingent. I think it's early to see what the results will bring. We'll probably end up seeing the results quicker through the internet.

RS: That's certainly possible to the degree that those results can be represented through the internet. The internet works very well for some media and less well for others. Sculptors, for example, have more problems. [laughter]

There was a period in the seventies in San Francisco, briefer than four years, more like two, two-and-a-half, where there was a very active attempt on the part of visual artists, particularly performance artists, and the poets of the city, to try and figure out ways to work together, which came down to putting on a series of events together. For example, I co-curated a series with an Australian performance artist/painter who's now living in Germany, Jill Scott, in which we would have one performance artist and one poet on the same bill at an art center called The Farm, which was in fact a farm in San Francisco – subsequently developed. One of the things that proved interesting about it and also problematic, was that the poets got a lot of energy out of it and value, and continually through the entire period of the series, six or eight weeks, a lot of performance artists expressed enormous frustration. Each performance artist had essentially developed his or her own vocabulary for their work, so that one person, like Terry Fox, might do a project around a graphic representation of Chartres, as displayed by a series of ladders and wires over a space, whereas somebody like Tom Marioni might use the same equipment, like a ladder, but his project would be to stand on top of it and pee into a bucket.

JD: That's the time-honoured peeing into a bucket of performance art. [laughter]

RS: Their complaint was that the poets knew how to talk to one another and get something from each other's work, but there was nothing that Terry Fox could get from Tom Marioni, or that Tom Marioni could get from Terry Fox, other than the idea of a ladder. They found it much more frustrating. And then the question of whether or not we should include people who are performance artists in the sense of physical theatre, created an enormous amount of problematics, because while they declared that they had nothing in common with the other performance artists, they had a clear idea who *wasn't* a performance artist. They were doing theatre, that is, and had actually being trained. Twenty years later, there's hardly any evidence of the conceptual

¹⁶ <http://www.stern.nyu.edu/~bstefans>

movement, except insofar as there's still a reading series at New Langton Arts, which was originally a space created for performance artists. The Art Dealers Association got really tired of people peeing on the wall-to-wall carpets in art galleries, pouring blood or flour or whatever onto the carpets – literally it was the carpets that was the issue – and so they gave away half of this shared warehouse that they used south of Market, for the performance artists to do with as they pleased. That reading series is probably one of the two or three oldest in the Bay Area at this point.

JD: I think there's lots of residual effects from that same time in Vancouver, in that the galleries still have reading series. KSW shares a space with a gallery. It's tied with funding as well. The galleries have access to fundings that writers as a group don't, because the Canada Council funding couldn't imagine funding writers as a group; they could only have a way to fund writers as individuals. When the KSW was formed, they didn't even have an application for us. How can we fund this group? they said. We said, well, we're an artist-run centre, and they had a term for that; except we didn't show any visual art; we called it language-centred art. It allowed us to get in an application, which was then rejected.

Also, to address the potential antagonisms across generations: if I wanted to make a generational rupture, thinking in Canada, the person whose ankles I would be biting would be Steve McCaffery's. But it doesn't make sense to do that. Even though he's published over twenty books, his work has had very little critical attention in Canada; so, it's a more interesting critical and social project for me to try and find a critical method that will bring the complexities of his work, and the social grounding of his work as formally politicized work, into sites of discourse to be talked about. Rather than turn to him, see him as a material embodiment of a hegemony, I would rather look at his work as an untapped source and as an ally. To me, it's trying to rearticulate – by “rearticulate” I mean: to take apart and literally rearrange – a critical method that will bring to the fore the values of his work that I find useful, to bring forward a use value of his work, to take him out of the kind of orbit or quagmire of “experimental writing,” to have him brought past the conceptual horizon of the “unreadable,” because that leads to an easy dismissal, which automatically jettisons the social, and gives it an elite status as in some way untouchable.

