Echoes and Polyphonies:

The Choral Poetics of Dan Beachy-Quick

and

Passage: New Poems

Kate Middleton

PhD Thesis
Western Sydney University

2016
Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

.........................................................
Acknowledgements

This thesis was completed with the generous support of many people.

First and foremost has been the assistance and support of Professor Hazel Smith. Her guidance throughout the process of research and writing has been invaluable: she has always challenged me to think the next step, and the step after. Dr Chris Andrews’s counsel has helped me through every step of this process. Dr Kate Fagan’s sharp observations have made me a better thinker. The questions asked by this panel have never failed to lead me to vital discoveries as I searched for their answers.

Thanks are due to the many colleagues who offered encouragement and love. Chief among these, Fiona Wright, Lindsay Tuggle and Claire Nashar offered thoughtful feedback on my writing. Jessica Wilkinson, Natalie Day, Gretchen Shirm, Toby Fitch, Jen Craig, Elizabeth Allen and Emily Stewart all provided a sounding board at vital moments. Ivor Indyk’s continued support of my creative work has always helped me keep my head above water. Melinda Jewell and Suzanne Gapps have always assisted me in navigating the practical side of this work. Zacha Rosen arrived in time to make the final phase of writing an adventure.

Special thanks to Audra Puchalski, who is the first person I remember mentioning the name “Dan Beachy-Quick” to me. I did not know it at the time, but this conversation altered the course of my life.

None of this work would have been possible without my family.
Contents of Thesis

Abstract

Part One:
Echoes and Polyphonies: The Choral Poetics of Dan Beachy-Quick

Part Two:
Passage: New Poems

Abstract 1

Part One:
Echoes and Polyphonies: The Choral Poetics of Dan Beachy-Quick 3

Part Two:
Passage: New Poems 249
Abstract

Echoes and Polyphonies is a thesis in two parts, consisting of a critical study of the contemporary American poet Dan Beachy-Quick, and a manuscript of new poems, titled “Passage”. Both portions of this thesis explore citational poetics and the multiplicity of the choral voice: as such the critical and creative works exist in conversation in a two-part work of practice-led research, and research-led practice.

The critical thesis posits that throughout his writing Dan Beachy-Quick investigates the nature of lyric and lyric subjectivity, questioning the singularity of the lyric speaker. Beachy-Quick’s poetry, largely published since the turn of the millennium, is concerned with the plural experience of the writer as one who is also a reader. I argue that Beachy-Quick addresses the nature of the lyric voice by linking the lyric speaker to the ancient Greek chorus, reading the written voice as necessarily plural. This thesis demonstrates that Beachy-Quick examines the nature of poetic speech through direct interrogation of echoic literary influence.

Through an examination of Beachy-Quick’s verse, I read the lyric voice as polyphonic in nature and consider the formal hybridities of contemporary American poetics. In doing so I draw on a range of critical approaches while offering close readings of Beachy-Quick’s body of work. Goldsmith’s and Perloff’s writings provide a framework for reading “unoriginality” as part of the plural lyric voice. Carr and Robinson’s Active Romanticism assists my reading of Beachy-Quick’s destabilisation of the lyric voice as a continuation of the major shift in the understanding of literary subjectivity represented by Romanticism. These works assist my demonstration that Beachy-Quick’s poetry participates in what I call an active lyric, a lyric that makes explicit its own polyphonic nature through citational poetics.

I posit that Beachy-Quick’s poetry is exemplary of the way in which a hybrid poetics allows contemporary poets to combine influences from multiple traditions and historical periods in order to both use and at the same time destabilise the lyric voice. As such, I argue that Beachy-Quick’s poetry takes the investigation of the poetic
speaker as its subject to an unusual degree, enabling his poetry to both embody and
directly discuss his own poetic practice as a writer-reader.
Following an introduction that includes a chronological overview of Beachy-Quick’s
career thus far, this thesis takes the shape of an ‘inventory’ that, in thirty interlinked
short essays, examines Beachy-Quick’s use of genre, poetic form, recurrent image,
lyric voice and literary tradition from multiple angles. At the same time that these
essays offer close readings of individual poems, they also offer discussion and
theorisation of contemporary understandings of the lyric voice, experimental lyric
hybridity and the relationship of that hybridity to the literary tradition. This
inventorial approach creates a set of coordinates allowing for a networked reading that
reflects the constellation of approaches and voices Beachy-Quick employs in his
poetry.

This examination of the lyric voice is also central to the book-length manuscript of
my own poems titled “Passage”. These poems share some thematic preoccupations
with Beachy-Quick’s work, such as an interest in literary and historic legacy, ecology
and place; at the same time they also haunt and are haunted by other traditions and
landscapes, exploring lyric inhabitation of time and space. My own creative
preoccupations with animals, travel and exploration, science and science fiction
emerge in both citational and non-citational new work. In these poems, I move
between traditional lyric modes, such as the charm and ekphrasis, into the
fragmentary and echoic lyric voice of the cento and processes of erasure. The
juxtaposition of citational and non-citational forms allows me to emphasise the way
that both “unoriginality” and chorality underpin my own individual poetic sensibility.
This verse proposes both a renewal of and radical departure from received text.
Part One:

*Echoes and Polyphonies: The Choral Poetics of Dan Beachy-Quick*

Kate Middleton
Part One: Table of Contents

A Note on Style and Abbreviations ................................................................. 4
Abstract ........................................................................................................... 5

“Lyric” / (Epigraph) ..................................................................................... 7

Introduction .................................................................................................. 8

Inventory

Almond ............................................................................................................ 39
Ancientness ................................................................................................... 45
Annotation ..................................................................................................... 51
Backwardness ................................................................................................. 58
Charm .............................................................................................................. 64
Child / Ghost ................................................................................................. 70
Chorus ............................................................................................................. 73
Citation ........................................................................................................... 79
Compass ......................................................................................................... 88
Deer ................................................................................................................. 90
Echo .................................................................................................................. 99
Elegy ................................................................................................................. 105
Epigraph / Sub-sub-Librarian ....................................................................... 114
Etymology ....................................................................................................... 118
Hybrid ............................................................................................................ 123
I / I / “I” ......................................................................................................... 131
Impersonality ................................................................................................. 137
Lullaby ............................................................................................................ 144
Lyric ............................................................................................................... 148
Lyric “I” .......................................................................................................... 163
Mouth / Eyes ................................................................................................. 168
Nature / Ecology ............................................................................................ 173
Nest / Silk ....................................................................................................... 181
Page / Desk / Work ......................................................................................... 185
A Note on Style and Abbreviations

Throughout this work I use the following abbreviations for Dan Beachy-Quick’s works when giving in-text citations:

ABC – Apology for the Book of Creatures
BWB – A Brighter Word than Bright
CA – Circle’s Apprentice
ISPS – An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky
NTSB – North True South Bright
TNSP – This Nest, Swift Passerine
WD – A Whaler’s Dictionary
WI – Wonderful Investigations

Single-word book titles—Spell, Mulberry and gentleness—are used in full. Essay titles may be shortened to their first word in accordance with MLA 8th edition.

In accordance with MLA style, I only offer author name and, if necessary, the titles of essays to indicate quotations from electronic resources. Full bibliographic details are available in the works cited.
Lyric / (Epigraph)

—after Dan Beachy-Quick

The whale by the whale’s own light
   The song by song’s own mesh of I
of we: the zoomorph of lion, man
   and gentle coo of lullaby

Voice—I, we—dissects this sea
   and whale carves history from the bone
lions pace the den of sleep
   and explorer’s ship moors upon

the whaler’s coast    Voices torn,
piece, re-sewn    In lion light,
in whale song, in sleep that follows
   lullaby, in wakening of lyric night

song stages history’s long speech
   reads whaler’s voyage, lion’s maw
Opens field of ancient voice
Folds its origami:    Form

— Kate Middleton
**Introduction: Disruptive Passage**

I like how this voice performs itself inside my mouth
This voice everyone speaks inside my mouth as me
As I speak inside their mouths

—“& Co”, Dan Beachy-Quick

(CA 27)

**The Voices of Inventory**

Many voices can come to us in a single voice: a chorus can speak in unison, or its individual voices can dovetail with each other into a single line of verse. The integration of many voices into poetry is as ancient as the form itself: the epic poem, though framed by a single narratorial voice, inherently reflects many speakers; ancient drama explicitly includes the figure of the chorus. Many works of the Western tradition of lyric poetry are implicitly or explicitly part of a conversation, both through their use of apostrophe and lyric address, and through direct and indirect literary allusion. The inclusion of other voices and a different poetic diction is explicitly one of the aims of British Romantic poetry as outlined by Wordsworth in his 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. He states that one aim of volume is to “choose incidents and situations from common life” (7) as the subjects of the poems that instigated British Romanticism, and to relate these subjects in “language really used by men” (7). In making this effort, Wordsworth claimed poetry as a space for multiple levels of diction. A century later, Modernist practice made the Babel of voices deliberately fragmentary, using direct and indirect quotation to build monumental poems. In contemporary poetic practice that disruption of the lyric voice continues: the singular voice of the lyric speaker is often fragmented into polyvocality. Dan Beachy-Quick, the contemporary American poet, is an exemplar of this trend, and draws on multiple poetic traditions in his examination of a poetic diction inclusive of many voices. This thesis consists of two parts: the first is a critical inventory of the poetry of Beachy-Quick; the second is an original manuscript of my own poetry entitled “Passage”.

Dan Beachy-Quick, an American poet born in 1973, has since the 2003 publication of his first book created a substantial body of work, and emerged as a productive figure of critical discourse as well as creative practice within the field of contemporary American poetry. A graduate of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop and a teacher in the MFA program[^1] at Colorado State University at Fort Collins, Colorado, he is both representative of a particular milieu in American poetry (that of the poet ensconced in the MFA system) as well as a figure of resistance to the stereotypes that dominate characterisations of MFA poetries. When a critic such as Marjorie Perloff aligns the MFA system with a “conventional”—or mainstream—poetry (“Poetry on the Brink”) she provides an oversimplified narrative that ignores the institutional home found by poets associated with avant-garde and hybrid poetic practices.

In this introduction I situate Beachy-Quick’s body of work in the context of contemporary American poetry, and briefly map the trajectory of his career since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The exegesis on his work that follows takes the form of an inventory. This consists of thirty essays on elements of his poetry that the reader may combine and recombine to create the overarching argument regarding his body of work. The emergent argument posits that Beachy-Quick is a poet who, in his body of work employs a lyric voice—incorporating citation, annotation and allusion—that explicitly argues for the plurality of the poetic ‘I’. This combinatory approach mimics the hybrid poetics I argue is central to Beachy-Quick’s practice, and also represents a response to his own inventorial work in *The Whaler’s Dictionary* (2008). The creative component of this thesis, a manuscript entitled “Passage”, represents both an evolution of my own poetic practice and a response to Beachy-Quick’s varied approach to the contemporary lyric. I address the form of these two parts of the thesis in greater depth in parts three and four of this introduction.

In examining Dan Beachy-Quick’s body of work, I address the broader, linked questions: “How is Beachy-Quick’s work representative of contemporary American poetry?"
poetic practice?” and “How does Beachy-Quick’s work inform contemporary understanding of the lyric voice?” I focus on two primary concepts to structure my inventory: the first of these is the lyric voice. Lyric is of course a form whose features are highly contested: there may be as many different definitions of lyric as there are practitioners and readers of the form. Nonetheless, because Beachy-Quick identifies as a lyric poet, I consider a grounding of the inventory in lyric, lyric address and lyric forms as crucial. As such, my unfolding of his oeuvre and approach will constitute an examination of what Beachy-Quick understands of the lyric in this moment that has been called elsewhere “post-lyric” (Bar-Nadav) or what I prefer to term, by re-framing the concept of “Active Romanticism” posited by Julie Carr and Jeffrey C. Robinson, “active lyricism”. I argue that Beachy-Quick’s work—both his poetry and prose—may help us navigate the notion of the lyric in the era of conceptual writing in which a poet and critic such as Kenneth Goldsmith argues that any form of text can be reframed as poetry in an act of “uncreative writing”. Beachy-Quick’s recourse to citational strategies demonstrates the way in which we can see such citational strategies as a fundamental component of the lyric.

The concept of citation and citational poetry—text that has been framed as “Unoriginal Genius” (Perloff) or “Uncreative Writing” (Goldsmith)—is critical to this thesis. While the Western poetic tradition stretching back to Ancient Greece is marked by inheritances and allusions, borrowings and reframings, the direct citation of other works accelerates in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Two key modernist texts, T. S. Eliot’s “The Waste Land” and Ezra Pound’s The Cantos, exemplify a trend that continues through to the present moment: rather than stopping at allusion, such works directly import quotations from elsewhere, approximating the work done by collagists in the visual arts. This collage-style poetics informs the work of Beachy-Quick who both uses citation to reinhabit and reanimate single texts, and creates book-length sequences that marry multiple streams of citation into larger works.

These two circles of enquiry, lyric and unoriginality, meet in the figure of the chorus. This thesis argues both that multiple poetic traditions inform the work of

---

2 Here I refer to the translation of visual collage by artists such as Pablo Picasso and Kurt Schwitters, associated with modernist movements such as Cubism and Dada into a poetic analogue; such cross-media translation is discussed in Perloff’s The Futurist Moment (42-79) and Altieri’s The Art of Twentieth-Century American Poetry: Modernism and After (11-51).
Beachy-Quick, and also that Beachy-Quick’s work asks the reader to reconsider the nature of those poetic traditions through a multi-voiced lyric speaker. In his essay “The ‘I’ of Lyric”, Beachy-Quick champions a choral poetry in which the “we speaks as an I” [my italics]. When a critic such as Helen Vendler emphasises the singularity of the lyric voice by defining that voice as not “socially-specified” (3), this formulation seems emblematic of an anonymous singular speaker, stripped of individual identifiers so as to speak with a universal voice; however citational poetry demonstrates that a form of impersonality can likewise be achieved through inclusion of many—contradictory—social markers in the form of the chorus. In citational poetry, which incorporates quoted material as part or whole of the poet’s linguistic material, the poet’s own governing sensibility is evident through the process of selectivity. At the same time the poet’s “voice” is blended such that the first person that speaks is plural. When the lyric voice is considered as choral, that voice is rendered impersonal by the fact of its polyvocality. As such, in making explicit his own influences through citation and annotation, Beachy-Quick is demonstrating the way in which the lyric voice is necessarily choral. This thesis argues that the “singular” sensibility of each poet displayed in the form of the lyric is constructed through the collision and collusion of many voices and sensibilities. These voices represent a kind of haunting. The modes of many-voiced collage and its distillation into the first person “I” are fundamental to the nature of an individual lyric voice, and the poetry of Beachy-Quick demonstrates this fundamental relationship, evident in his poetry from his first collection onwards.

This choral voice likewise informs the poems collected in my own volume “Passage”: the manuscript moves between unified personal narratives, ancient folk forms, allusive works on other texts, and citational poems consisting entirely of the words of others. Rather than separating these different poetic modes into different sections, I have instead opted to interweave these approaches, seeking to demonstrate the interrelatedness of the seemingly singular voicing and the overtly choral. Section four of this introduction considers the interrelation of the exegetical and creative components of this thesis and the impact of Beachy-Quick upon my present creative work.
Beachy-Quick’s first collection appeared in the same moment that editors were beginning to take stock of what a twenty-first American poetry might look like. A poet whose first collection appeared in 2003, Beachy-Quick is of that first group of poets whose careers begins in the new century. Several anthologies appeared in the early 2000s that give context to his work, particularly those edited by Claudia Rankine and Lisa Sewell (*American Poets in the 21st Century: The New Poetics*, 2007), Reginald Shepherd (*Lyric Postmodernisms: An Anthology of Contemporary Innovative Poetries*, 2008) and Cole Swensen and David St John (*American Hybrid: A Norton Anthology of New Poetry*, 2009). All three anthologies emphasise the “combinatory” (Swensen, *American Hybrid* xxii) poetics of twenty-first century poets seeking to draw upon both ‘conventional’ lyric and experimental traditions that had been previously placed at odds within contemporary conversation, fostering what divisive discourse. Recognising the limitations to such division, the new anthology-makers sought both a wider-angle lens through which a broader spectrum of poetry may be viewed, and a space for “third way” poetries (G. White 22). Individual poems by the poets included in these anthologies attempt to negotiate multiple traditions, emphasising lyricism while simultaneously exercising the potentially disruptive practices of experimental writing traditions.

