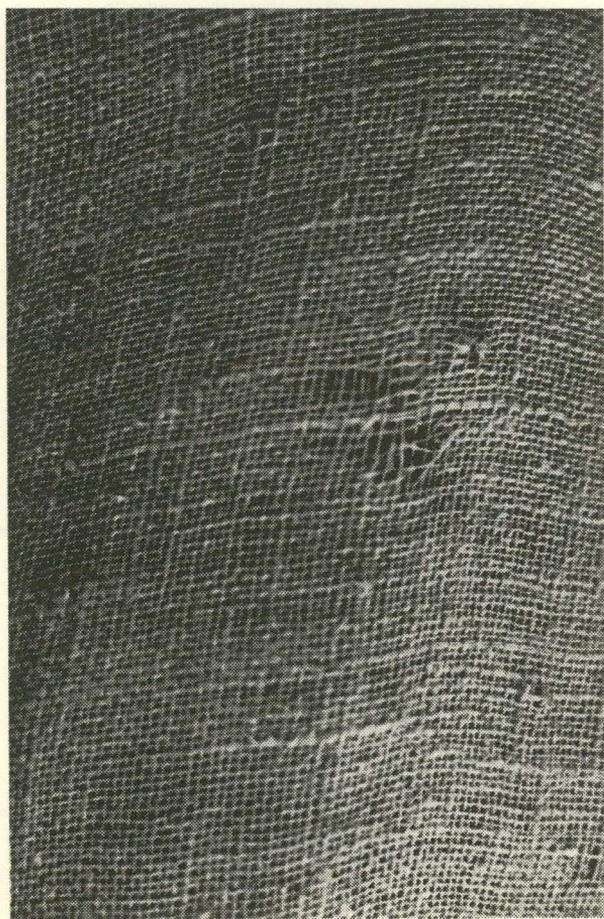


hole



HOLE MAGAZINE

Louis Cabri

This essay reads some of *hole's* contents through anecdotal, historical and theoretical contexts. *hole* was a project of the “experimental writing group” (ewg) which met regularly to read poetry alongside critical theory and poetics, and produce poetry seminars, talks and readings, in Ottawa, from 1986 to 1995. Rob Manery and I organized ewg events, and initiated and edited *hole* from 1990 to 1996,¹ irregularly producing just six issues, the first four formatted and proofed afterhours on computers at work.²

ewg's goal was to create poetry as a public act, predominately by locating poetry in a site of poetic dialogue, by attempting to create conditions for dialogue—by valuing talk about poetry as much as poetry itself. We desired “site” to be understood as constituted by dialogue; but, for all that, ewg did not emerge from an existing local scene. Poetry in Ottawa-Hull in the mid '80s seemed confined to subordinate and instrumental roles as theatricalizing narrative for visually-based performance art—at times, this was true even when poetry had no prop other than the page it was written on: poetry was a token reason for forming community. Nil discussion of poetry occurred outside the credentializing abstraction of university classroom. At Carleton University, Christopher Levenson's *ARC* magazine was pre-eminent—the tone of which seemed to us Arnoldean; at University of Ottawa, Seymour Mayne's influence was mythopoetically Laytonesque. Interesting page-based poetry in our opinion was translated by the expatriot Chilean community, notably Jorge Etcheverry, who attended ewg gatherings and presented in our Transparency Machine series. ewg poetry/theory discussions were attended by twenty or so people at best,³ with a core group of about five, including Bob Hogg, a poet and professor at Carleton University. Bob was our immediate connection to a live tradition of formally innovative English-language poetics (*TISH*; The Four Horsemen, especially bp Nichol; the San Francisco Renaissance poets, especially Duncan; and Olson and Creeley).

Group enactment of “location” as dialogue, and the writing of discursive prose on poetry beyond an academic frame—historically—have been initiating premises, even goals, for many poetics group formations. We knew group enactment was

¹ *hole* has become a chapbook series—Alan Davies, *Sei Shonagon* (1996); Clint Burnham, *Pandemonia* (1996, o.p.); Deanna Ferguson, *ddilemma* (1997); Ammiel Alcalay, *A Masque in the Form of a Cento* (2000); Jeff Derksen, *But Could I Make a Living From It* (2000); Jackson Mac Low, *Struggle Through* (2000)—available at 2664 William St., Vancouver, V5K 2Y5.