This was the reason why I decided to go to university; it was to move into the site of such discourses. “Canadian literature” is a tiny little pea that's ready to be taken apart. It's only been articulated into a mass in the last thirty years, and it feels sutured together with very loose threads. The generation that I'm of should be criticized not for having not produced new work, but rather for not having picked up critically and developed a critical method that will address texts in their social materiality. To go back to McCaffery's work, and to other people's work who are under-represented, is sort of a mini salvage paradigm. But

for me to make a generational rupture would be to throw away work that I think hasn't had its social effects realized, or the potential for it as a social text realized.

From your view, Ron, how does it seem that there's not the new? I guess what I'm arguing is that there is the new, but it's organizing itself in a way that isn't immediately apparent. How can one see the new? By seeing the new, does it then become new, does it then get named the new, and is that a function of a discursive exterior? What's the desire for the new?

RS: I think a desire for the new has to do with making art that stands up to social circumstance in a way that makes that social circumstance become much more revealed. I find myself in this “funny” situation. There are an enormous number of younger writers whose work I like a lot. Yet they all feel like natural extensions of an aesthetics that is almost continuous with, if not my own, then maybe people three years younger. It feels like this continuous growing strand. There's an enormous sense of individual accomplishment, but nothing that seems to articulate how the world today is different from the world in which I grew up.

One of the things I think is a real characteristic phenomenon of the “language poets,” so-called, is the Vietnam War experience. Every one of the males in the U.S. had some kind of intense relationship with the draft. When the government's trying to kill you for five or six consecutive years, it gets your attention. It was a really shaping experience. I don't think one can even *imagine* “language poetry” without that experience. Yet there are people today who are writing interesting work who were born after the fall of Saigon. The world is really different. I don't think anybody has been able anywhere yet to articulate exactly how that difference functions. That, to me, is the thing that seems so problematic.

I think you are quite right in saying that the question of what nations and nationalisms is, is very different from what it was even a decade ago. The example I constantly use for this is the European Union. The EU is an attempt to create a viable state on a continent where none exists, in spite of the fact that that is where many of the world's “great imperialist nations” once resided. The experience of Britain in the twentieth century has been to go from Empire to New Jersey. [laughter] That's a deeply troubling experience, and it shows up in British music. The EU is one of those things that will always-already have failed in some very profound fashion, in a way that states are today failing and being torn asunder both from within and without. I don't think anybody has been able to articulate how that plays out in personal life in clear terms yet. There is the gross level, you know: jobs flee across the border to maquilladoras; the fall in currency in Thailand hitting banks in Hong Kong caused IBM's stock to go down nine points today so a friend of mine has lost three thousand dollars. But those kinds of gross facts don't tell us what it is that I think, ultimately, we need to know.

This is where I read the *O.blek* anthologies differently.

For those who don't know, these were two books, which are now hard to get, but very much worth buying. One is of essays, the other of poetry from this conference, where most of the poets were under the age of forty, with one or two exceptions which were highly political and caused a lot of comment along the line. In the essay collection, there was a real foregrounding of the concerns of what later became known as the *Apex of the M* contingent, a group of writers around Lew Daly, including some very good writers, Kristin Prevallet among them, who took the position that what my generation of writers had not dealt with was the spiritual, specifically Christian gnosticism.

It's certainly true that Christian gnosticism in my generation of writing extends all the way from Fanny Howe to Fanny Howe. [laughter] But, if you then proceed to take a look at Norman Fisher, Kit Robinson, Steve Benson, Leslie Scalapino, and all the practicing Buddhists in particular out there – Alan Davies – you get a very different interpretation of what spirituality meant for people of my generation. There was a real reaction initially to the first couple of issues of *Apex of the M* precisely because the editors were so clearly taking that kind of a collective stance, even if it was a quirky one.