While Beachy-Quick, in this beginning phase of his career, was not included in any of these anthologies, the anthologies are nonetheless indicative of a prevailing mood coalescing within the American poetic community, and they mark the territory and community into which his work fits. Moreover, Beachy-Quick from the start practises a hybrid, combinatory poetics. The grafting work of hybridity is work to which Beachy-Quick continually returns.

Anthologies are important landmarks: an anthology clusters into a conversation, marks out a territory for parallel sympathies emerging into publication, speculates on the present moment, extrapolates on possible futures. *American Poets in the 21st Century, Lyric Postmodernisms,* and *American Hybrid* each stands out for its

---

3 This interest in a “third way” poetics is not restricted to America, though each of these anthologies restricted its scope to America. One analogue can be seen in the publication of *Calyx* (ed. Brennan and Minter), an anthology of contemporary Australian poetry that concentrated on “recombinant” (13) poetics.
observation of the importance not only of the yards gained by avant-garde movements over the previous century, but also for their emphasis on the importance of the lyric form and lyric voice in the poetry of the current moment. Swensen and St John’s anthology could be seen as mapping a genealogy of the “new poetics” Sewell and Rankine posit, in that American Hybrid reaches “back” to poets such as New York School poets John Ashbery and Barbara Guest, and Language poets such as Rae Armantrout and Lyn Hejinian, documentary poets such as Eleni Sikelianos, “elliptical” poets such as C.D. Wright, and poets who have gained a more mainstream readership such as Jorie Graham. While these anthologies restricted themselves to living authors who published into the twenty-first century, most of the poets included made their reputations decades before the beginning of the new century: part of the work of American Hybrid is in reframing the poetries of the preceding decades to lead up to a moment of multiple “lyric postmodernisms”, in the phrase Shepherd applies as the title to his anthology.

This genealogical perspective allows for both the short and long view of hybrid practice to come into focus. In these anthologies, the impulse toward hybridity is located within recent American verse culture, but as Brenda Hillman points out in her essay “Seam Poetics”, “the lyric experimental tradition has been long & inclusive: The Shulamite, Herbert, Vallejo, Celan” (101). There is a longer, international view to consider, in which we may recognise existing experimental-lyric hybridity. When Dan Beachy-Quick, faced with the task of answering Marjorie Perloff’s essay 2012 “Poetry on the Brink”, writes in “The ‘I’ of Lyric”, “I’d like to think backward, atavistically, anciently” he is looking, thinking, “backward” to this same tradition Hillman invokes. At the same time, this thinking “anciently” is never an attempt to deny the contemporary context: rather it is diachronic and multi-geographic. Beachy-Quick recognises that contemporary American practice grows out of and reinvigorates traditions such as the Graeco-Roman and Modern European contexts.

The poetry that results from the renewal of this lyric experimental tradition does not represent a “middle ground”, as Beachy-Quick calls it, but a separate, long-held striving in exploration of what the poet terms “lyric instability”. That “instability” is an essential feature of hybridity. If in the true hybrid the graft of two species—two traditions— “takes”, the space of overlap is also a space of instability: it is the space in which the hybrid is both and neither. With “lyric instability” the poet’s
voice occupies that space of overlap that is also, paradoxically, a gap. The instability oscillates, for instance, between a singular and a collective “I”—between singularity and multiplicity. This oscillation, represented in both form and voicing in the poems, is representative of the poet’s broader intellectual enquiry, which examines consciousness and what it means to speak in the first person.

Hybridity is nothing new: among the earliest human sculptures are those of zoomorphs, in the bodies of which different species combine into the fantastical. The collage techniques that came to such prominence in the work of modernists in both the visual and literary arts—as exemplified in the work of poets such as Eliot and Pound, as well as the beginnings of documentary poetries in works such as Charles Reznikoff’s *Testimony* and William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson*—operate on the principle of juxtaposition. At times these juxtapositions advertise their disparate-ness but at other times they come together to form new kinds of zoomorph. So too, in this present moment, do the “new poetics” of combination operate on this zoomorphic principle.

With this history in mind, we can ask what makes this new focus on the “hybrid” timely. The answer comes as much from what it rejects as from what it includes: in the American context, a combinatory poetics rejects the binaries presented by the previous narrative, the received story of the divisions instigated by the publication of Donald Hall and Robert Pack’s anthology *New Poets of England and America* in 1958 and the publication of Donald Allen’s *The New American Poetry* in 1960. With these anthologies a new era of aesthetic antipathy between “conventional” and “experimental” poetries came into being, and it has been consolidated by more recent labels for divisiveness within the American poetic community, such as the opposition between the “Post-avant” and the “School of Quietude” (G. White 20, 22-24). “Post-avant” and “School of Quietude” are, by and large, new labels for the same set of divisions. New practitioners of combinatory poetics—including Beachy-Quick—wish to redress this overly simplistic narrative.

If anthologies mark out a terrain, and speculate on a potential future “canon”, they are also marked by that which they don’t yet recognise: the work of Dan Beachy-Quick does not appear in *American Poets in the 21st Century, Lyric Postmodernisms* or *American Hybrid*. At the time these editors made their surveys of the scene, Beachy-Quick’s career was still in its very early stages; yet while the anthologies
focussed on more established poets, they seemed to presage the emergence of poets such as Beachy-Quick.

Indeed, in accounting for the process of creating their anthology, St John notes in his introduction to *American Hybrid* that their first inspiration to put together the volume came from their observation that many “younger” poets did not feel constrained by the poetic encampments that the editors had experienced as they developed in their careers. In 2000 Beachy-Quick was a student in the MFA program at Iowa, an institution at which Swensen has taught, and in 2004 his work was included in Reginald Shepherd’s yet more speculative anthology of emerging poets, the *Iowa Anthology of New American Poetries*. It seems likely that he is one of those “younger” poets that Swensen and St John observed as they approached the task of outlining *American Hybrid*. Although they initially considered an anthology that included these younger poets, the editors eventually decided to include only poets who had already published three or more volumes at the time they began collecting work, in 2005; Beachy-Quick’s third collection appeared in 2006.

Since 2007, when the first of these anthologies appeared, Beachy-Quick has emerged as an important voice of the twenty-first century, and a poet whose career has been almost entirely forged within the new millennium. Beachy-Quick’s work attracts and merits attention; more broadly, however, the work allows for consideration of the broader field of contemporary American poetry. While Beachy-Quick’s poetry is very different from other poets who have risen to prominence in the twenty-first century, his extant body of work brings into focus questions surrounding poetic form and poetic voice raised by English and American Romanticism and international Modernist poetries: in particular the individuation of voice emphasised by the Romantics is brought into tension with the resistance to the poetic “I” suggested by Charles Olson’s “lyric interference” (47); this tension becomes a constant presence. In effect, a study of Beachy-Quick’s poetry operates as a two-way mirror: one must consider not only the way existing poetries and poetics have impacted the poet, but also how Beachy-Quick reconfigures what has come before.

_A Brief Overview of Beachy-Quick’s Oeuvre_

While this study draws upon Beachy-Quick’s prose books, chapbooks and
works written in collaboration, I return primarily to his six full-length collections of poetry through the body of my inventory, in many instances returning to particular emblematic poems across multiple entries. The volumes that form the primary focus of my enquiry are: *North True, South Bright* (2003), *Spell* (2004), *Mulberry* (2006), *This Nest, Swift Passerine* (2009), *Circle’s Apprentice* (2011) and *gentleness* (2015). Because this inventory does not proceed in a linear fashion through Beachy-Quick’s works, I offer here an overview of his career, with a particular focus on his poetry. Through his “reworking” (Welch) of the tradition, particularly his engagement with British and American iterations of Romanticism, a poetry emerges that is simultaneously Romantic, modernist, postmodern and post-avant. The modernist, postmodernist and contemporary poetic traditions are constantly present in the invention of his work, but their presence is often a formal echo; meanwhile the subjects he takes up are frequently drawn from the more distant past.

Beachy-Quick’s first collection *North True South Bright* appeared in 2003, and in this first volume the poet’s concerns with citational poetry, lyric voice and the chorus are already apparent. *North True South Bright* is a collection of lyric poems with points of return, both within the volume and borne out in subsequent work, and it ends with an extended sequence, “Daybook”, which takes as its subject the story of Babel. In this debut collection Beachy-Quick is already concerned with American history, as when he draws on historic texts written by Thomas Hariot and Mary Rowlandson, adopting their voices. Elsewhere, he draws on other texts and writers: with the title poem, configured as “Northtrue. Southbright.” (27) he writes “after” the Objectivist poet Lorine Niedecker, while in the poem “Psalm (Traherne)” (41-42) the inspiration is the seventeenth century poet Thomas Traherne. Including rounds, psalms and charms in the collection, Beachy-Quick demonstrates his interest in form, but especially an interest in ritual and folk forms not in regular usage in the twenty-first century. Meanwhile in poems such as the volume’s opening work “North/South Composition” (3-6), the poet explores his relationship with the world around him and produces the first poem within his body of work that has sympathies with the broader field of ecopoetics as outlined by critics and essayists such as Jonathan Bates, Timothy Morton, Jonathan Skinner and Scott Russell Sanders. The extended sequence

---

4 Thomas Hariot’s name is also spelled in many references as “Harriot”; I retain the spelling used by Beachy-Quick in his poems, which is also the spelling that appears on the frontispiece of the original publication of *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*. 

---
of “Daybook” presages his future book-length collections, while the formal returns in the short poems of the book’s first half are later echoed by the cycles of poems in Circle’s Apprentice (2011) and gentleness (2015).

With his second volume, Spell (2004), the poet turns towards a text that will recur in his other writings: Herman Melville’s epic Moby-Dick. Spell enacts a “writing through” that fragments the singular voice of Melville’s narrator into the multiple voices of captain, crew and quarry. Spell is arguably the volume with which the scale of Beachy-Quick’s vision becomes clear. This first “chase” after the whale is an apt follow-up to his uses of non-fictional historic American texts in his first collection, and it is the beginning of his truly working at the scale of the book as well as the individual poem. By revoicing the story through the figures, not only of Ishmael, but also of Ahab, Pip, Starbuck, Queequeg, Moby Dick and the unnamed narrator of this new book, Beachy-Quick reads the first-person narrative of Melville as implicitly choral in nature. Again, this chorality returns implicitly and explicitly within his poetic and critical writings as both subject and mode.

In Mulberry (2006), Beachy-Quick presents a work that braids its points of return. In an opening address “To the Reader” the poet considers his fascination with the mulberry leaf, and its consumption by the silkworm. He writes,

The silkworm’s cocoon—that result of the voracious devouring of the mulberry leaf, and so prevalent on my mind as I wrote the pages that form this book—is spun of a single thread. The worm spins a silken line in its mouth, and weaving its head back and forth, constructs around itself the dwelling from which the worm will emerge winged (ix).

That figure of the silkworm—as well as the single coil of a handmade Chinese pot—are the metaphorical representations of the way he proceeds in this work; again, these images can be seen extending into future work, especially This Nest, Swift Passerine. As in North True South Bright, Beachy-Quick again moves between historical texts (the puritan Samuel Sewell’s journals; the “secret diary” of the early Virginian William Byrd of Westover), contemporary settings (including the museum), the natural world (the volume opens, essentially, in the silkworm’s mouth) and the realm of devotional and mystic texts—he cites writers such as Traherne, Blake, Dickinson,
and Weil as among the influences on the work, as well as the philosophically inclined poets George Oppen and Wallace Stevens. With *Mulberry* Beachy-Quick arrives at a book-length meditation on the juxtapositions that make up a poetic sensibility, just as in *Spell* he produced a book-length meditation on the many voices that constitute a singular voice. The work of *Mulberry* is a ravelling of the coil as much as it is an unravelling.

*This Nest, Swift Passerine* (2009) follows on from the braided text of *Mulberry* and from the poet’s use of quotations drawn from historical, fictional and poetic readings present in his first three volumes by presenting a text that moves between discrete segments of quotation and the poet’s own words. Andrew Wessels describes the process of the work as “tak[ing] the reader into the locus of convergence”: this convergence takes place both between the multiple time periods and techniques the poet employs, and also in the convergence of the poet’s own writing with the texts he cites. The relationship between quotation and new work is, in the individual segments, more a relationship of mirroring than it is of weaving; where previously the poet incorporated cited work into his verse, here he annotates the work he cites separately. By separating the portion of quoted text from his own response to it, Beachy-Quick invites the reader to more clearly see both his own and the quoted texts as responsive to each other—resonant. Again, this is an exploration of the multiplicity present in the solo speaker: the poet unpicks the patchwork of the poetic “I”. As a whole, the book suggests that to unravel a single poem—its echoes, influences and allusions—is to lay bare a large web of encounters.

With *Circle’s Apprentice* (2011) Beachy-Quick returns to a collection of shorter lyric poems for the first time since *North True South Bright*. Sequence and recurrence are still present in the volume: for instance, the book opens with a set of five lullabies, four of which bear only the title, “Lullaby”. As these opening lullabies indicate, with *Circle’s Apprentice*, the poet also returns to his exploration of inherited forms. Alongside the opening lullabies and a number of poems titled, simply, “Poem” (16-18, 19-20, 30) this volume includes the poems “Fragile Elegy” (49-55), “Catalog” (4-46), “Hypothesis / Hymn” (38-39), “Late Pastoral” (36-37), “Chorus” (62) and “Old Song” (21). Each of these poems works through the prism of a form with a particular history. This “hymn” sits alongside the “psalms” of his first collection, the “Late Pastoral” echoes many of the concerns that Beachy-Quick visited in the opening
poem of his first book, “North/South Composition”. The lullabies themselves echo the inclusion of “charms” in North True South Bright. Structurally, the book journeys from childhood through to the afterlife of a cycle of five poems each titled “Tomb Figurine” (77, 78-79, 80, 81, 82-83).

In gentleness (2015) Beachy-Quick again proceeds in a temporal manner, but rather than taking the shorter view of a single lifetime he moves through literary history. The work consists of a series of sequences, some which have also appeared as chapbooks previously. Beginning with “monadism: a proem” (1-6), he proceeds through the classical era with “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (7-19) and “heroisms” (21-33), the early modern period with “puritanisms” (35-45), the Romantic and Transcendental moment with “romanticisms” (65-80) and “overtakelessness” (47-63) and beyond with multiple “modernisms”(81-100). While apparently schematic in his approach, Beachy-Quick shows the way in which distinct periods are remixed, as when William Carlos Williams’s famous “The Red Wheelbarrow” appears, inverted, in “overtakelessness”—a word that appears in Emily Dickinson’s poem “1691”. As a result, even as the volume proceeds chronologically through historical literary movements, the poet demonstrates the simultaneity of influence that predecessors have on the contemporary writer. This movement beyond temporality is reflective of the readerly experience by which a reader does not move chronologically through literature, but rather constantly reconfigures temporality through the juxtaposition of different texts.