² Rob Manery's input and help has been invaluable to this essay, which is my reading of our collaborative project, *ewg/hole*.

³ These included musician, poet, performance artist, Scott Moodie, frequently, and cultural critic, theorist, Jody Berland, infrequently—among others.

possible in even the '80s because of *Writing/Talks* (Perelman, ed.), *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* (Andrews/Bernstein, eds.), and *Total Syntax* (Watten), published in the year of Orwell, 1984. (I will indirectly address below the talismanic quality these US texts and contexts had specifically for us, in terms of "second-order commodification.") Rob came to know of these texts through his friendship with Bob Hogg at Carleton University, I from Fredric Jameson in *New Left Review* (his now notorious flagship essay on the "cultural logic" of "late" capitalism). We didn't realize that Vancouver's legacy of group-enacted poetics was alive just then, incorporating the names these same texts catalogued, into their own context, at Kootenay School of Writing. In contrast, closer to home, Toronto's "in-my-street surrealism" did not compel us. Perhaps we didn't want reminders of essence of alienated WASP individualism, turned nihilistic, which is what the radical Quebec or French traditions seemed to have become in their hands. "ewg" was loosely modelled on the ideas of the "Toronto Research Group" and of "OPOYAZ". We knew hardly anything about TRG, except for some essays published in *Open Letter*. I had read about OPOYAZ in recent accounts of Russian Formalists. What excited us both was the fantasy that an open-ended "group" might be constituted by individuals practicing and/or talking about poetry from many points of view—scientific, political, etc.

The kind of talk we wanted to generate aimed to intersect innovative form with cultural critique and theory. We wanted to generate talk from within a site that was independent of institutional filiations (the universities, predominantly) and yet was also independent of ideological exigencies to positively value "the local" within a poetics of regionalism or place. Our first Canada Council-funded event was inviting Steve McCaffery to read and be interviewed in 1986. Subsequently ewg produced well over one hundred events at artist-run centres, the municipal arts gallery and library, and Chris Swail's Manx Pub, with poets invited from other parts of Canada (by 1996, mostly Vancouver—mostly KSW—and Toronto), the US (mostly "Language" poets, mostly from New York State, some from California), the UK (Tom Raworth, Maggie O'Sullivan, Aaron Williamson), as well as Ottawa itself (e.g., Hogg's week-long workshop on Olson's *Special View of History*). Audience size ranged from upwards of 45, to none (strangely, for a bilingual town, Quebec poets did not draw crowds).

Site-as-dialogue really began with our friendship—and that's where, in Ottawa, site-as-dialogue remained most of the time, contrary to our wishes. It was out of a somewhat desperate, pathetic sense of unaccountable loss that I postered the town announcing ewg's first meeting to discuss language-centred and other 20th-century writings, in 1986. I met Rob Manery at that first meeting (remembering him from a previous event because of what he wore for it, a black beret. He was gingerly reading *Piers Plowman* in a Penguin classics edition, sitting by himself in an empty gallery of opened stacking chairs, waiting for the event to start. Watching Rob was, to me, better, and more memorable than the event itself.) Rob closed ewg down nine years later, leaving it and Ottawa (I left in '94); from the beginning, the imaginary community wouldn't have

continued for much longer than a month, without Rob. Arguably, the minimal unit of "community" is two. That's what we (somewhat homogeneously) had. Viva homosocial bonding.⁴ We were profoundly struck by Steve McCaffery's essay collection, *North of Intention* (published 1987); by *Writing* magazine—then run by an editorial collective—which we discovered in 1987; and by any essays or poetry of KSW members, whenever found (*Raddle Moon, C Magazine*). Our connection to KSW really began with inviting, on McCaffery's suggestion, Colin Browne to read. Browne performed with musician Martin Gotfrit their intermedia work, *Ground Water*, in 1987, then returned to Ottawa on a second invitation the next year to read from *Abraham*, present a Transparency Machine event (on Stein), and attend the premiere screening of his first feature-length film. It was in an interview with Browne that he suggested someone could start a magazine.⁵