JOSHUA SCHUSTER: If they don't get the EU going, it's going to be one big Disneyland, or tourist zone. That's their crisis. To bond like that would be to close Europe off and to open it in certain ways – in other words, they would be able to open and close it the way they want to. That situation seems to be very similar to the situation of a younger writer today who wants to choose what histories, traditions, even contemporaries, to be open and closed to. This opportunity is pretty unique to now, though, because before there was a lot of need to close things off, mark a spot, and then bond. My questions then are: how, Jeff, did you choose your form, which on paper at least looks a lot like Ron's new sentence? And Ron, why in a letter to Jeff did you say that the new sentence is what least interests you in your work?

JD: The one slogan that's been running through my head through this whole thinking is from the Russian artist Tatlin, who said, "not the old, not the new, but the necessary," which gets out of the old/new binary.

I have to say that in this whole process of looking at my work alongside Ron's I was startled to see and to think how much the new sentence, so-called, was evident in my work. I can't say that I absolutely decided to write in "the new sentence." It comes out of, rather, to use Raymond Williams's term, a "structure of feeling," of a poetic community where the sentence had been foregrounded or privileged over the line. In Canada, the debate on the line went on and on. It carried through from Olson, in particular. That move towards the sentence was, then, a rupture from a previous generation of Canadian writers. It starts getting complicated. It's seen to be a move not only away from a group of Canadian writers, but also seen to be a linkage to

a group of American writers. The KSW was talked about as a language-writing branch plant, as if we can somehow produce these texts at a cheaper rate of pay set up in Canada.

RS: So KSW is basically a language poetry maquilladora?

JD: Well, we do have a better health plan.

So, it's actually this complex system of dearticulating from one tendency, and articulating yourself to another, which starts this circulation of discourses and communities. For me, to foreground the sentence in my work is not so much to pay an homage to Ron's definition, but rather part of a larger structure of feelings that links my work to a particular generation and to a particular group in Vancouver, which disarticulates it from another group of Canadian writers and moves it back to an American group of writers, which then reverses what was happening in Canada. It reverses the flow of a national literature. It kind of forestalls this hegemony of a national literature, if the next group of Canadian writers looks elsewhere for influences and devices. You start to have this system of linkings and delinkings that happen. It's not so much a conscious move, "I'm now going to write as if I'm Ron Silliman," but rather, it's the work of Ron's community which made a particular device available to another community of writers who then brought it into their own context and used it in a particular way.

RS: I see your work as being profoundly involved with the paragraph, rather than the sentence. Those paragraphs are clearly written as the structure of the poem, in a way that's very different from the work that I've ever done.

One of the projects of *The Alphabet* – and I think it's up in the air as to how successful it will or will not be, ultimately – is to push my work in twenty-six different directions, not to replicate what I do and have done, but to unearth different elements of my work and self that I may not be as conscious of as I should be. One of the relatively few visual artists whom I think of as a significant model of how to think about one's work over time, is the painter Frank Stella. His early work consists of a series of grey broad lines on rectangular canvasses, which since then has proceeded to become, at this point in time (or at least, the most recent show I saw, which was at the Pompidou Centre quite a few years ago, in Paris) these things that look like giant anarchic protractor sets of multiple textures, ranging from cardboard to stainless steel in massive amounts of overdetermined colour. The way he went from the highly monochromatic beginning to where he is currently was, paradoxically, through a process of constant *subtraction*, rather than addition. He constantly took the element of his work that seemed to be most typical, and stopped doing that thing, and in that sense his work has been an act of constant discovery, of constant removal of the mask. It's been interesting to watch how it's proceeded over the course of the thirty years or so that I've watched it. To some degree, I see *The Alphabet* as a project involved in that kind of pushing.

But in fact I don't look at you in terms of the new sentence, even if inadvertently those sentences have some of those elements.

MATT HART: I'd like to make one comment first as a citizen of New Jersey.

RS: You're speaking on behalf of New Jersey as an Empire now?

MH: I'm speaking from that part of New Jersey that is an ex-Empire. I don't know if what I want to say about the EU relates to poetics, as Josh managed to relate it, or whether it's strictly political. In any case, to talk about the EU as the creation of a viable nation is to miss what's significant about it, which is the victory of the market over what are both political and sentimental attachments to the idea of the nation-state by the overwhelming majority of peoples of Europe. If you were to do a referendum, I think you would get an overwhelming consensus for the maintenance of independent states – Great Britain, France, Germany, etc.