It is the combination of the ancient with the lessons learned from contemporary poets that are often considered “experimental” that offers the reader such an original poetic vision: Beachy-Quick’s is a hybrid poetics that takes the long view. The plethora of existing text that Beachy-Quick mines and assimilates into his work demonstrates the degree to which the poet takes reading-as-real-experience—both mental and bodily—as his subject. His is a poetic sensibility defined by breadth of reference as much as it is defined by recurrent images and formal innovation.

While he has produced this body of poetry, Beachy-Quick has also been industrious in both critical and creative prose, and has also collaborated on other

---

5 In his brief essay “As in the Green Trees” Beachy-Quick writes, “To be honest, I no longer know what experimental poetry is. To be more honest, I no longer care. A rhyme is a conceptual thing, just as a ‘tear is an intellectual thing.’ A poem’s formal life is my primary concern, never the same twice” (1). I use the word experimental at times throughout this work as a shorthand to describe one side of the binaries that I believe the work of poets such as Beachy-Quick seeks to break down.
poetic work. In brief, these works include *A Whaler’s Dictionary* (2008), his critical readings of and surrounding *Moby-Dick*; *Wonderful Investigations* (2012), a collection of essays and fairy tales; and *A Brighter Word than Bright* (2013), the poet’s exploration of the poetry of John Keats. All three of these critical works are particularly illuminating when read in conjunction with Beachy-Quick’s own poetry, as they reveal themes that recur in the poet’s own work, as well as his analysis of writerly devices and approaches that underpin his creative work. Reviewing *Wonderful Investigations* for the *LA Review of Books*, Susan Salter Reynolds writes that it is “a book about reading. It offers the kinds of insights into the act that most of us never stop to indulge in”. These insights into the act of reading are the subject of all three of his critical works, but they are also the subject of much of Beachy-Quick’s poetry: *This Nest, Swift Passerine* is the most overt interrogation of readerly interaction with text, but the act of reading has been a subject throughout the poet’s career thus far. More recently, his non-fiction work *A Quiet Book* brings together Beachy-Quick’s reading of the Ancient Greek writers and thinkers with content that dwells upon and within his own life.

Meanwhile, *An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky* (2013), his first novel, also includes brief bursts of poetry, an interwoven fairy tale and a lecture on the ending of *Moby-Dick* that continues over several pages. Here, not only his return to certain themes but also his formal play with the novel form provide points of intersection with the poetry: indeed, on occasion, the prose breaks into verse, or breaks down into verse, as the crucial points of investigation behind the novel are distilled in moments of lyric meditation. *An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky* not only plays with the form of the novel, but also plays with the persona of the author and, by extension, his relationship to the audience. The protagonist is named Daniel; he is a teacher at a small American college; he creates fairy tales and has an abiding interest in the works of Herman Melville. In particular, self-consciousness—and the investigation of the relation between worldly experience and the imaginary—link the novel to Beachy-Quick’s broader output: throughout his body of poetry he interrogates the notion of self, of “I”, and the “wonderful investigations” of his essays extend across all his work. Where the investigation is itself an assay of reality, the imaginal mode of wonder is crucial to such investigation.

His works in collaboration echo these solo efforts: the full-length work
Conversities (2012), written in collaboration with the poet and critic Srikanth Reddy, offers an investigation into the poetic voice, not only through the fusing of two different voices into what becomes a *third* voice, but also as an explicit subject of the poems. Work from Memory (2012), a book written alongside Matthew Goulish in response to Proust’s epic, offers a different vision of collaboration, with Goulish offering prose on the verso side of each spread, and Beachy-Quick writing poetry that appears on the recto. As an extended response to a fictional masterwork, this book sits alongside the poet’s various returns to *Moby-Dick*: in his poetic works on Melville and Proust, Beachy-Quick makes most explicit the fact that his poetry is born from his reading; nonetheless, his allusion to and re-inhabitation of past literature can be seen throughout his work.

Finally, two of his chapbooks offer poetry that has not appeared in his full-length collections. While *Mobius Crowns* (2008) and *Cantos* (2010) offer some of the collaborative work produced with Srikanth Reddy and collected in *Conversities*, and *Overtakelessness* (2010) and *Heroisms* (2011) both appear in full in *gentleness*, *Apology for the Book of Creatures* (2008) and *Shields & Shards & Stitches & Songs* (2015) contain substantial new solo-authored poems for consideration. The fact that the poems in these chapbooks have not yet appeared in full-length collections reflects Beachy-Quick’s vision of the book as a unit of sense, rather than the vessel for a disparate collection of poems. Since *Spell*, both his full-length collections and his chapbooks have consisted of singular projects that fill the space of the pages provided.

With this proliferation of published works appearing in the space of little over a decade, it is timely to take stock of the poet’s literary efforts and impact.

**On Methodology**

The dual nature of this thesis, presenting both new critical and creative work, means that the whole of the work is informed by the pairing of “practice-led research” and “research-led practice” (Smith and Dean). The two parts of this thesis have informed each other as my creative practice led to research questions concerning the lyric, and my critical research led to formal experiments in my creative work. More broadly, the creative practice elucidated in the manuscript “Passage” informed my
choice of the poet Dan Beachy-Quick for critical and conceptual examination as his work represents a recent iteration of that tradition of poetry that is deeply involved with the fact of its textuality and its intertextuality. My own creative output helped isolate the elements of citational poetry, the lyric mode and the emergent chorus as my primary fields of enquiry. Conversely, in examining Beachy-Quick’s own emphasis on the choral voice as the fundamental link between citation and lyric, I have developed the more overtly polyvocalic poems in “Passage”, considering the compression of voices and subjectivity into singular poems as another instance of the choral.

My approach to the thesis is hybrid, as is its form: the work draws on conceptual research on lyric theory—particularly works that consider the historical lyric and its poetics, such as Jonathan Culler’s *Theory of the Lyric* and Gerard Genette’s *The Architext*, and recent socio-historic work that considers attitudes to and ideas about the lyric in the contemporary moment, such as Julie Carr and Jeffrey Robinson’s *Active Romanticism* and Gillian White’s *Lyric Shame*. This thesis proceeds by way of literary criticism, close-reading, historical research, and the recent re-thinking of “institutional Romanticism” (Carr and Robinson xi). This work posits an “active” and continuous Romanticism that folds into it intertextual and ecocritical modes of thinking and is exemplified by much contemporary poetic practice.

The breakdown of the thesis into the shorter entries of an “inventory” means that areas of research are clustered around the areas of poetic inquiry: entries in particular dwell on genre (e.g. lyric, epic, hybrid), poetic form (e.g. charm, lullaby), voice (e.g. lyric ‘I’, chorus, impersonality), technique (e.g citation, annotation), history and the archive (e.g. ancientness and backwardness), and motif (e.g. almond and whale). Each entry includes readings of Beachy-Quick’s poetry; embedded bold text creates “links” to other entries in the inventory. Because the link between lyric, unoriginality and the choral voice form my central concern in this exegesis, lyric theory, conceptual poetic practice and intertextual reading provide my primary framework.

---

6 When considering ecocriticism as it relates to ecopoetics, I am considering both the content (from the consideration of nature, and the removal of the divide between the “human” and the “natural”) and the strategies of poems that formally reflect natural/creaturely processes such as the creation of the nest in *This Nest, Swift Passerine*, or the ‘collaboration’ between mulberry leaf and silkworm to create the silken thread the poet weaves as the poetic line through *Mulberry*. 
Taking Inventory

When Beachy-Quick wrote *The Whaler’s Dictionary* he took up the venture that Ishmael, *Moby-Dick’s* narrator, failed to complete: yet while Ishmael’s dictionary was imagined as an obsessive documentation of the whaling industry, no doubt in line with chapter 32 (“Cetology”) of the novel, which provides an exhaustive anatomisation of the whale, Beachy-Quick has taken a more conceptual approach. For the subjects of his short essays he chooses not just the elements that made the whaling industry so profitable but also entries that consider the poetic, epic and typological facets of Melville’s novel. This conceptual approach has become my own in offering an inventory of Beachy-Quick’s work.

This inventorial mode comes under the broader umbrella of indexing. Astrid Lorange writes of the form of the index that it often functions as a “reader’s first point of contact with a text—… an introduction, glossary, directory, map, or lexicon” (3). All of these functions reflect the role that the first study of a new body of work seeks. Lorange notes, too, that the ways in which we read “with” an index involves a particular set of moves: we “move laterally and variously across a network of affinitive texts” (6). This lateral movement has advantages when mapping a poet such as Beachy-Quick, whose work traverses so much territory in poetics, literary history and philosophy. Through approaching Beachy-Quick’s verse and other writings from multiple angles, a complex portrait of the way these different parts operate to create a whole emerges.

These lateral movements also echo the work of Beachy-Quick’s own *The Whaler’s Dictionary*. In this work the poet’s alphabetically organised short essays provide the links to other essays that touch on similar topics under the heading “See Also”; my approach to showing how the entries interrelate is to indicate these cross-references in boldface. I believe this internal linkage more explicitly highlights the inextricable connections between ideas. A lateral movement between entries to some degree sidesteeps the (oft-times artificial) hierarchisation of the ideas that is involved in the creation of linear argument. The form may be seen as analogous to the “rhizomatic” model exemplified by Deleuze and Guattari (1-28).

In adopting the form of the inventory for a response to Beachy-Quick’s own work I am paying homage to Beachy-Quick himself, but the arrangement of short
essays and aphoristic writings also has its own lineage in critical writings. Among the works in this lineage, one important to Beachy-Quick himself (it is a work that he cites in *The Whaler’s Dictionary*), is Roland Barthes’s *A Lover’s Discourse*. In this book Barthes achieves that which Beachy-Quick also seeks: a form of lyric and lyrical criticism that may be shuffled, reordered. The arguments of both *The Whaler’s Dictionary* and *A Lover’s Discourse* emerge in patterns created by the reader’s own errant mood: nonetheless, though they may appear in differing orders according to how the books are read, the central concerns remain the same. Similarly, in my inventory clusters of inquiry emerge; though multiple itineraries may be mapped, they circle the same routes. The two major thematic spheres that emerge are the work on “unoriginality” in the forms of citational and annotative poetries, and the work on the nature of the lyric with reference to the lyric “I” and lyric forms. These two spheres overlap with the consideration of the dramatic—poetic—chorus.

While Beachy-Quick emphasises the circuitous routes available, and does not expect his reader to proceed straight through the writing, Barthes’s arrangement is instructive on the possibilities of reading alphabetically. His short essays are also configured by the ordering of titles, but Barthes does not map the possible links so that the reader may proceed in a choose-your-own-adventure manner: in *A Lover’s Discourse* the reader follows Barthes in the order he presents his text. The procession through the discourse begins as a fragmentary experience, yet the overarching arguments begin to emerge as the mosaic falls into place. What may be lost in eschewing a linear progression—the straightforward development of argument—is replaced by the fortuity of unexpected resonances occurring between apposite entries. Threads that seem abandoned regain importance through belated recurrence.

In the English translation of *A Lover’s Discourse* the order determined by the alphabetisation of French section titles is retained; if it were rearranged according to the translated titles, new resonances would continue to occur. This form is revelatory: seasoned in reading rational argument advanced in steps, what we discover is that evidences and meditations may fold upon themselves in many patterns but that the central arguments still emerge. The reader finds the through-line, but gains a secondary experience of unexpected juxtapositions that carry with them an equally unexpected investigation of the sympathies between seemingly unlike entries. Beachy-Quick writes in *Circle’s Apprentice*, “when I write I study sameness” (5): the
accidental abutments that occur in this form suggest relationships between the unlike, and they invite the question of where the different may also be read as the “same”. My inventory, while proceeding in the manner of the mosaic exemplified in Beachy-Quick’s and Barthes’s work, nonetheless contains argumentation and analysis in each entry. In addition to the arguments made within each individual entry, the brevity and arrangement of entries allows a broader argument to emerge in a pointillistic manner.

After consideration of the options, I decided to title this work as an “inventory”: like the word “dictionary”, “inventory” is a word that the poet himself has used. In North True South Bright’s poem “Hariot’s Round”, the historical figure to whom Beachy-Quick gives voice Thomas Hariot says, “I am inventory” (18). This inventorial role is double: Hariot defines himself as an inventory as he reflects upon his role as cataloguer of the commodities and people of the New World, but more broadly, the concept of a self, an “I”, also becomes an inventory with these words. Beachy-Quick returns again and again to the haunting of the self with the voices of others: the lyric “I” as a voice emergent from the dramatic chorus is a crucial concept for the writer, and that chorus is often made evident through the act of citation; for this poet, influence is not, as in Bloom’s formulation, an “anxiety”, but a métier. This inventory, then, is an inventory of themes and concerns in Beachy-Quick’s work—but it is also an inventory of the “I” he employs. A lyric “I” is always slightly unstable; this instability in Beachy-Quick’s thinking comes not from singularity, but from the choral multitude the voice contains. This inventory investigates, from “Almond” to “Zero”, many of the constituent parts of that chorus, its recurrent images, its dwelling in time and space. The title “inventory” is also, I believe, the term that most fully reflects the fact that this thesis examines a body of work that is still in the process of being created. The etymological derivation of the word “inventory”, from the Latin invenire (to “come upon” or “discover”), links inventory to invention. This form discovers the extant work while anticipating that future invention.

As a writer who has established his reputation in the twenty-first century, Beachy-Quick has garnered attention through widespread publication of his poems and essays, as well as reviews of his work, but there has as yet been scant scholarly

7 Throughout The Anxiety of Influence, Harold Bloom pits the inspiration of reading precursor poets against the sense of Oedipal struggle the younger poet experiences in resisting influence in order to achieve “originality”. Both recent work on “unoriginality” by Marjorie Perloff in Unoriginal Genius and Kenneth Goldsmith in Uncreative Writing, as well as the example of poets such as Beachy-Quick offer an alternative model in which influence need not be the source of such agonistic “anxieties”.

25
consideration of his work. The decision to focus on the work of a poet in his early-mid career is a speculative act: literary history is yet to judge the impact of Beachy-Quick’s work. I believe that the form of an inventory is especially mindful of this speculation, even as it is anticipatory of future interest in the poet: an inventory allows for a distillation of contemporary discussion through the isolation of important poetic concerns. Through such a process, many entry points are offered that may be fruitful for future study. Many of the core concepts—the lyric voice, the chorus, conceptions of citation, unoriginality and impersonality—provide a window to thinking about contemporary understandings of the lyric poem in the wake of schools and movements such as the Black Mountain poets, Language poetry and conceptual poetry. In addition to the inventory I offer as an appendix an index of poetic themes: this acts as a compass, providing empirical material for future scholars to draw upon, allowing them to easily locate instances of images and subjects within the extant work of Dan Beachy-Quick.

In this inventory, circles of inquiry ripple around the lyric and its relationship to unoriginality. In tracking this relationship, the most frequent guide is Beachy-Quick’s reading as I map its influence on and appearances in his own writing. He is definitively a poet of the library: in his novel An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky his protagonist steals a book from the library, but eventually returns it. This act of possession and eventual return seems emblematic of Beachy-Quick’s writing: after it has been possessed through the act of reading, each book to which he responds is somehow altered when he gives it back in the form of his own work. Within An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky Beachy-Quick gives over several pages to a lecture on Melville’s Moby-Dick, years after he wandered through the Pequod in A Whaler’s Dictionary and Spell. Each of these books is entirely different, though they emerge from the same vessel. With A Brighter Word than Bright the poet reads the poetry and letters of John Keats, and through this reading of Keats an ars poetica of his own emerges, in which words do a “worlding” (BWB 92) work. Keats similarly infuses the work of Wonderful Investigations, though the essays in that collection dwell most especially on Emily Dickinson, Ovid, Thoreau, Emerson and Proust. Beachy-Quick takes up Proust again in his collaborative work, the book written with Matthew Goulish, Work from Memory. In individual poems in North True South Bright and Mulberry he goes back to the narratives of early American history, and to the
meditations of Christian mystics such as Thomas Traherne. In *This Nest, Swift Passerine*, the nest he creates is a nest of quotation. That distillation is the poet’s lyric voice—hybrid, “unoriginal”, choral and yet singular. Beachy-Quick’s intertextual outings are unavoidable, and so my own inventory seeks to fold the poet’s inventory into its pages.

