a truck comes down the road
by Robyn Gillam & Joe Galbo

If “discourse” (or “language” or “art” or “interpretation”) is to have any real meaning there must be something that is not-discourse, not-language, not-art, not-interpretation. The truck that is coming down the road is fundamentally different from the interpretation “here comes a truck.” To believe otherwise ... is to risk becoming trapped in an implausible and highly artificial form of historical idealism. ... The truck never comes down the road, though we may find ourselves talking endlessly about the ground for the possibility of our knowledge that it is coming.

Allen Megill, Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida

It has often been pointed out to me that I tend to look at the world from a theoretical perspective, rather than one based on history or “fact” (I find it difficult even to write the word).

Daniel Jones, This Magazine, June/July 1991

by the 13th of February 1994 neither discourse, language, art nor interpretation were sufficient to protect Daniel Jones from what they are not. Unable to cope with these absences and what they implied, he took his own life.

Jones was part of the Border/Lines collective for almost two years from 1989-1990, where he distinguished himself as an energetic and meticulous editor. Daniel left Border/Lines, as did so many other similar projects, citing personality and political differences. Although most people who came into contact with him were impressed by his intelligence and energy, they often found him difficult to deal with because of his apparent moodiness and unpredictability. Not all of them realized that Jones’s career as a writer of fiction and poetry, essayist, editor and teacher was his form of resistance to a debilitating manic depressive disorder. Saddest of all, during the final months of his life he pushed away almost all of the people who cared about him and loved him, of which there were many.

We both knew Jones for a long time and saw first hand both the misanthropy and the generosity which were reflected in his writing and his relationships with other people. Jones’s self image as an artist was tied to a deep rooted belief that disfunctionality is equated with artistic creativity, a Romantic notion that has often proved more destructive than beneficial to creative people. Jones’s tragedy reflects not only his own life in Toronto but the tensions inherent in the position of the contemporary cultural worker in the west. The shamanistic role associated with the modern artist reveals the contradiction of living in a society that values spontaneity and personality, but only if it is marginalized from the more utilitarian spheres of society. There is little doubt that economic problems due to the deteriorating position of funding for the arts in Canada added to Jones’s despair, and his illness exacerbated his difficulties as a cultural producer in the post-NAFTA world.

There were many sides to Jones but one of his most important roles was as a catalyst. He was adept at bringing people together and making things happen in the small press scene and other fringe artistic communities in Toronto. He was author of a collection of poetry, The Brave Never Write Poetry (Coach House Press, 1985), and Obsessions, a work of experimental fiction (Mercury Press, 1992). His last work, The People One Knows, is scheduled to come out later this year from Mercury Press. He published extensively in the Toronto small press and, with Robyn Gillam, had his own imprint, Streetcar Editions. He was involved with Piranha and What! magazine, and over the last year he was editor of Paragraph after two years of being Book Reviews Editor. Many of those with whom he was involved, particularly in recent years as his work gained its greatest momentum, were shocked at the sudden cessation of such productive energy.

Jones always found dealing with the real world a difficult and painful engagement. For most of his life he pushed against the limits of what was sayable, and his final act ultimately went beyond art, language or interpretation. When the truck finally came down the road, there was no one there.

Robyn was married to Daniel Jones for eight years. Joe worked with Daniel Jones and knew him for over ten years.