To turn to poetics, I'm particularly interested in the way recent scholarly writing on language writing – I'm especially thinking of Bob Perelman's book, *The Marginalization of Poetry* – problematizes the idea of language writing as a group or tendency, or a generational tendency. Bob is concerned to break down this idea of language writing as being a monolithic project, which it has been accused of being. I was wondering whether you, Ron, had anything to say about this, in relation to this argument that you are having with Jeff, regarding reconsolidation of the idea of the group.

I also had a comment for Jeff. You talked about this difference between strategic and tactical poetics. Not only does Ron's idea that the tactical is giving up the battle before it's fought strike a chord with me, but people have accused political poetic traditions of overestimating the power of poetry to change the world – an argument which you might feel extremely hostile towards. But, it seems to me that if you reduce the orientation of one's poetics from the strategic to the tactical, you engage in a further overestimation of what one might achieve by tactical means.

RS: I think you're right about the victory of the market, and I think that's happening in lots of places. The internet represents a peculiar capture of the military by the market. It was invented as a device to survive World War Three – not an accident. And it's very rapidly turning into the method by which different data bases shall compete for advertising banners and the right to transfer cash.

I just want to call brief attention to an article that was in yesterday's *New York Times*, called "Advertising: Deliberate to Make Print Ads Stand Out." It talks about not just typos occurring in advertisements because people in ad agencies are semi-literate (although that's certainly true), but also people who are in fact creative. An example would be an officer of BBDO West, a unit of Omnicom group in

LA., Barry Cox, a poet out on the west coast and old friend of mine, who died of cancer three months ago, was the CIO of BBDO West, so these are people I can imagine pretty easily. The article is talking about a particular consumer segment they identify as, of course, the 14-25 yr disposable income segment. "'For these particular kids, slickness and corporate sheen is really unpleasant', said David Lubar, chief executive and chief creative officer of BBDO West, 'and they can spot it a mile away. [//] 'So our ads are loose and funky in the spirit of 'zines', magazines that are very handmade and scratchy looking'."17

And then it goes to talk about the use of errors in Miller Lite ads and the creation of Dick, the creative superstar, who is of course a fiction – he's as real as Joe Camel, in that regard. That seems to be an instance where a social phenomenon that could be traced back to poetics, shows up coming at you in a Miller Lite commercial in a sort of garish fashion; and there are examples of this throughout the twentieth century. Display advertising was changed by e.e. cummings and William Carlos Williams, if you just take a look at magazines in the first twenty years of the century. And that sort of thing continues to go on, just because there is this cultural filtering-down. When McDonald's first started aggressively advertising breakfasts, they used a series of billboards that had the phrase, "Dawn Good Food," which replicated Lew Welch's old "Raid Kills Bugs Dead" strategy of using one-syllable words with consonants on the outside, single vowel sound on the inside. Also, the mind shifts that *w* in "dawn" upside-down very much like a Bob Grenier poem. Bob Grenier was doing that ten years before McDonald's was. Those things occur as sort of the detritus of that filtering phenomenon.

So that sense that poetry is powerless.... Certainly in the sense of: will Lyn Hejinian ever run for president? Yeah, that's a foregone conclusion. Seamus Heaney might run for president of his particular country, and he could conceivably win, but we don't have that particular social circumstance here. Yet in fact, filters will continue to filter throughout the culture, whether we like it or not.

MH: Saying Bob Grenier is doing it is not the same as saying that Bob Grenier caused it. I'm not suggesting that there is a relationship of power there, that poetry can change, but that once you move from the strategic five hundred-year plan to the tactical ten-year plan, or from the five-year plan to the one-month plan, that those potential powers are somewhat diluted even again. I would like to problematize something that Jeff said, rather than to suggest that poetry didn't have the power....