These radiating circles of inquiry into lyric and unoriginality converge within different entries of my inventory: *hybridity* considers voice and genre; *impersonality* and *chorus* the ways in which the lyric “I” draws its power, not from the singularity of that “I”, but from its polyvocality—its status as a voice that reads—or speaks—through. *Sameness* investigates the act of metaphor-making that becomes an ecology of language. The poetic workspaces of the *desk* and the *page* come together as the intertextual space in which reading is assimilated into writing. The entries in this inventory can be sorted into particular groups, particular concerns. The sub-groups broadly fit into itineraries across genre, form, tradition, image, and voice, yet many entries appear in multiple groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Annotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Charm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyric</td>
<td>Citation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song</td>
<td>Echo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whale / Epic</td>
<td>Elegy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epigraph / Sub-sub-librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lullaby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sameness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Song</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditions</th>
<th>Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancientness</td>
<td>Almond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotation</td>
<td>Backwardness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Child / Ghost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>Compass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even as many entries appear in more than one of these broader thematic lists, or sub-itineraries, they reach out to other entries across categories within the whole: the structure may be seen as a version of Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphor of the rhizome (1-28). The horizontal movements of the rhizome are particularly attractive when one considers the way in which, in poetic allusion, the impulse to read poetic tradition through a uni-directional chronology is collapsed as the poem under view invites the reader to simultaneously experience poetic history as a present moment. The rhizomatic model is also attractive for its subterranean echoes: in his essay “Thinking as Burial Practice” Beachy-Quick considers Thoreau’s statement, “My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing”. Taking this image as the model for
thinking—poetic and metaphysical, Beachy-Quick responds that, “thinking is to dig down into the matter itself” and that “One doesn’t gain knowledge; one created in it a hole, and in that hole, one learns how to live”. From within each hole that I dig in this inventory, I move sideways, in a series of subterranean tunnels. This is a structure that models itself on a fundamentally organic set of moves.

Ultimately an inventory—an act of taking stock—acknowledges that the work is ongoing. This inventory is of its moment—there is more to come. Here I offer a snapshot of a still-young career, a brief frozen moment, set against gathering momentum.

**Reviewing the Literature**

Many critical texts that become touchstones throughout my writing on Beachy-Quick have gained that status because of their importance to the poet himself: he is a critical reader as well as a creative one. The two roles are inextricably linked for him, and as such his own works of literary criticism provide a vital lead in examining his poetics. With *A Whaler’s Dictionary* he both uses the form that I adopt and adapt for this thesis, and also examines the links between the concrete elements such a dictionary might be expected to contain, and its conceptual echoes through dwelling within the work of Herman Melville and others. With *Wonderful Investigations* his shorter essays, especially those focussed on Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, provide key material on his attitude toward “nature poetry” as a distinct mode. *A Brighter Word than Bright*, his reading of the work of John Keats, provides the greatest insight into his thinking on the themes of unoriginality and impersonality, and their relationship to the choral voice he exemplifies in his poetry. These works, written in the critical mode, contain examinations of many of the works that appear in his intertextual poetry practice, both as he writes of his own poetic practice and as he dwells upon many of the same texts he cites in his poetry.

Some of the works important to his thinking are the works of poets, and through my contact with Beachy-Quick’s work, these influential texts have also become important to my work: Charles Olson’s *Call Me Ishmael* is a precursor to
Beachy-Quick’s own obsessive work on Moby-Dick. Robert Duncan’s The H.D. Book informs Beachy-Quick’s approach to writing about Keats in A Brighter Word Than Bright. Anne Carson’s Eros the Bittersweet is a resource for Wonderful Investigations and the subject of his essay “What Kind of Monster am I?”, his contribution the collection Ecstatic Lyre edited by Joshua Marie Wilkinson. As such, these works become part of my own study of Beachy-Quick’s writing.

Similarly the poet’s interest in mysticism and philosophy appear repeatedly in his work, and these interests have informed my research and my reading of the lyric “I” as choral and impersonal. Simone Weil’s work illuminates aspects of his poetry because his poetry engages with Weil’s ideas: here I draw on Gravity and Grace as well as the essays in Simone Weil: An Anthology. Her concept of decreation provides one underpinning for my consideration of unoriginality, impersonality and the relationship between them. To these poets and critics I add those thinkers who have further informed my own thinking on lyric and the tradition, from T. S. Eliot to Susan Stewart to Sharon Cameron, as well as more recent statements on poetic practice such as Brenda Hillman’s brief essay “Seam Poetics” and Donald Revell’s The Art of Attention. T. S. Eliot’s landmark essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” remains a crucial reading, not just for its exploration of the broader theme of canon formation but, more particularly, for its examination of the way each poet’s work curates a genealogy that contributes to an “individual” sensibility: I read this essay through the concept of chorality, and argue that the re-ordered canon produced by a new poet re-constitutes that “we” that stands behind the lyric speaker. Both Susan Stewart’s On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection and Gerard Genette’s Paratexts inform my reading of quotation, particularly in the form of the epigraph, as deployed by Beachy-Quick, while Stewart’s work on “lyric possession” (107-143) in Poetry and the Fate of the Senses informs my reading of the lyric voice as a voice of re-inhabitation. Sharon Cameron’s work Lyric Time: Dickinson and the Limits of Genre not only considers the temporality of the lyric poem but also addresses the choral nature of the lyric voice; her book Impersonality: Seven Essays reinforces her discussion of the choral voice with its reading of figures including Emerson, Melville, T. S. Eliot and Simone Weil as seeking anonymity: chorality and anonymity are closely linked in my reading of Beachy-Quick’s work.

In approaching the lyric, I have particularly drawn on the work of Jonathan
Culler (*Theory of the Lyric* and “Apostrophe”), and Gerard Genette (*The Architext*), allowing for an overview of the poetics of lyric writing and a consideration of the way the term “lyric” has shifted in meaning since its beginnings in Ancient Greece. In considering the way “lyric” has been placed in opposition to other poetic schools, I draw upon Gillian White’s work in *Lyric Shame*.

With Beachy-Quick’s urge to think backwards—to “think anciently” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”)—writers from Heraclitus to Aristotle to Keats (in the poetry and the letters) to Emerson (in the collected essays and the diaries) appear and reappear in his thinking, and therefore in my own thinking about him. The poet who “thinks backwards” is also a reader; the reader retracing this ground is a rereader. Recognising the densely intertextual references of Beachy-Quick’s poetry, in this thesis I read the poetry alongside works cited, performing a particular kind of poetic genealogy.

A further circle of influence on Beachy-Quick may be discerned through that little-studied realm of the book-jacket blurb: while these paratexts have a primarily commercial function, they become important markers for a poet insofar as they establish networks of sympathy, genealogies in which Beachy-Quick places himself. Among others, Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian, Devin Johnston, and Cole Swensen have all written signed blurbs for his work. As well as suggesting ways of approaching his work—especially as a new, post-postmodern Romanticism—these poets write more broadly on topics surrounding Beachy-Quick’s own interests, such as Puritan texts and captivity narratives (Howe in *The Birth-mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History*); experimental traditions (Hejinian in *The Language of Inquiry*; Swensen in *Noise that Stays Noise*); and nature (Johnston in *Creaturely and Other Essays*). Their works, both poetic and critical, are also natural entry points for the work of Beachy-Quick.

More recently, the provocations of Marjorie Perloff and Kenneth Goldsmith in their discussion of the experimental tradition and “unoriginality” have created an entry point for taking the “temperature” of contemporary American poetry: they have set an agenda for the discussion of contemporary American poetry that has, in the past decade, become unavoidable to those considering the tradition of experimental poetry in twentieth and twenty-first century America. Perloff’s position at the forefront of academic work on contemporary innovative American poetry, and her recent
championing of the conceptual poetic practice of Goldsmith, have forced many others to become respondents to their argument that conceptual poetry and “uncreative writing” are the frontier of American letters. The provocation inviting response was most evident in the wake of Perloff’s publication of the essay “Poetry on the Brink” in *The Boston Review*—in a follow-up issue, *The Boston Review* invited many poets, including Beachy-Quick, to write in answer to her essay. Meanwhile, as well as providing a window into a particular strain of discourse on contemporary American poetry, Perloff’s *Unoriginal Genius* and Goldsmith’s *Uncreative Writing* provide a genealogy and theorisation of citational writings that I use here in considering Beachy-Quick’s own “unoriginality”.

Likewise, since Beachy-Quick accepts the mantle of “nature poet” (WI 3) and expresses sympathy towards the field of ecopoetry, ecocritical thought also underpins many entries, particularly the writing of Timothy Morton in *The Ecological Thought* and *Ecology without Nature*. Because Beachy-Quick’s poetry acknowledges and then dissolves the boundaries between the human-made world and the so-called “natural” world, Morton’s argument that environmental aesthetics should dispense with the category of “nature” is apt. Ecocritical thought has focussed so much on the influence of the Romantics and Transcendentalists—as in Jonathan Bates’s *Song of the Earth*, which focusses on British Romanticism, and Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*. Buell takes Thoreau’s *Walden* as a touchstone, and reads “environmental perception” (1) through the work of American non-fiction nature writers who have followed in his wake. Similarly, Romanticism and Transcendentalism are crucial to Beachy-Quick’s poetic, and this makes ecocriticism a natural counterpart to reading his work. An “active Romanticism” (Carr and Robinson) has much in common with ecopoetry’s concerns; Beachy-Quick’s active lyricism retains rootedness in the world. Joyelle McSweeney’s *Necropastoral* informs the ways in which contemporary poets translate the Romanticism-based understandings of ecopoetics into different realms. Joshua Corey’s essay “A Long Foreground: Exploring the Postmodern Pastoral”, written in conjunction with his co-editing of *The Arcadia Project* (which includes work by Beachy-Quick) with G. C. Waldrep, provides a window into an ecopoetic purview according to contemporary practitioners.

Meanwhile, individual entries of this inventory draw upon work that more
particularly addresses a single entry: Svetlana Boym’s work *The Future of Nostalgia* provides a lens on “backwardness”; the collection *Charms and Charming in Europe* edited by Jonathan Roper allows me to read Beachy-Quick’s literary charms against the “folk” examples of the form, and Henni Ilomäki’s discussion of the speaker of the charm as a “ritual I” in the essay “The Self of a Charm” links to the lyric speaker and the choral speaker. In considering both the charm and the lullaby I draw on Daniel Tiffany’s *Infidel Poetics* and his conception of these forms as “transactional lyrics”, seeking to enact change through speech; likewise, this work provides me a lens to view the lullaby as a particularised type of charm. In writing on elegy, I draw on Jacques Derrida’s *The Work of Mourning* for his consideration of how we speak of—and to—the dead, and on Robert Pogue Harrison’s *Dominion of the Dead* to read the elegy as a ritualistic, literary “marker” of the burial of our deceased.

I also draw upon the existing body of writing that addresses the work of Dan Beachy-Quick specifically. While these writings appear primarily in the form of interviews with the author and reviews of individual books, they offer brief but insightful comments on the emergent themes and forms of the poet’s work as well as enabling another way for the poet’s voice to enter this work. As the most sustained engagement with Beachy-Quick’s work, Andrew David King’s “A metaphysic of the page, a mode of inquiry called wonder: an interview with Dan Beachy-Quick” for *The Kenyon Review* has been particularly useful in unfolding recurrent concerns in the poet’s output as well as in allowing the poet’s voice the space of commentary within this thesis. Other interviews that provide insight include those by Geoffrey Hilsabeck, Mickey Kenny and Bob King. Among reviews, Timothy Kahl’s “Weaving the Modern Puritan”, and Milton Welch’s “The Care of Poetry”, both on *Mulberry*, Andrew Wessels’s review of *The Nest, Swift Passerine*, and G. C. Waldrep’s “On Dan Beachy-Quick’s ‘Apology for the Book of Creatures’” not only provide careful readings of the work under review, but also seek to consider the developments of the poet’s oeuvre, providing insight into his formal and thematic developments. Jonathan Skinner’s “Nesting: Looking up from ‘sparrow,’ with Dan Beachy-Quick” makes the first suggestion of the usefulness of eco-poetical consideration of Beachy-Quick’s work. In addition to contributing insight to my understanding of the poet’s development, these writings also demonstrate the beginnings of what will no doubt become a broader conversation on the practice and import of his work.
Two Halves / Being Between

My decision to write on Dan Beachy-Quick was driven by a sense of parallel sympathies: in the introduction to Mulberry the poet notes some of his poetic preoccupations—“early American history, Puritan diaries, language philosophy, art history, religious mysticism” (ix). There are other points of return in his work that he doesn’t note here, as they do not appear in the work of Mulberry: whales, and especially, the novel Moby-Dick; the Transcendentalists and their perception of nature; contemporary physics; ancient Greek drama and its chorus. Many of these interests are interests I share; others parallel poetic preoccupations of my own—pantheistic and utopian patterns of thought, literary antecedents, the impact of Romanticism on contemporary poetic practice, the ways in which both ancient mythology and the most recent scientific research inform science fiction. The poems in “Passage” bear out, I hope, a sense of resonance with Beachy-Quick’s work.

Among my own preoccupations as a poet are the subjects of explorers and travellers, the texts they leave behind, and the way those texts fuel the imagination of subsequent readers. My own interest in science encompasses the creaturely and the futuristic: rats and mice should, from their constant presence in the laboratory setting, be among animals those most fully “known” as objects of study. Though they are so exhaustively studied, rats and mice have remained in many ways mysterious to humans: their positions as scientific subjects deliver us knowledge that we do not know how to use or interpret. The fact that rats and mice are “produced” on an industrial scale as laboratory test subjects makes them familiar; it is this familiarity that makes me wish to examine them as poetic subjects, in order to reinhabit their otherness.

Rodents specifically bred for the laboratory are figures of ultimate entrapment—living their lives under constant observation—but they are also figures of wild hope: from the tests performed upon them scientists extrapolate possible futures. Each seemingly successful trial carries just a whiff of the promise of immortality; it is monstrous. At the same time they are figures of distaste to many. As well as being perceived as spreaders of disease during plague outbreaks they are also, in themselves, a type of plague when introduced to foreign environments. On the one
hand we seek to eradicate them where they are invasive species or perceived as carriers of disease; on the other we seek to mass produce them and keep them entrapped for our own benefit.

Meanwhile the whale remains the largest creature to ever inhabit the earth, and despite the vast spaces it occupies and the eco-systems that form around it, it remains a figure of mystery. The miniature and the gigantic, the enclosed laboratory and the open ocean are akin to points on a compass for me: while whales were already, so to speak, on my sonar, it was the ever-looming presence of Melville’s white whale that prompted their reappearance in my poems besides the titular “Passage”.