Our first issue scrutinized the practices, and construct, of "contemporary Canadian poetry magazines," in editors' own words. We asked over sixty Canadian English-language poetry magazines (i.e., all we could find addresses for), "What is the poetics that informs your editorial policy?" We were addressing those who either controlled or were affiliated with means of periodical production (while realizing they were not necessarily poets). Our intent was to "translate editorial policy into discourse on poetics." We wanted to know what kind of poetics and historical thinking was consciously motivating editorial decisions, regardless of what we thought of the poetry they were publishing. We also wanted to know the automatic pilot, so to speak, and alibis it used, in the machinery of poetry magazine publishing. To what extent was the journal in question a readerly induction into the Canadian Stall of Time, instead of hockey's Hall of Fame? We published all responses received, excepting those evidently composed from a government funding application or publicity flyer. The other extreme—than bureaucratic rhetoric of application or flyer—was captured in the boast, "I publish what I like." While probably true, and possibly interesting (either as echo of Steve Biko's "I write as I like," or in identifying poetics with the poetry itself along the lines of "poetry speaks for itself"), it was nonetheless symptomatic, in our view then, of how preconscious the rules of taste actually were—rules we wanted explicitly articulated, and challenged.

Grandly, we imagined ourselves addressing poetry "communities" in Vancouver, New York, and San Francisco—although, it was not the cities attracting us, but a modelling of social discourses (political, cultural, economic) in which poetry

⁴ A reactionary statement—if one does not read into it the intended irony. For no pairing is "freely" chosen in the peculiarly fraught trials of mutual recognition and tests of exchange through which one discovers the poetry-world beyond its façade of publicized prize names and educational anthologies. It is nevertheless true that such pairings are a common literary phenomenon, and historically have tended, in the most celebrated male examples, to reinforce identity over difference (Michael Davidson writes of this with respect to the '50s San Francisco scene).

⁵ See my interview in *The Carleton Literary Review* for 1988; edited at that time by Rob Manery.

became the prime motive force for all of it. Again, it was specifically not the style or thinking of a single poet or poetry group we wanted to emulate—say, Language writers—so much as a modelling of social discourses, on our own terms, where outcomes would be unknowns, and the conditions enabling outcomes, self-caused. The modelling we most admired seemed capable of producing a shared reading horizon among writing individuals. This we thought might pop our respective orbits, releasing that photon of social energy we felt was necessary for writing to begin to find a way beyond an otherwise private rotating blank.⁶

In one sense, “modelling” was time-honoured poetic communizing. In another, we were interested in structuring what might be called live proceduralisms. ewg’s so-called Transparency Machine series would invite a poet to present her poetry in a context of other texts and images distributed as a package in advance and then projected by means of overhead projector for the poet’s informal talk about them. Michael Gottlieb’s poetry in *hole* 4 appears alongside collages presented during his Transparency Machine event (see fig. 1). He made the collages from materials found on New York City streets; they are the found basis of his poems, and they were left out of the poetry book that subsequently collected the poems. While not published in *hole*, newsletter-format packages of texts from the Transparency Machine series provide interesting documentation by Dorothy Lusk, Erin Mouré, Melanie Neilson, Tom Raworth, Fred Wah, McCaffery, Jed Rasula, and myself, among others.

It is possible, for what it’s worth, that *hole* was the first exclusively “language-centred” magazine east of *East of Main* (Vancouver, 1989), purposefully negotiating an expanded value for the term “language poetry” as primary writing.⁷ To our thinking, we combined Steve McCaffery’s sense of “Language Writing” with Jackson Mac Low’s description of a “language-centered” analysis and practice of poetry (we found his essay in *In the American Tree*), to arrive at the politicized word-as-such, localized through poetic activity. We persisted in homologizing the political with the aesthetic as a poetic practice. The paragram was of interest to us for what it might disclose of the social word.

Paragram as gateway to language became important to the proofreader of *hole*’s first issue and reviewer of *The Black Debt*, Christian Bök. But I think there was a split in Canada on how to read McCaffery’s poetry and theoretical statements. We favoured what we then thought of as the Vancouver reading, and emphasized the political-

⁶ Today, with the widespread use of poetry listserves, the situation might actually be reversed. Contrary to what I imagined on hearing about poetry listserves, and my excitement, my experience of them is that they sometimes enhance, if not actually produce, the sense of a private, rotating blank—nevertheless, a “blank” of poetic discourse, rather than the blank of “silence.”