RS: There was an issue of the *Impercipient Lecture Series* that came out of Providence Rhode Island, published by Steve Evans and Jennifer Moxley, Barrett Watten's "The Bride of the Assembly Line," that I think is making an argument close to the argument that I've been making. There was

17 "The Media Business: Advertising: Campaigns are making mistakes on purpose in the quest to stand out from the crowd." by Stuart Elliott, *New York Times*, January 20, 1998, section D, page 5.

within language poetry – and I see language poetry as an historical period, 1971 to 1981, as distinct from a reading list – that was perceived not just as a series of works and a series of writers, but as part of a larger full-sized critique of everyday life, that in that sense it was strategic, and that that sense has been what has been lost and which has disappeared.

Watten then proceeds to make arguments as to why he thinks it was lost and what he thinks could then be done. I think, nevertheless, there's a great overstatement in it. I don't think you could ever by any stretch of the imagination argue a coherent politics out of the work of Clark Coolidge. [laughter] I love Clark Coolidge's work, but that's not a dimension it has been engaged with – and if it was, it would change in ways that I would find interesting, and Clark would find problematic. And Clark is by no means alone in those terms. I think Bob Grenier is another person. The number of poets who are actually conscious of those elements and of working with them is a subset, and a much smaller subset of everything that came to be known as language poetry. I don't particularly agree that the reason for this is too much influence of Charles Bernstein, although I've heard that argument before, even in Vancouver the week that I wrote that introduction to *In the American Tree* back in 1985, which is the week that Charles read his great real estate prospectus, *Artifice of Absorption*, in which he attempts to identify and define every single language poet by one term or another so as to look sort of like a bird book, *Peterson's Guide to the Language Poets*. [laughter]

I want to use the word “heroic,” but I want to use it in a nonvalue-drenched sense – in the sense that one could talk about the “heroic period” of Russian Futurism as distinct from its later periods, or the “heroic period” of Surrealism as distinct from its later periods. There was an “heroic impulse” within language writing that seems to be the element I find gone when we have moved and arrived at the tactical.

JD: To me, one of the exciting conceptual things about language poetry is to approach it, say, the way one approaches conceptual art, so to lift it out of literary value and look at it conceptually. Conceptually, I think, language writers came very close to defining a political argument for work such as Clark Coolidge's. I think that reinfused a sense of language as an ideological material – and incidentally, that's another value that gets carried forward.

But the shift down from saying that we can't argue a usable ethical or effective political agenda using Clark Coolidge's work is a shift from strategy down to tactics. In some ways a kind of realism starts happening. It seems to me that the strategic would be to say that there's something inherent in poetic value that gives it a social space, whereas the tactical would be to say that this is something that's going to have an effect. I see it as a movement from seeing value as transcendental to something that's more contextual

in terms of effect.

RS: Did you say value was transcendental?

JD: Yeah. Except with the Canadian dollar. I don't see it as a *scaling* down, but more a particularizing of a political agenda. And it's a speeding-up of effects; effects are wanted quicker. We can see this in political philosophy as well. In some ways, I'm just taking a grid of radical democracy and laying it on top of poetic communities, and saying that this is how poetic communities have organized themselves, as coalitional contingent tendencies of radical democracy, as opposed to self-interested semi-autonomous groups. I propose that we look at how communities create effect from strategic to tactic is mirroring a postidentitarian politics.

It's not so much how we are going to get a copy of Coolidge's work in every hotel room in America [laughter], but how we are going to get a crosswalk, where someone just got hit; it's a speeding-up of effects. Again, because I've already raised the specter of the contingent, it could be a contingent move that's only going to last for a number of years, that's in the process of rearticulating how groups organize themselves.