There are formal resonances too between my work and the work of Beachy-Quick. Like Beachy-Quick I am interested in ancient poetic forms, and in “Passage”, the charm is once again renewed. This intersection is fortuitous: my own interest in the charm arose many years ago when translating Anglo-Saxon texts and was renewed by reading Fiona Sampson’s translations of Romanian charms, which first appeared in Poetry in April 2008. Owen Barfield’s suggestion that what poetry offers its reader is a “felt change of consciousness” (48) feels especially vital when dealing with the charm, a text that would literally, it was originally imagined, act upon the world. Beachy-Quick’s own charms in North True South Bright provided further impetus to study the voice of the form and to create my own examples.

Elsewhere, quotation within the body of the text is a frequent strategy for me. In works such as “Run” and “The Queen’s Ocean”, short extracts from the works of explorers who began to map Australia are quoted more or less intact. In the title poem “Passage”, I follow an Australian—John Franklin, the former governor of Tasmania—as he seeks other undiscovered horizons with the ill-fated Franklin expedition that went in search of the then-rumoured Northwest Passage. Text from the note left behind by the last members of this party before their death is part of the poem. While this is a strategy I have used before in my work, my research into citational poetics and consideration of the choral voice led me further into the use of the words of others: the resultant poems allow me to both offer a reading of the texts from which I draw, and also extract one poetic sensibility—my own—from the words of another.

In this vein, the manuscript deploys the cento frequently. An explicitly citational form with roots in classical literature, my use of this form, in which I stitch
together the words of others, reflects my broader enquiry into echoic, choral poetics. In these poems I have scoured primarily non-fiction texts, and the resultant texts often bear a strange relationship to their original sources. Among these centos the most explicit link to Beachy-Quick exists in the form of a cento whose text is drawn from his *A Whaler’s Dictionary* and itself takes *Moby-Dick* as its subject. These short centos also echo the work Beachy-Quick completes in *This Nest, Swift Passerine*: there he quotes longer segments of text, from sources of many different types, but the effect is that of an emerging sensibility at least partly hewed from the words of others, a patchwork of a poetic “I” demonstrating its own multiplicity. Where Beachy-Quick stitches together his readings over the course of a book, however, the centos of “Passage” act as smaller, individual patchworks, reconfiguring the work of other authors to reveal new works, unimagined by the “original” authors. The patchwork of the two bodies of work, Beachy-Quick’s and my own, occurs on different scales.

Similarly I have made use of erasure in a series of poems, each drawn from an individual chapter in the book *This Unknown Land* by S. P. B. Mais, first published in 1932. Taking the form of a book of local exploration and travel, Mais’s writings are rich in landscape and local lore; he is likewise interested in literary and religious antecedents, and as such the resultant poems, though abstract, include echoes of the traditional poetry he cites, and become saint-haunted. Again, this form finds an echo in Beachy-Quick’s work, albeit one that appeared almost simultaneously with my own experiments: in *Shields & Shards & Stitches & Songs* the poet performs erasure, but it is self-erasure. The “shards” and “stitches” of the title are incomplete, literal echoes of the “shields” he presents as the text gradually disappears before being reborn as a series of new “songs”.

While the work in *Passage* does not perform the same kind of braiding as Beachy-Quick does in his works *Mulberry* and *This Nest, Swift Passerine*, the form of this manuscript nonetheless contains points of return, most explicitly in the form of the poems bearing the title “Watching Science Fiction”. These poems draw on episodes of a single television show that explores both ideas drawn from quantum physics regarding the “multiverse” (a theme Beachy-Quick has picked up in his novel *An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky*) and also questions of memory, identity and the potential multiplicity of selfhood.

While these resonances with Beachy-Quick’s work exist, I have also been
concerned with allowing the manuscript to reflect the continued growth of my own work. Bestiaries and cinematic turns, myth and fairy tale, have appeared in my previous collections. The sense of lingering on the border and pushing into new space—trying to reoccupy the “empty spaces on the map” as genuinely unknown—has also been present in my previous work. The works on rats and whales, the consideration of a recent television series, the explorations of Hansel and Gretel, and the push of explorers into “newfound” territories all represent an evolution of my own poetry.

The arrangement of the manuscript into sections titled “Past”, “Present”, “Future” and “Future” is not indicative of chronology, but instead attempts to show the way time appears to fold on itself again and again in memory and retelling. Tense and time exist in a complicated relationship—made more complicated in the act of reading—and these poems attempt to navigate this fact: just as Beachy-Quick’s work could be read as a larger meditation on the nature of the lyric “I”, this ordering and reordering of potential chronology is my own attempt to consider the nature of lyric time.
Echoes and Polyphonies:

Dan-Beachy-Quick’s Choral Lyric—An Inventory
The poetry of Dan Beachy-Quick is marked by repetition. One form of repetition is Beachy-Quick’s use of recurrent images: these images form a series of overlapping concentric circles that radiate over the course of his work, linking one book to the next. The almond is already a recurrent image in the poet’s first collection *North True South Bright* (2003), so when the nut reappears in *Mulberry* (2006) it becomes not just an architectural feature of that work, but also a link back to the beginnings of the poet’s oeuvre. Through multiple poems almonds figure as an echo, but also appear as a commodity, a figure of the backward glance of nostalgia for home, a metaphorical figure for the eyes, a pleasure that sits in the mouth, and, ultimately, a figure of time—both historical and lyric. In poems that look to the sixteenth, seventeenth and twenty-first centuries, the almond remains a constant, a refrain, as the timeline shifts. An examination of the accumulated meanings the almond develops over the course of multiple poems allows us to see the way Beachy-Quick creates associative meaning through his use of other repeated images.

In an interview Beachy-Quick speaks of figures of repetition, including the refrain. He says:

> The refrain pulls the reader back to a moment already occurring, not a past tense, but an ongoing present, so that within the poem we find an unexpected access to an archaic sense of time, a demonstration of eternal return, and the poem … becomes again a thing concerned with eternity. (A. King)

This notion of refrain is relevant to multiple forms of repetition in Beachy-Quick’s verse, but his focus on the “ongoing present” makes it particularly useful in reading the various almonds that appear and reappear in his work. In his use of the imagistic refrain of almond, the moment already occurring is, though brought once more into the present tense, often a historical moment. The recurrence of almonds links the past

---

8 Beachy-Quick’s phrase “ongoing present” recalls Gertrude Stein’s formulation of the “continuous present” (499, 500, 501) in her essay “Composition as Explanation”, which concerns itself with “time in the composition” (502) and uses repetition to demonstrate the development of this continuous present.
of Thomas Hariot\textsuperscript{9} to the past of Samuel Sewall\textsuperscript{10} to the “now” of Beachy-Quick himself—and each of these moments, past and present, occurs simultaneously within the repeated figure of the nut. With each appearance, almonds carry the echo of their previous appearances, becoming figures of imagistic continuity.

While the recurrent image links multiple historical periods that are the subject of the poems, and multiple points in Beachy-Quick’s work, these almonds always exist in the continuing moment: their taste and texture is always immediate. This “ongoing present” tense is the eternity of Eros, the eternity of lack, the eternity of \textit{eternity}. In \textit{Mulberry}, the last appearance of these nuts occurs in the poet’s own present, when the poet invokes “this sweet almond now/ unsettled/ and true” (“at the window when the wind blows” 45). That “unsettled[ness]” is the very condition of the “ongoing present”. This ongoing present, as enveloped in the image of almonds, is a version of William Blake’s ability to see “a World in a Grain of Sand” (506): such magnitude within the miniature—whether sand or almond—is a quintessential example of the hyperbolic quality Culler sees as central to the \textit{lyric} voice (\textit{Theory of the Lyric} 37-38). Hyperbole contributes to the poem’s status as an event; the magnitude of the image grows with each recurrence.

Just as the final appearance of almonds in \textit{Mulberry} takes place in the present moment, so too does their first appearance in \textit{North True South Bright} when almonds appear in the poem “Unworn”\textsuperscript{11}. The opening stanza of this poem links almonds with the addressee’s eyes; the lines land back in the mouth, transformed into a pear. This movement from eyes to mouth fulfils a trajectory that is frequently performed in Beachy-Quick’s poems:

\begin{quote}
Count me among those almonds your eyes
Count me among those almonds your eyes
Never opened. Your mouth on the floor-fallen pear
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{9} Thomas Hariot (1560-1621) was an early visitor to the then colony of Virginia, and produced as the result of his visit the work \textit{A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia}, an account of the commodities that could be exploited in this new colony, but also significant as an early ethnographic account of the indigenous population. His voyage and report form the basis of two poems entitled “Hariot’s Round” (18-20, 34-36), which appear in \textit{North True South Bright}.

\textsuperscript{10} Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) was a Puritan settler of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, one of the panel of magistrates that acted as judges for the Salem Witch Trials. His \textit{Journals}, begun in 1674 and kept until his death, form the basis of the poem “Record no oiled tongue, diary” (5-6) which appears in Beachy-Quick’s \textit{Mulberry}.

\textsuperscript{11} For further discussion of “Unworn”, see the entry “Repetition”.

40
Never opened your mouth on the floor-fallen pear
Count among those almonds floor-fallen, your eyes
Your mouth on the pear never opened me (NTSB 9)

The “never” of this opening stanza is both a figure of continuous time, and the instantiation of the lack that is fundamental to desire. The sensuous press of almonds in the mouth is matched by the unopened almonds of the eyes. The almond here is not simply the nut, but also the poetic self, another instance of the lyric ‘I’ as Beachy-Quick figures the self as not just speaker, but also as one among many almonds—potential other speakers. The lack of punctuation designates the almonds as both “me” and part of you—“your eyes”; the paratactic construction here creates an imagistic ecology in which addresser and addressee are linked in the microcosms represented by the scattered, “floor-fallen” almonds.

These almonds in “Unworn” are the first almonds to appear in the volume North True South Bright. When, in the voice of Thomas Hariot, almonds appear again in the two poems that each bear the title “Hariot’s Round” (18-20, 34-36) they are already a repetition and a revision. These almonds are now characterised in the voice of Hariot as “oily and sweet” (“Hariot’s Round [I]”, (NTSB 19)—except that in the first poem bearing the title “Hariot’s Round” the nuts Beachy-Quick invokes are walnuts; their unexplained transformation into almonds, further explored below, gains its meaning from the image’s echo with earlier and later poems. The walnuts and almonds of the two iterations of “Hariot’s Round” are, however, linked—arguably made equivalent through the sameness of Beachy-Quick’s description—by the continued return to nuts that are “oily and sweet”.

In “Hariot’s Round [I]”, America—to which Hariot invites would-be English emigrants—is awash with nuts. Beachy-Quick writes, “Full 1/3 of trees/ Are walnut trees; of walnuts there is infinite store” (NTSB 19). Presumably the nuts the historical Hariot encounters are the black walnuts native to the American east coast, recognisable to the visitor through their resemblance to the “English” or “Persian” walnuts of the Eurasian continent. These walnuts are quickly transformed from potential commodity to poetic figures of longing: “To speak of home unravels the tongue:/ Home. The kernel of the bitten nut is oily and sweet” (19). In the mouth resides both the rich promises and sweet pleasures of the New World, and the ache for
the old.

The exact phrase is repeated fifteen pages later, in the second poem bearing the title “Hariot’s Round” when the poet writes:

The kernel of the bitten nut is oily and sweet—
And as my tongue is true, what’s sweet to me is
As like to you. You: I keep you in my mouth
But my mouth is yours. The sweet nut bitten
Is never bit. Is bit and never-bit. Both are true. (NTSB 35)

Here the nut is never named, but from the first appearance of nuts within the two rounds, the reader infers that these are, as in “Hariot’s Round [I]”, once again walnuts. However, in the poem’s final line, the nut is transformed: “The world is// A quantity. Trees are infinite. Almonds are sweet. Most is unknown” (36). This sweetness links the two nuts, replaces one with the other.

The notion that Beachy-Quick transforms the walnut into the almond requires reading Beachy-Quick’s poems alongside Thomas Hariot’s original writing, and assessing the way in which the two writers differ in their approach to “reporting” on the new world. If Hariot is an accountant of commodities in his 1588 Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia, Beachy-Quick’s Hariot is also an accountant of lack. In his report, Hariot lists the resources of America, including the foodstuffs available. Among these he writes of “Oyle: There are two sortes of Walnuttes both holding oyle, but the one farre more plentifull then the other” (12). He also notes the “seuerall kindes of Berries in the forme of Oke akornes” that also “yeelde very good and sweete oyle” (12). In Hariot’s description the “oily and sweet” quality of nuts is linked to these acorns; in his Report almonds are never mentioned. As such, Beachy-Quick’s almond—“bit and never-bit”—is an interloper, not native to the Americas, and added to the report by the poet: “bit” by Beachy-Quick, “never-bit” by Hariot. Its presence here works as an anachronism—almonds, not native to the Americas, are belatedly interpolated into Hariot’s voice—making the temporal location of Hariot’s voice as rendered by Beachy-Quick unstable, and links it with the earlier (present-tense) poetic “I” of “Unworn”.

Almonds appear again in the volume Mulberry in the voice of Samuel Sewall
with the words:

Note the almond
Tree overmuch with fruit. The almond
Press is oil sweet. The almond bit
Is a smoke meat that leaves—note it:
The tongue bathed in oil. (“Record no oiled tongue” 6).

The almond once again sits in the mouth; the “bitten sweetness” recalls Anne Carson’s exploration of Eros when she writes, “Eros’ sweetness is inseparable from his bitterness [my italics], and each participates, in a way not yet obvious, at all, in our human will to knowledge” (Eros 70). In the “bitten sweetness”, the knowledge that accompanies Eros arrives in the mouth, here through taste. Elsewhere in Beachy-Quick’s poetry, the mouth’s participation in voicing emphasises its role in learning, thought, and experience; here the oil is another sensuous—erotic—detail.

This sensuousness seems at odds with the personage of Samuel Sewall, a quintessential Puritan figure. Nonetheless, almonds do appear in Sewall’s diaries as a special treat. Recalling his childhood in the memoir-like introduction he writes to account for his life before he commenced his regular diary in 1674, Sewall notes a visit to relatives during which “Capt. Dummer of Swath-ling treated us with Raisins and Almonds” (“Introduction. XUI”) before he moved to New England in 1661 at the age of nine. Many years later, on 20 January 1699, he records a similar event: “Capt. Brown and Turner breakfast here: Betty came in afterward, and serv’d Almonds and Raisins, and fill’d a Glass of Wine to us”. In the pages of Sewall’s diary, then, almonds represent a sensuous rarity.12 The smoky, meaty sweetness of the almond is for Sewall a pleasure of the mouth; its echo of bitter-sweetness is a figure for desires unfulfilled—for poetry.

Beachy-Quick has stated in an interview that one of the roles poetry still plays is that it “teaches us how to desire” (A. King). Desire and eros go together.

---

12 Sewall’s published diaries form one thread of Beachy-Quick’s historical reading that appears in Mulberry, alongside The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover and Robert Beverley’s 1705 History and Present State of Virginia: the poet names “early American history” and “Puritan diaries” as sitting alongside “language philosophy, art history [and] religious mysticism” (ix) as the central concerns of Mulberry. His interest in the Puritans is later revisited in gentleness with the sequence “Puritanisms”.
same interview, the poet goes on to say, “that lack love finds, I might say it also
founds—that is, it makes within the self a foundation whose paradoxical nature is
that, rather than being bedrock, it is emptiness. But it is a charged emptiness”. When
Beachy-Quick’s Sewall notes the presence of the almonds he does so on the occasion
of being visited by a widow. Beachy-Quick’s Sewall states, “Almonds in a bowl:/ She
ate none. I did/ Not bid her remove her dark/ Gloves…” (Mulberry 5): the almonds,
for all their sensuousness, are present not to anoint the tongue, but in order to be
renounced. This renunciation indicates a desire left unfulfilled: the widow who visits
Sewall in “widow’s silk” and “black gloves” is a bedrock of loss, and cannot succumb
to the sensuous pleasure of the nuts.