⁷ Perhaps our one eastern counterpart was *Rampike*, which, in contrast to us, seemed to be a well-established (-funded, -aged) wider aesthetic forum, unmistakably more all-round ambitious as a periodical, with cyclic regularity. We thought our ideological and symbolic differences from *Rampike* were self-evident in our title, *hole* (a name which, incidentally, predated, like a lot of poetry names do, the rock band with similar name).

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aesthetic axis of McCaffery's writings, his brave homologies, and performance work. In contrast, Toronto, to where Christian moved, emphasized McCaffery's "pure" word and sound, as if in spite of his social word (as if they were not the same). The same poetic value of purity which generally pervades the first-wave reception of bp Nichol seems now, ironically, transferred to McCaffery. I think in a certain way, Vancouver and Toronto communities still continue to split the good maple that way.

Using "language-centred" required facing in the direction of where this aging term was already going according to those with claims on it at the outset of the '90s. Our second issue includes Kit Robinson's "Dayparts." His line, "the prospect / of a simple, straightforward / communication," seemed to us to profile the spectre recently come *from within* this writing community to haunt the various poetries subsumed under its "language" rubric. Such a prospect, of "straightforward / communication," had been most complexly argued by Alan Davies since the mid '80s. Davies was, I think, in large measure responding to a condition of poetic discourse—its "second-order commodification" I'll awkwardly call it.⁸ —that had historically inflected our magazine's moment and trajectory from the start.

Part 24 of "Dayparts," from *hole 2* (p. 19):

After the difficulties
or correct spelling, serial
murder, and extravagant
gestures inappropriate to
any context, the prospect
of a simple, straightforward
communication possesses
a disarming appeal.
That flight, however,
is booked, and we are
forced to go by ground,
wending as we make
up our way. In this
way, we actually discover
more to say, although half
of it gets lost in translation.
Finding places to stop
and rest can be
the best achievement of

⁸ The term sec.-o c. is modified from Barthes's 1957 theory of the ideology of myth as a second-order semiotic system.

an ordinary day—
an occasion fit
to be tied up
by a redoubling
of every effort
until the moment spills over
and it's time to get back
to luck. Late arrivals form
the basis of a new
century, part figment, part
chill, a situation no one
could have predicted.

The apparently self-evidently damning title of the language-centred magazine, *The Difficulties* (ed. Tom Beckett), Bernstein's poetic device of the spelling error, serial poem as "murdering" sequential lyric—Robinson's opening lines playfully conjure a list of criticisms of what very loosely they invoke as a metalanguage of "extravagant / gestures inappropriate to / any context"—i.e., the metalanguage "Language Writing"—in order to oppose it to the redeemer, "straightforward / communication." I think an urgent need to address the problem and prospect of direct address, of straightforward communication, propelled Davies' post Signage (1987) critique of language-centredness as much as it initially propelled Barrett Watten's (e.g.) language-centred writing in the '70s through to his late '80s poem "Direct Address." To explain why would digress from my immediate point here, however—that Robinson's text discloses where a significant difference lies between the popular criticisms of language-centred writing Davies seems to confirm (but does not, I'd argue) and Watten. The shared urgency for (the seeming impossibility of?) direct address is socially apprehended and situated in Robinson's lines, in a way that it is not in the popular critique of language-centred writing's various poetic and theoretical responses to the problem of direct address (responses that invoke a variety of mediating concepts—ideology, materialism, etc.). Straightforward communication is not available for all, Robinson says in these lines, insofar as it is something—a technology—one must buy. While I can't go into Davies' own critique at length, I think its gist is that "straightforward communication" is not mediated by technology; it is a pure affect, experienced in words, of unmediated addressor-addressee contact. But, for Robinson, "That flight ... / is booked, and we are / forced to go by ground...." And insofar as "straightforward communication" is something one buys into, Robinson poses an alternative ideal; admittedly "part figment, part / chill," it is, nevertheless (the poem's claim goes) "the basis of a new / century." That new basis obtains agency in the poem as "late arrivals" lingering in "places to stop / and rest," and in the figure of local production, addressed as "the best achievement of / an ordinary day." Robinson's poem circuitously anchors for his reader a sense of social space that we prized in the

discourse modelling we thought was taking place under the name of Language Writing, social space locally carved out of corporate flux and state devolution in the everyday, “although half / of it gets lost in translation.” Which is to say that, theoretically at least (leaving the ground for a moment, as if that flight were not booked), what made us stick to (although eventually feel deeply stuck in) Ottawa was the self-justifying conviction—we felt it as ideologically “real” at the time (falsely, I sometimes think, now)—that global capitalism rendered redundant modernist yearnings to locate oneself in a “cultural capital” or centre in order to come to terms with its processes.

