

POETICS AT BUFFALO

Core Faculty

The Poetics Program is composed of five literary artists who make up its core faculty:

Charles Bernstein, David Gray Professor of Poetry and Letters, is the author of *Content's Dream: Essays 1975-1984* and *A Poetics*, as well as many works of poetry, most recently *Rough Trades* and *The Sophist*. He coedited *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* and edited *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*.

Robert Creeley, Director of the Poetics Program, Distinguished Professor, holds the Samuel P. Capen Chair of Poetry and Humanities. His *Collected Poems*, *Collected Essays*, and *Collected Prose* are published by the University of California Press.

Raymond Federman, Distinguished Professor, has written many novels, including *Take It or Leave It*, *Double or Nothing*, and *To Whom It May Concern*. A native of France, Federman has written extensively on "surfiction" and on the work of Samuel Beckett.

Susan Howe, Professor, is the author of *My Emily Dickinson*, as well as a number of studies of early American literature. Her recent collections of poetry include *Europe of Trusts*, *A Bibliography of the King's Book or, Eikon Basilike*, and *Singularities*.

Dennis Tedlock, James H. McNulty Professor, is the translator of *Popol Vuh*, a Mayan book, and of *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians*. He coedited *Alcheringa/Ethnopoetics* and has written numerous studies of oral performances. His latest book is a long poem, *Days from a Dream Almanac*.

Program

The Poetics Program has an interdisciplinary approach to literary, cultural, and textual studies. Our programs include:

•Visiting Writer Residencies. Readings by and seminar visits with both American and foreign poets, fiction writers, critics, theorists, and philosophers. Recent visitors have included Michael Palmer, Robin Blaser, Jerome McGann, Rachel DuPlessis, Lyn Hejinian, Tom Raworth, Nathaniel Mackey, Clark Coolidge, Lorenzo Thomas, Leslie Scalapino, and Jackson Mac Low.

•"Common Place." A meeting ground for discussion and review of poetics and the poetics program with Poetics Program Director Robert Creeley, "Common Place," which meets monthly, provides an informal opportunity for exchanges on range, qualification, definition, and bibliographies.

•State of the Art. A series of lectures and talks by prominent UB faculty in all fields—the sciences, law, medicine, social sciences, arts, and humanities—on the poetics of each discipline as it relates to questions of human knowledge and action.

•Poetry/Rare Books Collection. The Collection has one of North America's most extensive holdings of twentieth century poetry books and manuscripts and continues to acquire archives from innovative contemporary poets. Professor Robert Bertholf, Curator of the Collection, is both a primary advisor to the Poetics Program and an active participant in its programs. Each year, a few graduate students have the opportunity to work in the Collection, placements that are integral to the goals of the Poetics Program.

•Graduate Seminars. The essence of the Poetics Program is the series of interrelated graduate seminars offered by the Core Faculty in such areas as ethnopoetics and native American verbal arts; the European tradition from Mallarmé to present; twentieth century English-language poetry and poetics, with emphasis on the radical modernist approaches and the relation of poetry to the other arts; the American traditions of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century; twentieth century innovative prose, fiction, and surfiction; philosophy, ideology, and literature; and "core poetics"—a history of poetics from the pre-Socratic to the present.

•The Art of Nonfiction Writing. Through a series of prose writing workshops and individual consultations, the Poetics Program provides support for investigating and developing new approaches to critical writing. By emphasizing the importance of the mode and style of all types of writing, the program encourages—and supports—students in writing essays and dissertations in creative, exploratory, dialogic, and self-constructed forms.

•The Poetics of Translation. The passage from one language toward another requires an experimental poetics. The Poetics Program offers courses, readings,

and talks that explore the verbal arts in languages other than English and open the possibility of altering or extending the verbal arts of English itself.

- The Art of Teaching. Through its various offerings, the Poetics Program emphasizes teaching of the arts at the college level, with special emphasis on how to teach innovative works of literary arts to undergraduates.

- Graduate Assistantships are available for a few students to assist in Poetics Program activities, including events, research, and library work.

- Individual Consultation. Core faculty members are available for individual consultation on course selection, oral examinations, dissertation topics, and all aspects of writing and poetics.

- Fellowships. Poetics Program Fellows are funded for up to one academic year to participate in seminars and other program activities, present readings and lectures, and continue with ongoing research and writing. The Poetics Program also welcomes Fulbright and ACLS scholars to spend the term of their fellowships at UB.

Philosophies

While *poetics* suggests a long history of laws of composition, the Poetics Program stresses *poiesis*—the actual making or doing: poetry as process. Every doing carries the potential of something new, emergent, something not already predicated by poetics. Practice overtakes theory, practice changes theory. And not just writing practice, but performance practice, the practice of *sound*.

To write is to produce meaning and not reproduce a pre-existing meaning. To write is to progress and not remain subjected (by habits or reflexes) to the meaning that supposedly precedes language. To write is always first to rewrite, and to rewrite does not mean to revert to a previous form of writing, no more than an anteriority of speech, or of presence, or of meaning. The book creates meaning, and meaning creates life (and not vice versa). Fiction or poetry is never about something, it is something. Writing is not the living repetition of life. The author is that which gives the disquieting language of fiction or poetry its unities and disunities, its knot of coherence and chaos, its insertion into the real. All reading is done haphazardly. Now some people might say the situation (of poetry and fiction) is not very encouraging, but one must reply that it is not meant to encourage those who say that!

Poetics is "an unruly, multisubjective activity"; the reading of poetry, just as the writing of poetry, is beyond the control of any authority. Poetics opens the

space of a page to interplay and contradiction, to many voices, a complexity of words. A poet brushes scraps of themes against the continuum of history. Language surrounds chaos. Poetry brings similitude and representation to configurations waiting from forever to be spoken. A poet is writing from inside the opening where the writing subject disappeared without writing. The search for traces is a polyphony of stories.

Ethnopoetics is not simply the poetics of exotic others but calls attention to the ethnicity—the particularity and nongeneralizability—of all poetic practices. Oral poetry is best thought of as something not older than or prior to or simpler than the written, but as something that goes on coexisting with, and interacting with, the written. Thus, our attention is to both alphabetic and nonalphabetic writing, to codes of the historical past and imaginary codes of a potential present.

Poetics stays grounded in the fact of making, the complex of that which has so made such "it," inside and out, the intimately present (oneself, like they say), else the vastness of all possible dimension. "To measure is all we know..." Such reference proposes world in all its times and places, in determined labors of common body, constructs of passage and echo. "Only the imagination is real..." (As in New England—to work...)

Admission

The Poetics Program is an integral part of the graduate program in English at the University at Buffalo, with special affiliation with the Program in Comparative Literature and the Poetry Collection.

Any graduate student in Arts and Letters at UB can participate in Poetics seminars and special programs. In addition, special one- and two-semester Poetics Fellowships are available for U.S. and foreign poets, critics, scholars, and students who wish to work with the Core Faculty and to do research in the Poetry/Rare Books Collection.

Applicants applying for admission to the Ph.D. program should contact the Director of Graduate Admissions, Department of English, 302 Clemens Hall, SUNY, Buffalo, NY 14260. Applicants applying for admission to the university's one-year M.A.H. Program should write to that program at 305 Clemens Hall.

Requests for information about Poetics Program Fellowships should be made to the Director, Poetics Program, Department of English, 438 Clemens Hall, (716) 636-3810.