The widow’s renunciation is completed with the final appearance of almonds
in the poet’s extant body of work: after the almonds’ return in an elegiac “sweet
almond now” (“at the window when the wind blows”, Mulberry 45) they never appear
again. The “now” that is brought into focus can be read backward through Hariot and
Sewall, as their voices are updated into dramatic poems of the contemporary moment.
The almond—after all it is oily on the tongue—allows the poet to voice a slippage
between the past and present.

The images of the almond become overlaid over the course of several poems.
The reading of Beachy-Quick’s recurrent images becomes, for the reader, an
experience of accumulation and reconfiguration. Recurrent images investigate
different facets of time, place, and identity, allowing new permutations13 to arise. The
cumulative effect of these images will be experienced regardless of the order in which
they are read: the reader could begin in the “sweet almond now” and move backward
in time, or arrive in Hariot’s Virginia and move forward. The effect of the image is
atemporal for the reader, while it is simultaneous as it governs and is governed by the
multiple moments that come under investigation by Beachy-Quick.

13 For discussion of the “permutational” use of image and form see the entries “Deer” and “Hybrid”.
The notion of the “ancient” only makes sense when there is a contemporary moment and an historical timeline against which it can be measured. For Beachy-Quick that contemporary measure comes in the form of the debates among contemporary writers about the nature of traditional and avant-garde practices. When in 2012 the poet was invited by the Boston Review to respond to Marjorie Perloff’s provocative essay “Poetry on the Brink”, he immediately sought to step outside the binary between conceptual and conventional poetry that Perloff had laid out as the terrain of contemporary American poetry. While all respondents resisted this binary, Beachy-Quick is arguably the most direct, stating his resistance from the outset when he writes, “I’d like to find a way not to occupy some middle ground” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”). His model is not a continuum that places concept and convention at either end, but a dynamic constellation of lyric “instability”—instability that traverses history, and folds time and tradition upon itself. Instead of dwelling solely in the present moment he writes, “I’d like to think backward, atavistically, anciently” (my emphasis), thus putting a localised stoush into a much larger—longer—perspective.

The poet remembers throughout his short essay that lyric is linked to ancient song, chorus to ancient dance. Ancientness is his ground; in making it his ground, the poet revives the contemporaneity of ancientness, as he reminds his reader that the beginnings of written literature were necessarily innovative. For Beachy-Quick, the earliest poetry of the Ancient Greeks is one touchstone; he is likewise interested in the beginnings of vernacular English language literature, and in early texts written by settlers in America. The traditions he explores are multiple, but in each case he looks backward to the origins of local written literatures. While all poets draw upon literary traditions in their work, Beachy-Quick is unusual in the degree to which he points the reader to those traditions and engages, through his poetry, in a creative reading of the lineage of literary tradition. This direct engagement happens both in annotative and citational works, as well as throughout the book gentleness, in which he examines the periodisation of literary studies from the opening series of aphoristic one-line series of poems Beachy-Quick calls “monadisms” (3-6) that recall the pre-Socratic philosophers, and which take the position of a classical “proem” to the work, through to the “modernisms” (83-100) with which he closes the volume. For Beachy-Quick,
these “modernisms” require the “monadisms” that precede them.

As suggested by its title, in “The ‘I’ of Lyric”, Beachy-Quick focuses on the lyric speaker; his linking of the **lyric “I”** to the chorus of ancient Greek drama is just one of his acts of seeking the ancient. In his poems he likewise turns to forms that link his poetry directly to ancient texts, including oral and ritual literatures, when he writes **charms, lullabies**, psalms, and hymns. These genres “think backward”, as does his recourse to **etymology** within the narrative of his poems; his usage of the backward glance, however, does not push his own work backward. Beachy-Quick uses the ancient as his path to the new: he folds poetry’s discoveries upon themselves, fusing a new voice. Walter Benjamin reminds us that, “the uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in a fabric of tradition” (217); but that tradition is, as T. S. Eliot states, individual. In the case of Beachy-Quick a sensibility emerges under the sign of antiquity and from the **echoes** of (particularly Greco-Roman) antiquity that resound through multiple literary traditions. While Beachy-Quick returns to many moments and voices in the poetic tradition throughout his work, the ground that is *most* ancient in his verse is arguably that in which he recalls the beginnings of written language through his explorations of individual words, their etymologies, and their combinatory possibilities upon the **page**.

The contemporary often has deep roots—and blurred edges, as in the case of the combining of existing words to create new terms. When posing the question of why the ancient Greek poets were so good, Anne Carson answers herself with the reminder that as the first poetry was being written the act of writing was itself being instantiated, and as such was still unstable. In *Eros the Bittersweet* she writes:

> A written text separates words from one another, separates words from the environment, separates words from the reader (or writer) and separates the reader (or writer) from his environment. Separation is painful. The evidence of epigraphy shows how long it takes people to systematize word-division in writing, indicating the novelty and difficulty of this concept. (50)

---

14 In his essay “What Kind of Monster am I?” Beachy-Quick considers Anne Carson’s *Eros the Bittersweet*, and reads into the work another “suggest[ed]” (18) question: “how is it the poets who introduced their audience to Eros were also the first to write down their verse into letters?” Like Carson, he too dwells on the innovations of the Greek alphabet, including its introduction of vowels to the previous Phoenician system of writing, and the elasticity of written language before its conventions become entrenched.
While making allowances for differences in morphology as words shift syntactically between different word classes, the roots of words by and large retain their shape. Both the fluidity of words as they shift between word classes, and the rootedness of words in primary lexemes, become the source of poetic possibility in a written language. The familiar “edges” of words that are marked within our chirographic tradition by the white space placed between words can be rethought as word-division is revisited. The rules set out at the beginning of a written tradition are revisited by Beachy-Quick as he creates new words. This is a strategy that, through its experimentation with accepted, common usage, looks forward-thinking, but is also a strategy that is found in some of the oldest written literatures and thus looks backward too.

Poetic word collisions, in which new words are coined by the combination of multiple words through either hyphenation or direct combination, recall the ancient coinages at the beginning of written language—before the systematisation of writing Carson invokes. The strategy of word-combination coinages also operates from the beginning in English-language poetries, as in the case of the Anglo-Saxon use of kenning. Sometimes Beachy-Quick’s combinations reflect proximity or definition: in *Mulberry*, writing of silk, he considers the “threadsourse” (in “augury of in” 22; 25 and “east east the great lake” 33-34); writing of cocoons, he finds the “wingstub” (22); the wings of gulls fuse into “gullswings” (in “calms the sentence the lake will calm” 39). Elsewhere, his coinages bear a ritualistic tint: “blossomroot bloodblossom sharp/ blessing in blood” (in “east east the great lake” 35); “heartsourse repeat this song” (in “without contraries is no” 49); and

---

15 Returning to the ancient exploration of the word’s ‘edge’—the separation between words and the erasure of that separation—is a poetic strategy that has of course been revived by many others, perhaps most notably in the work of the lyric experimental poet Paul Celan. In *A Brighter Word than Bright* Beachy-Quick cites the speech Celan gave when he received the 1958 Bremen prize, in which Celan described himself as “stricken by and seeking reality” (cited in *ABWB* 46). The translator of his speech notes of this phrase that his rendering “does not quite catch the German [language]’s ultimate stresses—*wirklichkeitswund und Wirklichkeit suchend*, ‘reality-wounded and Reality-seeking.’” (Felstiner xxvi), these compound words illustrating the task Celan sets himself. This stricken quest for reality takes place in a German language the poet viewed as broken by the events of the twentieth century and Germany’s role in them. Celan’s compound words take place in an aftermath that requires a new language; as such, like the ancient Greeks, Celan views himself at a new beginning of a written language. He coins new words out of the old to voice the reality he seeks—an operation present in Beachy-Quick’s own poems.

16 Kennings and Beachy-Quick’s use of Anglo-Saxon poetic form is discussed in the entry “Song.”
infant in the pyresmoke
of that star whose failing

light collapsed in light

(“without contraries is no”, *Mulberry* 49)

These combinations echo the fact that the words he combines create singular images because the words he combines are already related to each other; as a result, the new words are a reflection of their unitary meanings—just as Sappho’s use of the combinatory “bittersweetness” speaks to the simultaneous experience of multiple sensations. Carson’s examination of the bittersweet reminds the reader that the creation of neologism, including neologisms through combination, is an ancient strategy. Beachy-Quick’s search for origins suggests that his own combinatory coinages are not merely an attempt at innovation, but also an attempt to reinhabit the sense of the written text as elastic.

Elsewhere Beachy-Quick’s combinations explore historical indebtedness: the poem “Northtrue. Southbright.” is written after Lorine Niedecker (*NTSB* 27); writing through Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals he notes, “The wooddeep shade where the aster grows/ Wm went into the wood to compose” (*TNSP* 6). When writing “after” Niedecker, his compounded words do not echo a frequent strategy of her verse (compound usages are not a notable feature of Niedecker’s work), but instead reflect this poet’s rootedness in landscape—place as a “true north”—and the way the compass speaks to the emotional pull of such rootedness. “Northtrue” recalls the title of her 1968 collection *North Central*; “Southbright” may be seen as the outlook one takes from a luminous northern perspective. Meanwhile, within Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals “depth” is often figured as emotional or intellectual; while she refers to the depth of the streams or snow in the landscape she traverses she does not describe the woods as deep. The effect of Beachy-Quick’s homage is to combine the emotional state of strong feeling with the site so often associated with the Wordsworth siblings, the woods.

By returning to the strategy of combination, the word’s—the voice’s—*edge* is most explicitly a concern of the poet in the ninth part of *This Nest, Swift Passerine*. In
what may look like some of the least ancient of his writings because of its inventive form, Beachy-Quick returns again to the strategy of representing language through the removal of white space between words. He writes:

* \textit{Echo}, I pine.\footnote{\textit{Echo}, I pine.}\*\textit{o pine}

Looking up. Over the water. My voice has no edge. I am the edge. I pin

\* watermyvoice

My voice to a leaf. The water is not thin. Light betrays the surface.

\* leafthaw eros

Will you be seen? Over the water.

\* bein water

A wave is this. The shore is no sound.

\* away is now

Pine bough the empty sleeve. I am

\* empty eve

Looking up. My voice. If I am alone.

\* voice my own

\[\text{I pine, Return.}\text{\* in Return}\]

(TNSP 45-46)

Here Beachy-Quick unravels form and self even as he knits together language. Each column is a poem; each may be read as a paratext to the other. His coinages of the right column derive from the equation of self with edged-ness on the left: while “watermyvoice” merely runs together the words it echoes, “leafthaw eros” reconfigures the sounds of “leaf. The water is” in an inventive, suggestive echo. The words “inlight yourface” elide many of the sounds of the line “not thin. Light betrays the surface” (my emphasis); at the same time Beachy-Quick conjures a “you” to whom the poem is spoken. In reverberation, the separation between words is erased—or reinvented. The right column is a game of Chinese whispers, returning to the old strategy of running words together; it is an ancient fragment—what survives when the left column has passed into ruin.

This exploration of word combination and separation is just one of the ways in which Beachy-Quick takes a long view of literary form through his work.\textsuperscript{17} What is notable about his return to this strategy is that it is fundamentally about creating

\textsuperscript{17} For other considerations of Beachy-Quick’s use of the broader literary tradition see, in particular, the entries “Annotation”, “Chorus”, “Citation” and “Echo.”
something new as the collision of words brings about coinages. Beachy-Quick creates these new words at the same time as alluding to early vernacular texts. In doing so, Beachy-Quick is casting his time period, not as the narrow moment of contemporary life, but as the longer history of the written literary tradition, bringing his ancientness and his contemporary moment into line.
The work of writing poetry is stoked by the fire iron of reading. New poems refer explicitly or implicitly to written works that precede them: this is often a relationship of allusion, an intertextual echo. When Beachy-Quick links the act of writing to the act of reading—the one being an extension of the other—he suggests a more particular relationship that his new texts bear to the texts through which he reads. For Beachy-Quick, it is also a relationship of annotation in which the works to which he alludes are both cited and then subjected to poetic commentary. In many of his works we can see what might be termed an annotative poetics at work. This is particularly the case when we examine This Nest, Swift Passerine, which continually moves between Beachy-Quick’s own work, and the direct citation of many other texts. His use of citation in this work differs from the way he uses it in much of his citational poetry, and as such the commentary he provides upon the cited work can be viewed as annotation; the resultant poem can be read as a poet’s commonplace book replete with citation and meditation upon what such citations mean to the poet. While annotative works form a subset under the sign of citational literature, the distinct category allows us to see the variety of ways with which citational poetics interacts with historical documents and literary traditions. Annotation provides a fuller acknowledgement of indebtedness through its prolonged reflection on and inhabitation of its cited materials.

Citation is found in many works, and particularly from the modernism espoused by Eliot’s “The Waste Land” (with or without the footnotes) and Pound’s Cantos onwards, it becomes a familiar poetic tactic. Eliot’s use of footnotes for one version of “The Waste Land” reveals the necessary link relationship between citation and annotation: the footnotes are a form of self-annotation, as well as a list of “works cited”. Similarly, Pound’s Cantos can be seen to move between citational and annotative forms, as when, in “Canto I” he not only retells/translations a portion of Odysseus’s story but intervenes in his own retelling to reveal his source is not the Greek of Homer, but actually the Latin translation of Andreas Divus. This move is the first of many authorial interventions where Pound not only integrates the work of others into his monumental work in the manner of citation, but explicitly addresses the relationship between the source text and the new poem through in-text annotation.
Although the reflective inhabitation of annotative poetics does not arise with modernism (see, for example, the borrowings of classical texts by figures such as Chaucer and Shakespeare, or the explicit “afterness” of a poem such as Keats’ “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer”), the variety of citational strategies provided by the modernists, including fragmentary and digressive models, is a vital underpinning to contemporary citational works. The “tissue of quotations” (Barthes, *Image* 146) and allusions is embedded within such poems as they traverse vast textual and intellectual histories in verse form. In his other books Beachy-Quick performs a similar type of embedding, allowing his citational work to build a picture of his poetic sensibility through the accrual of references and voices. These references are, he writes, the “nervous system” (“Oracular” 43) that connects to the consciousness which speaks a lyric ‘I’.

Citation may make up part or the whole of the text. In his review essay “The Speaking Ear” Beachy-Quick writes of Ronald Johnson’s use of citation and erasure. He writes that in Johnson’s *Radi Os*, “ruin and song are anonymous work”: ruin and song gain a kind of equivalence as he recognises in Johnson’s text that “uncreativity” (Goldsmith)—or *unoriginality*—and creation likewise exist in partnership. In *Written from Memory*’s sequence of poems “The Long Sentence”, Beachy-Quick likewise relies solely on another text for his source—in this case the famous long sentence of Marcel Proust’s second volume of *In Search of Lost Time* (23-25). Beachy-Quick describes the process as “not an erasure, but a gleaning” (*WFM* 93) as he moves forward and then backward through Proust’s sentence to uncover his poem, each time selecting words for his own poem only in the order in which he reads them. That process of moving forward and backward in the text is “repeated as many times as there are poems” (*WFM* 93). For Beachy-Quick, reading is apprenticeship—it *is* the work of creation. That apprenticeship to preceding texts reveals the resulting new text as both citational and an annotation to the original.