hole 2 also includes an interview with David Bromige.⁹ In an extended footnote written for the issue, Bromige elaborates on how Language Poetry (“LP”) critically addressed a contradiction in Projective Verse (“PV”) between subjective and objective expression:

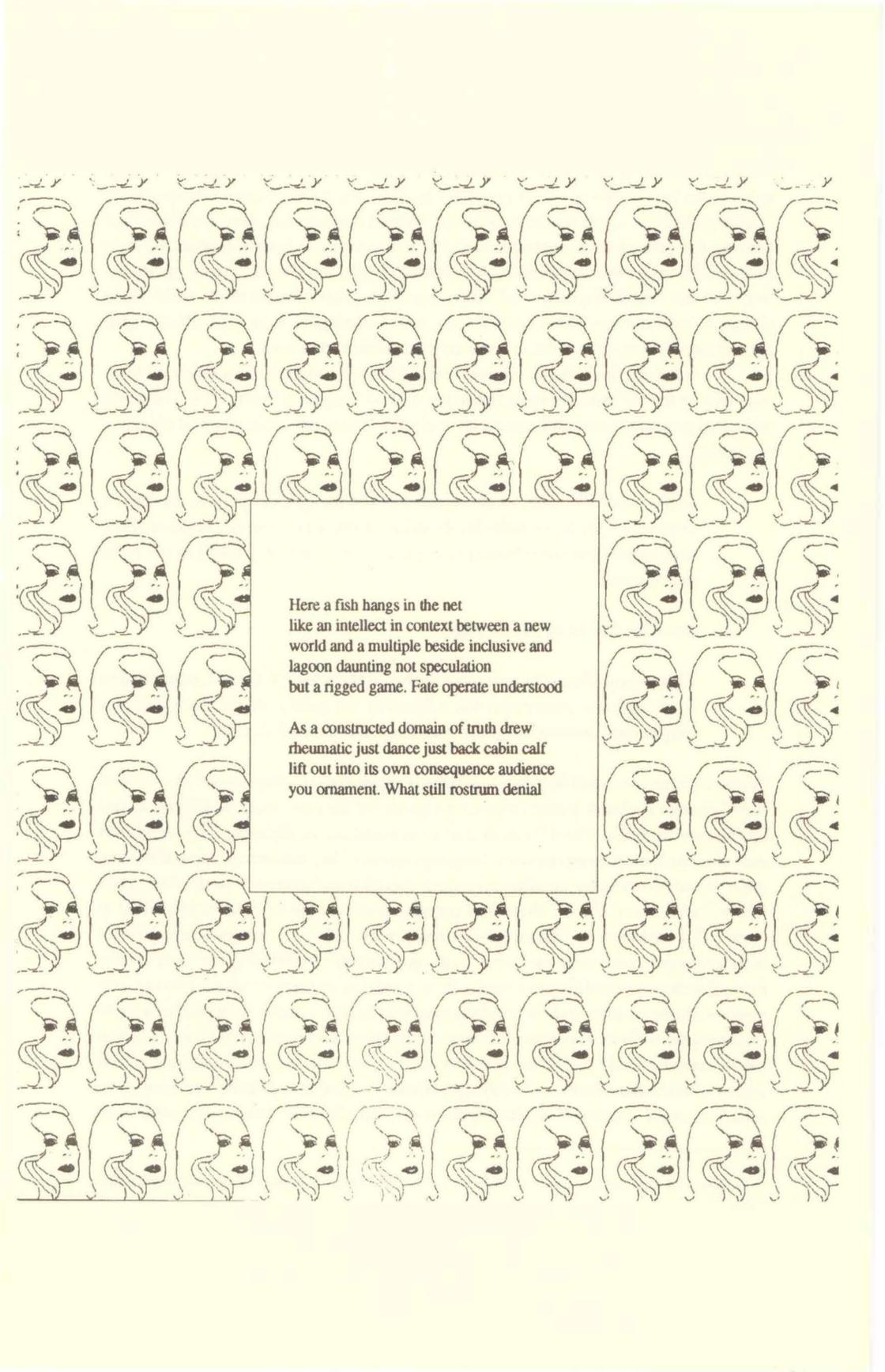
[T]he fetish PV made of the utterance—of the specific person, the poet’s, utterance—led to a similar fetishization of the written word, because of the need to preserve the utterance (and the utterer) in writing. It had to be on the page just so.