RS: One of the historic concerns I have is that we have allowed far too much good writing to go out of print over the last fifty to one hundred years. One of the things that occurs in the poetics of the Donald Allen anthology, *The New American Poetry*, was that that cluster of writers really focused around the years 1926, 1927, exactly the age of my parents. If you take a look at the poets who were born in those years – Ashbery, Eigner, Ginsberg – there's a whole slew of them that's really a core cluster of that anthology, and it extends even beyond that collection to people like WS Merwin and Donald Hall. You find that there is a fix around those years, which is not an accident. Those people came of age with regards to World War II much as my generation came of age with regards to Vietnam. But what of the poets who were ten years younger than them; there are an enormous number of good writers among them, who produced three to five to ten books each. Harold Dull would be a good example. A lot of the younger writers of the Spicer circle. George Stanley. Joanne Kyger – one of the most under-published and least recognized writers in America. Those writers have become much harder to find in print.

That is a problem that occurs without that sense of strategic focus. It's nice to see that there's an anthology of Michael McLure's work. But it is extraordinarily distressing to think that it is impossible at this point in time to find the poetry of James Alexander, Ronnie Primack, or Seymour Faust.

That's a concern I have for a lot of the younger writers today, that we're setting up a situation in which everybody gets to have two books that go out of print. There's that question of value and community – and even the crosswalk

question: it's like the *poet* gets hit in the crosswalk.

JENA OSMAN: I like Jeff's idea of talking about what's next in terms of I think you said articulated links between communities. It gets away from the Brecht-Artaud dichotomy that Ron refers to. I find it so interesting that you brought up *Apex of the M*, Ron, because that journal started the same year as *Chain* did. *Apex of the M* got so much attention; it was this kind of fever or nexus, that people were able to respond to. Whereas this idea that you are bringing up, Jeff –

JD: Which is very chain-like....

JO: Yes... seems to push forward in a direction I think is really useful. It seems to be a direction connected to what Joan Retallack calls "poethics," where you create a poetry that somehow mirrors the kind of world in which you would like to live. Her idea is connected to her work with John Cage. I was just wondering what you felt about that poethical idea, and of an aesthetics aligned with Cage, in relationship to what you're talking about with communities, and connections of the aesthetic to the political.

JD: I'd have trouble linking it to Cage's aesthetics. I think

I would like to have an ethics be a contextual ethics. So these coalitional links that I'm imagining would be contextual links, not just that there's an overarching ethic for different communities. At this point I'm getting to the heroic stage of being hungry, so am having a little trouble answering. But it's also interesting that *Chain* proposes many collaborative projects, against individualised work that we usually see. It's harder to be oppositional to collaboration, because it is already an articulated link in a way, it imagines a writer in a different way. There's not going to be so much opposition between two individual writers, because you have a collaborative thing happening.

RS: *Chain* represents a very complicated idea, in a way that *Apex of the M* presented almost a single brush stroke. It's not the exact same relationship by any means, but *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* magazine was very effective because it represented almost that single brush stroke, whereas something like *Poetics Journal* never had the same impact, because it was much more of a complicated project to actually try and go through, and in the same sense *Chain* makes much greater demands of its readers. I hate to say that we should underestimate poetry readers, but history hasn't been good to us in those terms.

Please send all responses and correspondence to:

Louis Cabri
 Editor, PhillyTalks
 4331 Pine St., #1R
 Philadelphia, PA
 USA 19104

This issue is designed and formatted by Nicole Markotic.

Please subscribe; keep the newsletter going: \$12/5 issues (payable to L. Cabri).

Forthcoming

7: Brian Kim Stefans (Brooklyn) & Fred Wah (Calgary)

Monday Nov. 2, 1998, 7:30 p.m.

Kelly Writers House, 3805 Locust Walk, Phila.

For info.: 573-WRIT

PhillyTalks is a project supported by Kelly Writers House & the University of Pennsylvania. For further information on Kelly Writers House, contact wh@dept.english.upenn.edu, <http://dept.english.upenn.edu/~wh>, or write to Heather Starr, Res. Coord., Kelly Writers House, 3805 Locust Walk, Philadelphia, PA, 19104.