What Beachy-Quick does in *This Nest, Swift Passerine* is related to the citational poetry he produces elsewhere, but is more akin to Walter Benjamin’s massive, unfinished *Arcades Project*—a project dependent on the interplay of gleaned fragments and the writer’s annotations, augmentations—than it is to the citational writings of Eliot, Pound and the poets who drew upon and extended their poetic and aesthetic methods in subsequent work. Kenneth Goldsmith describes Benjamin’s
project as “scrivenerlike” (112), but this “scrivening”, or copywork, whereby Benjamin amasses found texts that relate to the Paris Arcades, addresses only half the process. Benjamin plays the dual role of organiser of and commentator on those found texts. Within the Arcades Project Benjamin describes the role of the historian as assembling citations; of this process he notes, “To write history thus means to cite history. It belongs to the concept of citation, however, that the historical object in each case is torn from its context” (476). Being “torn from [their] context” allows citation a creative potential, as Michael Taussig points out when he writes that quotations are “especially empowered so as to disrupt context and create new worlds” (103). The annotative process is one such form of the creation of new worlds. With the annotations of the Arcades Project Benjamin acknowledges this process of removing the work from its context, and in doing so he produces a text that lays bare the processes of the historian—and, indeed, the poet.

Beachy-Quick likewise plays that Benjaminian dual role of organiser and commentator when he assembles quotations from Dorothy Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Ovid, Martin Buber and many others: the resulting work is born of and borne on this preceding work. (Elsewhere, in his “January Notebook” he performs a similar act of assemblage and assimilation; in this case there the work occurs in prose, and it functions as a craftsman’s record of and meditations upon process.) Selecting and ordering his chosen quotations already constitutes a creative work; the vision of This Nest, Swift Passerine comes in part from Beachy-Quick’s creation of proximity between quotes. Apposition instigates a relationship.

Lisa Robertson describes this relationship when she writes of her own reading, “The progress is more sideways than forward; it constantly falls through the page into reveries, then brings reveries forward to fard the text, complicate its limits” (“Lastingness”). The “sideways” movement of apposition is enhanced by intervention: Beachy-Quick intervenes in the assemblage both to think and write through his assembled texts, and to fall into the reverie that marks the work as poetic rather than scholarly. Through assemblage the poet discovers intellectual links between texts that define his poetic concerns. Through reverie—time spent in extra-rational, associative meditation on the texts—the poet discovers the intuitive, affective links that reveal poetic sensibility. Even without his written interventions, the texts would still share the common through-line of his own interest in them; this alone
would “complicate [their] limits”. By creating his own annotations, he further blurs the edges of texts, allowing his own voice to bleed into the polyphony he brings to the page. Each cited voice becomes part of his **lyric “I”**: at the same time, each poetic intervention he instigates becomes **impersonal**: a two-way process that makes plurality equal singularity, and vice versa.

This writing through is one way in which Beachy-Quick claims these assembled texts as his own. Of Ronald Johnson’s erasure work *Radi Os*, Beachy-Quick writes, “The receptive and the expressive are yoked into a single gesture, in which the words in my ear transubstantiate into the words in my mouth” (“The Speaking Ear”). Emerson suggests there is an act of “creative reading” (48) that exists alongside the act of creative writing: the poet’s annotative interventions form a physical yoke between the two. The received words of reading are now accompanied by the writer’s own act of bindery through the addition of his own words; this leads the reader from text to text. Yet Beachy-Quick does not claim these gestures toward other texts as a form of exhaustiveness or erudition. Rather, he proclaims the examination of the particulars that strike him as an individual reader is a form of “ignorance, incapacity, incompleteness” (“Oracular” 42) that his reading illuminates. More than filling gaps, the words he gleans for citation highlight existing gaps in Beachy-Quick’s knowledge and reading. Incompleteness is a form of subjective documentation; the work of *This Nest, Swift Passerine*—the annotative process by which it proceeds—is an examination of the gaps that his own words only seem to cover over.

In the fourth section of the work, Beachy-Quick cites John Milton’s “Letter: To Leonard Philarus, Athenian; Westminster, Sept. 28, 1654” in which Milton describes the progression of his vision darkening into blindness. Before this quotation appears, the poet offers a prose segment in which he contemplates the light that reaches our planet, including the instances of starlight “so old the star that cast it is silent and dead” (*TNSP* 20). He notes the uncanny way time bends when applied to the history of light, and writes: “Vision also the shroud of vision” (20). This “shroudedness” immediately precedes the quotation from Milton’s letter. This section begins with the words:

*It is ten years, I think, more or less, since I noticed my sight becoming and growing dim And even in the morning, if I began as usual to read, I noticed that my eyes*
felt immediate pain deep within and turned from reading as often as I looked at a lamp, a sort of rainbow seemed to obscure it. (TNSP 20)

Following this quotation Beachy-Quick first contemplates the constellation Orion (“Orion is Orion only here/ Another angle expands the form…” (21)) and then folds Milton’s words into his own as he begins the process of writing through the older poet. He writes:

\[
\text{deep within I turned from reading} \\
\text{the day outside the page} \\
\text{a sort of rainbow seemed to obscure it} \\
\text{through which the birds flitted} \\
\text{with a sort of sleepy heaviness} \\
\text{their bright bodies interwoven with it} \\
\text{some ashy light in my eyes} \\
\text{forced me to put down my book} \\
\text{and my ambitions therein} \\
\text{my eyes both night and day} \\
\text{and my comfort if comfort it was} \\
\text{I saw in the pages that closing} \\
\text{narrowed the whole day into a minute} \\
\text{quantity of light as if through a crack} \\
\text{and I had no way to speak of it} \\
\text{and then it was done (TNSP 21)}
\]

All sections in (the poet’s own) italics comprise text imported directly from Milton’s letter— for example the phrases “deep within”, “turned from reading” and “a sort of rainbow seemed to obscure it” can be seen in the quotation above. Around these phrases, Beachy-Quick constructs his own poetic fragment. Here, Beachy-Quick’s vision blurs the distinction between the “day outside the page” and what is present within the pages he holds. His importation of Milton’s letters illuminates his perceptions, allows him a voice for the experience which he would otherwise have “had no way to speak of”. That “minute quantity of light” becomes for Beachy-Quick
the illumination of the imagination, and the illumination of reading: in “narrowing the whole day” to this passage, the poet adopts his own kind of visionary blindness.

Yet the combination of the two poets here is such that Milton’s phrases could be seen as annotating Beachy-Quick’s verse as much as Beachy-Quick’s words illuminate Milton’s. This reciprocity reflects the relationship that the poet sees between Milton and his “eraser” Ronald Johnson: “Johnson seems to say of Milton, I will speak with his mouth as before I lived he spoke with mine” (“The Speaking Ear”). The act of annotation is, likewise, reciprocal in Beachy-Quick’s writings, as the poet both speaks through his forbears, and allows those forbears to speak through him. Susan Stewart writes of quotation within literature, and its role in revealing the “abstract exchange value” of the written word, that:

…literature enters the field of exchange, a field articulated by writing, the exchange of letters, IOU’s, “deed,” all acts of reciprocity that reveal the conflicting realms of the material and the abstract, the real and the ideal, praxis and ideology. (On Longing 36)

Beachy-Quick’s IOUs are laid on the page as he attempts to clear his debts by answering back. Or rather, This Nest, Swift Passerine recalls, not indebtedness, but a gift economy in which words, the greatest possessions of poets, are exchanged across time in what Jalal Toufic calls an “untimely collaboration” (38). The conversation into which Beachy-Quick draws the authors he cites reflects the ongoingness of language, the seeming reversibility of chronology that makes Milton Beachy-Quick’s contemporary.

The conversation likewise reflects the fact that the poet views reading not as escapism, but as a form of real experience, one that is embodied. In “Meditations in the Hut” he writes:

Hands hold the book’s heft; eyes read the words; the body is involved though we forget so. Reading seems something more than or less than experience, occurring, as it does, in some twofold world happening simultaneously in the author’s mind and the reader’s mind, with only the thin printed page as conduit between. (WI 111-112)
With an annotative poetics, this role of the page as conduit is magnified, given new a
dimension. The collaborative pact that writing makes with its readers to create the
work is here crowded with voices.

Ultimately the broader project of *This Nest, Swift Passerine*, and its annotative
method, may be seen as radical meditation on the form of the **lyric**. Citational poetry
has already shown the **choral** multiplicity of the poetic voice; annotative poetry
emphasises the fundamental unoriginality that underpins the lyric tradition. At the
same time, what is revealed through the combinations and permutations of that
tradition and its reader is a new poetic sensibility: an original poetry.

It is possible to think of the whole of *This Nest, Swift Passerine* as the
unfolded version of the final “Twining of Twinings” (52-53) on which the book ends.
The “Twining of Twinings” contains the final weaving of the “nest” of Beachy-
Quick’s poems, in which the twines he has already woven are now intertwined; to
read the annotative process as an unravelling rather than a ravelling, then, makes this
final poem a prologue, and what precedes the final “twining” becomes an examination
of this final text. Like Beachy-Quick’s experience of Proust, the work can be read
both forwards and backwards. The “Twining of Twinings” completes the nest; yet the
book as a whole, by showing each constituent part of that nest, unravels the whole. By
acknowledging his debts, the poet explicitly reveals what has influenced him and the
way he has written through it. The book and its annotative method function as an
investigation into poetic thinking, and the ways the tradition both expands and
compresses in the hands of an individual poet.
In “Hariot’s Round” [I and II], Beachy-Quick uses the image of deers’ antlers as a form of orientation: this orientation is literary, historical and geographical. Repeated observations regarding the antlers’ directionality provides a compass for the writer and his reader as Beachy-Quick moves through these literary, historical and geographical landscapes. The image of the antlers is emblematic of the way in which Beachy-Quick uses the past as a way to navigate the future in his verse.

In “Hariot’s Round [I]”18 Beachy-Quick’s Thomas Hariot describes the deer he encounters as, “…like ours, but the snags of their horns look backwards” (NTSB 18). In the second “Hariot’s Round” the poet writes, “The deer like ours, but their horns look backwards/ At whom they flee” (NTSB 35). That backwardness is a mirror image: for Beachy-Quick’s Hariot the “forward” direction that defines the backwardness of these American deer is the forwardness of the Britannia from whence he has arrived. The mirroring represented by the antlers of these deer in the newly claimed Commonwealth of Virginia reflects a land that is therefore, in Hariot’s view, also backwards. Yet the deer otherwise behave as normal:

The deer do leap here as in England, they do:

A hind leaps from hind legs first
And bounds. (NTSB 18)

As such, it is not a perfect mirror image: it is only the “snags of their horns” that look behind them. The land in which Beachy-Quick’s Hariot finds himself, as yet unexplored by Anglo-colonialists, has in Hariot’s eyes the potential for “forward” movement—in the form of colonisation—but retains the “backwardness” of its previously uncommodified status. Beachy-Quick reads Hariot in such a manner that he draws attention to this language of “backwardness” that opposes “forwardness” in geographical, temporal, and technological frames. By framing the work in this way, Beachy-Quick restages Hariot’s work as a text of discovery at the same time that he implicitly critiques Hariot’s colonialist view.

In recognising these deer both the Hariot of the 1588 A Briefe and True Report

18 For further discussion of the poems “Hariot’s Round” [I and II] see “Almond” and “Deer”.

58
of the New Found Land of Virginia and the Hariat of Beachy-Quick’s imagination can connect this new place to a world already known. Difference here is defined, first by recognising sameness, and then by noting deviations from that sameness; in recognising difference, Hariat falls into the act of cataloguing. The words he possesses to provide this catalogue are largely the words with which he arrived—just as the “correct” images he describes (e.g. which way a deer’s antlers “should” face) are likewise those images with which he arrived. In his Briefe and True Report, Hariat collects many native names for the landscape of this new world, but his orientation is always East across the Atlantic, as he writes to meet an audience that is facing West. In the two “Rounds” written in the voice of Hariat, Beachy-Quick makes explicit the way in which Hariat constantly seeks orientation in this early trans-Atlantic text. Beachy-Quick works into his poems the constant return Hariat makes in his original Report to the differences between Virginia and England, and to Virginia’s status as a colony under the crown. Both poems titled “Hariat’s Round” (NTSB 18-20; 34-36) act as a readings of Hariat’s original text in the mode of the re-voicing of history from within a “present” that has moved on; the emphasis on orientation towards English colonisation is disorienting for the contemporary reader aware of America’s status as an nation that achieved its independence from Great Britain two centuries ago.

If backwardness is defined by its mirror image, this act of facing in the wrong direction is also a term of derision. Alongside the partly askew deer are the men Hariat finds in this new land. They are, for a man as devout as his time required him to be, backward in that other manner: they do not recognise the ‘correct’ God. In his Report Hariat writes that they “beleeue that there are many Gods… of different sortes and degrees” (36) and outlines their religious beliefs, while also recording his own evangelism: “Manie times… I made declaration of the contentes of the Bible; that therein was set foorth the true and onelie GOD” (39). Hariat’s efforts to “correct” the backwardness he encounters represents the beginnings of a long history of assimilation. Meanwhile, in the first “Hariat’s Round”, Beachy-Quick, moves through

---

19 In Hariat’s original Briefe and True Report, this language is supplemented with Native American terms which Hariat introduces and then translates for his English readers; in Beachy-Quick’s poem, this Native American language does not appear. This reflects the collision between historical periods: Hariat had no other language for the new flora and fauna he encountered; Beachy-Quick writes in an aftermath that replaced or Anglicised many Native American words. Beachy-Quick’s Hariat exists in a past inescapably inflected by the contemporary moment.
religious belief into a different kind of assimilation: he first dresses these Native Americans in deer-skin and then turns them into deer.

They have Religion, but it be far from Truth.

They sharpen stone by striking stone against itself.

They work no metal. *Witch-hazle*, they bend to bows.

Of clothes, deer-skin, and some so clothed

Think themselves *Deer*, and hide in shade, nest in *Needles Of Pine*, and leap as *Deer* do.

(*NTSB 20*)

This shifting perspective through which the native population is first viewed as clothed—to the European sensibility, one mark of “civilisation”—to being animal metaphorises for the reader the way in which First Nations peoples have been read and portrayed as atavistic; to be “far from Truth” is also to be backward—not far enough advanced, and thus placed at the rear-guard of humanity, made animal.

In his two Rounds, Beachy-Quick necessarily looks backwards through time: he quotes Hariot, looks to the source document, Hariot’s 1588 *A Brieue and True Report*, and dramatises Hariot’s voyage. At the same time that he produces a dramatic poem in Hariot’s voice, he produces an act of historiography. Beachy-Quick is yet another poet of the library: as a deep reader of Emerson, he would no doubt hold close that essayist’s words from “The American Scholar”: “Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books” (47). As a writer of books that frequently dwell on *other* books, Beachy-Quick has learned the lesson well, and his use of Hariot’s report offers a form of history. He looks, from a position almost two centuries after American independence, backward to the earliest incursions by the British, over two hundred years before independence, and becomes in the process a poet-historian. The backwardness of his gaze presupposes the forwardness of his

---

20 Another contemporary poet who has explored this portrayal of Native Americans is Rosmarie Waldrop in her *A Key into the Language of America*, which takes Roger Williams’s 1643 text of the same title as its impetus. Chapter XX of this work is entitled “Of their Nakednesse and Clothing” in which indigenous peoples are again seen wearing “beast skin” (41). Again, this text functions to draw attention to and critique this aspect of early American commentary.
current position that allows for him to create in verse a work of historical interrogation.