Just so, it had to be on the page.

This [was a] liberating turn-around [by LP; that] left PV behind, enmeshed in its struggles to perpetuate the subjective, the person of the poet, and this despite early successes and the best of intentions. (*hole 2*, p. 51)

“Second-order commodification” is a certain condition of reception of the cultural “new” (always a relative matter) where emergence (of the new “from here”) and arrival (of the new “from elsewhere”) intersect in a contested site-as-dialogue. That condition existed for us in employing the term “language-centred.” Second-order commodification refers to a myth-inducing condition in which there is simultaneously (a) the emergence (“here”) and arrival (from “there”) of primary writing only later to be identified as “new” (for instance, as “language-centred”) with (b) the emergence/arrival of a metalanguage (in this case, the term “language-centred”) identifying the work as new. Second-order commodification results from a cultural context in which primary language without a name, and its metalanguage that brings a name, temporally co-exist. One reception-effect of second-order commodification is to have poetics stances appear clearly staked, already amplified, distinctly audible, a critical lexicon already worked out and available to draw from in identifying aesthetic tendencies in possibly opposing, even reductive, ways. Determining the direction in which the term “language-centred” was

⁹ Incidentally, this issue contains uncollected work by Daniel Davidson (from his manuscript, “Shine”).



Here a fish hangs in the net
like an intellect in context between a new
world and a multiple beside inclusive and
lagoon daunting not speculation
but a rigged game. Fate operate understood

As a constructed domain of truth drew
rheumatic just dance just back cabin calf
lift out into its own consequence audience
you ornament. What still rostrum denial

headed required that we realize how effects of the processes of second-order commodification—which we felt inflected our belated context—could be engaged (as in Bromige’s narrative of formal succession) and critiqued.

When a poet knows second-order commodification to be an “inevitable” condition of her work’s reception, causal chains can be set up, or broken. One such poetic knowledge of second-order commodification takes the form of resolute intransigence towards the “received standard,” whether that might be represented by KSW specifically (its own standard), or more broadly by the ideology of discursive contextualizing itself. Deanna Ferguson’s “Received Standard,” in *hole 4*, is a good example (for the poem, please see fig. 2). These lines desire to “lift out into its own consequence” the field of reception itself, in which the reader/writer “hangs” like an “ornament” and, by dispelling second-order commodification, return with the reader to a primary condition of engagement with verbal process. The reader is beckoned to exempt herself by deliberately recontextualizing the processes of second-order commodification as a “rigged game” ornamentalizing the importance of context—and critique—itsself.

Lisa Robertson’s poem from *hole 6* demonstrates another order of poetic knowledge of second-order commodification, one that is opposite to resolute intransigence: resolute participation:

My premise is simple. All method is a
demonstration of history. All change
is substitution. “Yesterday was a
new day.”

“We are enraptured,” the stage-direction says.

And why should we not live near the beauti-
ful streets, have and like the meaning of our
pleasure and its measurement. But let us
leave aside the question of the
material dream, not out of tact, not
from the need to figuratively dim-
inish the little drama of sensitive
expenditure, but in order to get
familiar with the civic minimum.
Longueurs of desperate truancy
name an idea about the “un-
governable” world. Yet here I am not
extending the maudlin phantasy of
limits. Sure, a person will have—at their

own admission—and penultimate
before the marvellous environment—
real material romance. Today I
want to address those of terrifying
enthusiasms and meaning's ordinary
jobs—those for whom both origins and
limits repeatedly fail. Oh ardent
transgressors whose walls are also my own;
what country, good friends, what forest, what
language, is not now smothered by our sobs?

Or I could pose the matter otherwise.
What are the terms of our complicity?
We cannot definitely know, for
reasons of faulty appearance and mis-
managed debt. Our apparent sameness
leads elsewhere than to cause or origin. . . .
(from "The Device," *hole 6*, pp. 1-2)

Here the collective pronoun "we" is at once fiercely singular and empowered in a sort of garishly triumphalist way to resolutely participate in, if only to play with and differ from, history's method acting. Resolute participation is a necessary response because second-order commodification is always already a condition of the discourse-field, however primary the claim for writing may be (there is commodification at all levels of language). Ferguson's resolute intransigence occurs within the domain of poetry as a claim for poetry's exemptability from discursive contextualizings, while Robertson's resolute participation brings poetry and prose together, stylizing that which is not poetry as material for poetry.

Contrary to both positions, Alan Davies gestures towards a nonverbal outside of poetry—from within poetry. Distinguishing primary writing from second-order commodification misses his point, which I think asserts, in an almost lyrically nostalgic mode, referent as absent referent. To what "level" of language does a word such as "life" belong, when used in Davies's poem? This question, its possible answers, creates a dialogue within poetry and its discourse genre, and is therefore beside Davies's point. Against poetry ("poesie"), Davies paradoxically uses poetry in an aesthetic manoeuvre to gesture beyond its own rules, towards the limits of dialogue. In "Life," Davies determines to mark poetry's limits, inscribing those limits within poetry itself, thereby displaying what are for Davies the aesthetic's best poetic resources:

Some of my friends are contented to plot the little movements of their minds. They think poetry is an art.

.....
If somebody has written some poems and you read some of them you can tell pretty much right away whether they concentrated on the poesis or the life.

.....
There is something pathological about the usual attachments towards words but writing at its best has to do with doing without them. (*hole 3*, pp. 40-2)

To what does "them" refer? Is it that "writing at its best has to do with doing without" the "usual attachments towards words," or in a zen-like paradox, doing without words themselves? If the former is true, then Davies pre- and post-*Signage* work remains connected by a modernist impulse to "free" words of their everyday affects, their "usual" and "pathological" attachments. If the latter, then Davies pushes towards internal limits of dialogue within writing, limits that establish zen-like balance between art and life, and maintain the psychic health. The larger implication of these lines (and also of his post-*Signage* work), for Davies, I think, is that some of the poet-friends follow a modernist impulse to make language new at the expense of the goal of "healthful living." I think Rob Manery's own poetry is very much interested in pursuits of similar ratios and "balances" between art and life.

Resolute intransigence; resolute participation; and in Davies' case, the resolute itself—squared. These are three of many theoretical routes from *hole's* poetry, image-texts, reviews and essays.

The idea of talk, site-as-dialogue, was central to ewg. ewg predates the formation of the Buffalo poetics listserve. I doubt we would have begun this imaginary group, for the reasons we did (to immerse ourselves, as speakers, writers, within contemporary poetry), if poetry listserves were already in place, and if we had access to them (computers, modems). What is talk, finally? Nick Piombino recently writes this ambiguous assessment:

Perhaps an aspect of the astonishing success rate of groups like Alcoholics Anonymous is that such a group allows for an ongoing possibility of talking among people, with an unusual degree of freedom, for very long periods of time—no doubt in some cases, for a life-time. Artistic uses of talking do not afford for this dailyness and gradualness, particularly poetry. Our culture will no longer support this for poets. (*Theoretical Objects*, p. 123)

Is this the reason why the ewgroup remained more imaginary than it intended, because "our culture" no longer supports the idea on which it was fundamentally based—poets'

talk?¹⁰ Conspiracy theory, or leisure wear? But what is it exactly that “our culture” no longer supports: artistic/literary, or ordinary/usual uses of talking by poets? In what sense to understand “support”?¹¹ Is Piombino drawing a possibly insulting analogy from poetry-group to AA-group, or drawing a possibly flattering one to transindividual values for artistic *and* nonartistic uses of talking “through” societal pathologies? Either way he writes: “Our culture will no longer support this for poets.”

But this fact is itself not only poetry’s symptom. If that were the case, the symptom would remain private—an individual’s somewhat desperate, pathetic sense of unaccountable loss, mine, for example, driven to poster town, announcing “ewg.” Rather, it’s the culture’s symptom (that poetry articulates). There, was Rob (he lost the beret pretty quick). It’s “The Sustained Siege,” as Michael Gottlieb’s poem title has it, a phrase he reiterates in the first line:

The sustained siege.

The great teeth and
the mighty jaws.

Pretending
that these tails are not
lashing,
that these blows
are not coming fast and low,
that these are not
our vitals, so stapped.

¹⁰ But if “our culture” did support such talk, what would one get—“table talk,” as the genre was called, of the so-called literary greats, in “timeless conversation”? For Charles Bernstein, the “freedom” of the innovative poetry world lies in its having evaded the commodifying and reifying attentions of “official culture.” “*It is a measure of its significance that it is ignored,*” he emphasizes (see his introduction to *Close Listening*). The *PhillyTalks* series of poets’ dialogues I’ve curated since 1997 (www.english.upenn.edu/~wh/phillytalks) offers a different order of engagement with poetry than either the Buffalo poetics listserve—with its implicitly broad democratic hope for dialogue and community—or the “Great Conversation”, as Barrett Watten calls it, between the elected few. *PhillyTalks* attempts to offer *more* than the poetics listserve, by focused dialogue (it *wants* to be great conversation, but open to as many as possible), in a context of way *fewer* pretenses of “literary” conversation (e.g. of the latter, the imminent conversation, as of this writing, between Anselm Hollo and Lisa Jarnot at \$25 a ticket—one wonders how venue and audience will negatively affect their actual discussion) by providing a newsletter of dialogue and poetry available in advance of the talk, by ensuring the event is free, and by having it occur at a volunteer-run site at arms-length from funders.

¹¹ *hole* had little financial support from arts funding bodies; we thought the work of applications and of civic duties the funding entailed would lead us wide of our primary motivations for starting the magazine.

Like a fervid gift
for deflection.

“If it’s not yours
perforce
it’s mine,
even if I never use it.”

“I can’t carry you anymore,
you don’t weigh enough.”

Orphaned all,

a descending series
we are obliged to appraise,
like a kind of metrical test,

the dreadfully unkeyed
mirrored phrasings,
the anguished, somnolent
draughts
streaming back empty,
the smoking cliffs,
the empty loges,
the halls where the insults
were first tossed.

All of us entirely under-
rehearsed.

The atrophied, antic,
strophes.

The arbitrarily endurable,
the purblind tolling,
the graven, wan,
detuned verging.

These gravid,
“posthumously born.”

The giving up
—that makes it official.

The suspicious rising
and the cheered fall.

The stingy padding,
the lack of anything we
would recognize
as insulation.

Jinking left and right,
availing not.

“I can’t shake them.”

Sunk to the axles.

“This time
it’s not different.”
(*Gorgeous Plunge*, p. 35)

Appendix / *hole* bibliography

hole 1: art, Marie-Jeanne Musiol; poetry, Gerald Burns, Peter Ganick, Karen MacCormack, Steve McCaffery, Melanie Neilson, Jena Osman, Hannah Weiner; reviews, Christian Bök, Allison Fillmore; essays, Jeff Derksen; survey, contemporary Canadian poetry magazines.

hole 2 (1990): poetry, David Bromige, Frank Davey, Daniel Davidson, Karen MacCormack, Kit Robinson; David Bromige interview, Louis Cabri; review, Kevin Killian; correspondence, Kevin Killian/Kit Robinson.

hole 3 (1991), poetry/review issue: poetry, Bruce Andrews, Dennis Barone, Alan Davies, Jeff Derksen, Edmond Jabès, Eric Wirth; reviews by Barone, Christian Bök, Davies, Derksen, Wirth.

hole 4 (1993), image/text issue: cover art, Louis Cabri and Rob Manery; poem/collage, Susan B., Charles Bernstein, Ray DiPalma; poetry, Ray DiPalma, Deanna Ferguson, Michael Gottlieb, Jed Rasula; essay, Franklin Bruno.

hole 5 (1995): cover art, Rob Manery; poetry, Bruce Andrews, Clint Burnham, Louis Cabri, Peter Culley, Stacy Doris, Gerry Gilbert, Harryette Mullen, Ted Pearson.

hole 6 (1996), poetics & reviews issue: cover art, Germaine Koh; poetry, Lisa Robertson, Johan de Wit; reviews, Clint Burnham, Nathaniel Dorward, Susan Holbrook, Mike Magoolaghan; essay, Fred Wah.

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