The poet takes many words directly from Hariot and places them into his poems: he modernises spellings or diction (brings them *forward*), he arranges the material, interpolating his own voice, which mingles with Hariot’s. When Hariot considers the American deer he encounters he describes them:

‘Deare’, in some places there are great store: neere vnto the sea coast they are of the ordinarie bignes as ours in England, & some lesse: but further vp into the countrey where there is better feed they are greater: they differ from ours onely in this, their tailes are longer and the snags of their hornes looke backward. (*Report* 27)

Here England’s deer, like the later institution of England’s Greenwich Mean Time, act as the yardstick. The American deer are “ordinary” again, as they are, literally, sized up. If Greenwich provides a yardstick for time, old world deer are an older yardstick, against which forwardness and backwardness are defined; against which bigness and smallness are measured; against which length or shortness of tail is measured. The deer’s body becomes a measure for space, an “empirical” measure that applies not simply to size, but to the building of Empire.

Hariot’s audience is British—albeit a British audience willing to invest in the project of this new colony.²¹ Hariot’s glance is useful to contemporary Americans in that it offers one of the earliest written glimpses of this region of America, including an insight into the ethnography of Virginia’s native peoples. Yet Beachy-Quick takes the document as its author intended: Hariot’s main purpose is to tally commodities. “Two are *deer’s horns*” (*NTSB* 18). Hariot is in the business of futures: “I am inventory. A Pearl in the Mouth is One” (*NTSB* 18). This is self-actualisation as commodification, just as Hariot’s document proves the “new world’s” worth through its exploitable resources. The pearl is Hariot’s (“Sometimes in feeding on muscles wee founde some pearle” (*Report* 14)) yet, placed in the mouth, it also recalls the Shakespearean pearls “that were his eyes” (I.1 399 123) in Ariel’s song in *The

---
²¹ In contrast, other historical texts upon which Beachy-Quick draws were written in American for early colonial American audiences. The British audience for whom Hariot writes underpins the theme of orientation that Beachy-Quick reads into his work.
Tempest, a play itself often read backwards through the re-orientation of the now-independent Americas.

The poet’s gaze backwards is a mirror to the explorer’s gaze forwards, just as the centre stands on opposite sides of the Atlantic for each of the two authors. Hariot sees the centre as England; for Beachy-Quick the centre is the United States—arguably, for the latter author, it is the English deer whose antlers appear to be “backward”, which is the reason that this detail from Hariot’s report is striking, worthy of citation. In voicing Hariot from the present moment, Beachy-Quick occupies both temporal and geographical centres: he looks backwards to the past’s vision of the future, he looks across the ocean to the Britain that is home to Hariot and not to himself. In revoicing Hariot’s text, with its colonial cataloguing and its descriptions of Native Americans that reinforce primitivist narratives surrounding indigeneity, Beachy-Quick forces himself to face outmoded attitudes. The “backward” glance of searching for origins—literary and geographical—brings into view a complex web of inheritances that, through his poems, he must address. What he doesn’t include—such as the words Hariot collects in his makeshift lexicon—reflects his contemporary position: such language has been largely erased from the landscape except in the form of place names that acknowledge a past occupation of land but do not offer reparation.

It is in the invocation of home that these dual occupations on either side of the Atlantic come together—and fall apart. The poet writes, “To speak of home unravels the tongue: / Home” (NTSB 19). While throughout the poems, Beachy-Quick’s Hariot is articulate about what he sees and how it compares to what he knew prior to this journey, the word “home” makes language fail, and only the repetition of that single word can be produced. Home is not just a place, but also a time. Svetlana Boym asks the question of nostalgia, “How did it happen that a provincial ailment, maladie du pays, became a disease of the modern age, mal du siècle?” (7). Hariot’s and Beachy-Quick’s writings could be seen to take on the different forms of this ailment. The word does not yet exist for Hariot, so he can only be homesick; his homesickness is for England. Beachy-Quick’s nostalgia is not the desire to return to the past that animates so much of his work, but the desire to dwell simultaneously in the past and the present: his nostalgia is the provincial maladie du pays that is oriented toward a singular place transformed into a pluralistic mal du siècle that exists because the
simultaneous experience of multiple historical periods is impossible to sustain. He must move between the home of backwardness and the home of the present moment that voices—defines—that backwardness. The past remains a site he longs to reoccupy through his writing. That reoccupation is an impossibility, and, as such, it is the source of a desire that pushes Beachy-Quick to keep re-examining his own inheritances.
Daniel Tiffany calls the charm—an ancient form, a quintessential folk form of verse—a “transactional” lyric (86); he applies this same term to the lullaby. The transaction is as follows: in exchange for the spoken words, the world alters as the charm works change upon the things its words name. A poetic charm is an act of conjuring in which the lyric ‘I’ transforms into conjuror. Many of the existing charms from the English poetry tradition use words that are familiar: yet in bringing these words (as words they are signifiers, not the signified) to the alchemical form of the charm they lose their separation from the objects they name—thus collapsing the distinction between the signifier and signified, invoking the things themselves. The words become physical talismans: the written word may be spoken, swallowed, buried, burned, and through these actions they will act upon the world as the word’s worldly counterpart is likewise affected by the action. As such the charm transforms the lyric speaker into a ritual speaker—and reveals what Culler calls the “ritualistic aspect” (Theory 8) that underlies the lyric poem. This ritualistic character comes from Culler’s wish to move away from or beyond a reading of the lyric and the lyric voice as a form of fictional narrative, and instead consider the fact that lyrics are performative texts. As performative texts, Culler notes that lyrics are “constructed for repetition” (Theory 123), and that they possess “a certain ceremoniousness, and the possibility of making something happen in the world”. Both ceremony and the wish to make change in the world are fundamental features of the charm.

Beachy-Quick’s revival of the charm in a literary context allows him to investigate the ritualistic nature of lyric poetry itself. That his charms take literariness and its tools as their subject performs the work of “charming” the whole of his poetic output.

The charm combines Jakobson’s poetic function of language, which focuses

---

22 Charms are among the most ancient English-language poems: there are twelve extant Anglo-Saxon charms that survive in medieval manuscripts. Three charms appear in translation by Kevin Crossley-Holland in The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology (270-271).

23 Barry Stephenson characterises ritual as follows: “Ritual” is not a particular kind of discrete action, but rather a quality of action potentially available across a spectrum of behavior. Ritual, as a metacategory, includes both religious and non-religious rites, the traditional and the new, the prescribed and the improvised, the human and nonhuman, and rubs up against a number of other cultural domains such as play, games, performance, and theater. If ritual is action, it is also an idea, something we think with” (3). The combination of performance, action and idea is a useful set of coordinates to consider the poetic charm as a ritual text.
on “the message for its own sake” (356), with a ritualised version of what he describes as the “conative function” (357): it is a text that seeks to influence the actions of the addressee. The use of the conative function is what, in these poems, becomes notable. In the case of the charm, the addressee may not be human; apostrophe may not be explicitly used, but is often implied within the body of the charm as the text makes an imperative call on the world and worldly objects for change. This imperative call opens a link to other poems that express the imperative mood: in the lyric space, the imperative voice becomes the lyric event. Arguably all such voicings are “transactional”, and implicitly wish to occupy the power of the charm as they seek to change the order of the world, ordering its addressees into that change. Indeed, Culler begins his Theory of the Lyric by noting his own interest in “lyrics’ strange way of addressing time, winds, urns, trees, or the dead and asking them to do something or to stop doing what they are doing” (vii): these are apostrophic pleas that, like charms, serve to change the physical world. As such, charms represent the explicit version of this basic poetic stance that is echoed throughout lyric poetry.

For Beachy-Quick, the folk antecedent to his own words remains vital. In his notes to North True South Bright he writes that charms contain “a sense of the magical potency latent in prayer and in natural objects carried forward from the middle ages into the Renaissance and beyond” (NTSB 65). In recounting particular charms used to fight illness, the poet also notes that the incantation of the charm text is one part of a ritual action. In his introduction to Charms and Charming in Europe, Jonathan Roper points to the definition of the charm offered by the Brothers Grimm: charms are “verbal formulas … to which are attributed a supernatural effect, mostly of a protective, healing kind’ (1). This recalls Walter Benjamin’s observation about the function of ancient art forms: “the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind”. Benjamin goes on to note that, “It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function” (217). The revival of the charm both points to the archaism of the form and also, through its resemblance to other lyric poems, to the magical thinking inherent in a reading of lyric poetry as ritualistic.

The lyric ‘I’ and the “ritual I” (Ilomäki 55) blend in the literary charm: the reader voices the charm in the wake of the writer’s voicing. Smallwood contests the ways in which the term has previously been used both in the vernacular and scholarly
contexts. He argues that the charm is not the object itself, the ritual action as a whole, the superstitious repetition of a particular phrase, or words “essentially inscrutable to their users” (11): rather, the charm is a vernacular text, simultaneously ritualistic—and therefore separate from everyday life—and yet at the same time ordinary. The language of the charm is likewise vernacular, relating to the lyric tradition through its speaker. The “ritual I” of charm is akin to the chorus Beachy-Quick invokes in “The ‘I’ of Lyric”. That choral speaker is a polyphony that incorporates the ritual speaker and the personal speaker, becoming an every-voice that, in Whitman’s formulation of the poetic speaker, “contain[s] multitudes” (113).

Though officially excluded by the church, charms often invoke Christian texts and contexts, at times because the church had itself co-opted parts of the ritualistic traditions from which the charm derived; as such, charms chime with Beachy-Quick’s stated interest in religious mysticism (Mulberry ix), an interest that informs his sense of the charm as akin to prayer. That the set of charms that appears in North True South Bright begins with the “Fess-Charm” (14-15)—recalling both confession and the archaic language of heraldry—reinforces the relation of his contemporary iteration of the charm with its place in Christian tradition. In his notes to this volume, in which his four charms appear, Beachy-Quick writes of the charm’s “sense of magical potency latent in prayer and natural objects” (NTSB 65); the prayer is “slightly altered” (65) — redirected toward the object of charming, and thus becoming both worldly and worldly.

The charm is arguably the most literal example of the magical thinking poetry may enact. In A Brighter Word than Bright, Beachy-Quick writes of the power of imagination that “to imagine the world is to participate in its ongoing creation: it hems the long grass to the little brook, it hems the brook to the little book. Word leads to world. It almost spells it” (24). Of course, that “spelling” is doubled: the words are spelled out; the word is conjured by spell. Both meanings take their origin from the Old English, where ‘spell’ meant narration. Charm is likewise linked to this action of telling, derived from the Latin carmen — song or incantation—and also linked etymologically to the shaman. To charm is to create and to alter a world through words.

And the subjects of the poet’s charms are, indeed, worldly and bookish: “Fess-Charm”, “Said-Charm”, “Work Charm” and “Vellum Charm”. The confession and
saying of the first two charms that imply oral transmission are matched by the explicit attention to the working of words on the page in the latter charms, a progression that reflects the history of the charm as it moved from oral to chirographic cultures. The page is the destination at which Beachy-Quick’s work—identity—as poet becomes self-conscious. This self-consciousness reflects the way in which Beachy-Quick uses the charm to investigate the voice of lyric poetry by making speech and page the subject of his charms. He opens his “Vellum Charm” with the words:

Watermark me, my margin-need
    held up to light
    I would be
Owned to know who owned me (39)

The subject of ownership follows directly from the poet’s “Work Charm”, where personal ownership is rendered suspect when the poet writes at the charm’s conclusion:

Inside my house
    I own—
    Am half-owner
Of pond, these woods—am half-owned (NTSB 38)

This transaction, by which the possessor is possessed, is likewise the transaction of the charm: the addresser of the charm is charmed even as he seeks to charm the addressee. This is because the charm is a bodily text: two of the major subjects of folk charms are illness and love, both of which are invasions of the body. More than this, however, the transaction is the subject of Beachy-Quick’s lyric more generally, in which words are inseparable from the body through which they are first conceived, and then later received. In Beachy-Quick’s charms this relationship is an idea to

---

24 Writing of charms in the Russian tradition, W. F. Ryan provides a useful general statement about the purview of charms: “The purposes of Russian charms are much the same as for recorded charms elsewhere. They could be apotropaic or protective (of children, crops, livestock, from enemies, diseases, witchcraft, etc.) curative, compulsive (love charms, or for use in court towards a superior) or malefic (such as charms to bring illness on an enemy, or hiccups, to bring marital discord, destroy love, harm the crops or cattle of an enemy, make weapons misfire, etc.).” (116).
which he continually returns: the words that are his subject are also of the body. They are spoken, confessed. The pen and the page are an extension of the poet’s body. When read they are taken in by the eye from a text in the hand.

The confession that begins “Fess-Charm” is multiple and speaks to the illness of being, an illness that is reflected by the tension between the singularity and multiplicity of the self:

Dust-swallowing dust, I am
Covetous of
Dew, a drop. Covet the thorn
That split in half
The water-bead into the black berry. (14)

The poem’s opening line places being in apposition to an inanimate cannibalism: the “I am” identifies the speaker with the dust feeding upon itself, while the next line’s “covetous” defines the illness of being within the language of the Commandments. While the objects coveted—dewdrop, thorn—are not forbidden, the poem unravels a ritual value for them, also bound up with being. The dewdrop is split by the thorn, and the speaker is likewise split by the thorn, an image that becomes definitional: “I have a thorn inside/ My thumb as fact the thumb exists” (14-15). The wound defines the existence of the site of wounding: being and undoing are twinned. Undoing the wound is a return to a wholeness, yet that wholeness has been defined in the first place by the act of wounding. The singular self is defined by the incursion of the multiple world. The charm, a confession of being, asks for the return to bodily integrity in the voice of the ritual speaker when Beachy-Quick writes:

I heard, I thought
I heard—

Myself asking—the splinter not
Asking
Me—myself asking the splinter for release. (15)
The personal speaker and the ritual speaker become for a moment separate: the individuated “I” here overhears the collective, ritual speaker that has become “myself”. That this voice is strange, removed, is underlined by the suggestion made through the rejection of the idea that the splinter itself could have spoken, as the “charmer” asks for release from his woundedness.
**Child / Ghost**

**Lyric** time and lyric self are multiple throughout Beachy-Quick’s poetry: the speaker and the reader experience the collapsing of historical and future time into the singular present moment that is the lyric moment, and the polyphonic **lyric ‘I’** through the **chorus** of multiplying voices of lyric address, citation and allusion. This temporal and spoken **presence** of Beachy-Quick’s verse is exemplified in the way he twins the figures of child and ghost. The becoming that the child represents—the emergence of a stable self—is taken apart by the disintegration of death and haunting. The bleeding edge by which child and ghost become one, and become one with the **self**, is a form of self-haunting and self-**elegy**.  

The child and the ghost are one: in the first and second **lullabies** of Circle’s *Apprentice* Beachy-Quick addresses his child thus: “little ghost” (*CA* 3, 4). In the fifth and final lullaby of the sequence the poet writes of himself as a child, thinking, and in the course of the poem he thinks “himself a child” (*CA* 8), a female that he again calls “little ghost” (*CA* 8). While the lyric address appears at first to be directed towards an infant—the speaker’s own child—as the arc of lullabies continues, the poet himself becomes a child. His movement into the past is mirrored by the projected ghostliness of the future. Here the lyric ‘I’ becomes consonant with the recipient of lyric address, the lyric ‘you’; the poet produces a simultaneity of past, present and future, folding his lullabies into the complexity of lyric time. The child and the ghost become, and thus in a lyric present always are, the self. At the same time, his direct address to the child becomes a form of “triangulated address” (Culler *Theory*, 8, 15, 186) as the poet addresses the reader via his address to child and self. The present patience of fatherhood becomes, in the future, not just the rust of the world, but the shared “rust” (*CA* 3) of inevitable death. Rust is ghostliness.

The figure of the child takes on an otherworldly power in “At Removes” in *North True South Bright*. In the adopted voice of Mary Rowlandson Beachy-Quick writes:

---

25 As seen in the entry “Elegy”, Beachy-Quick’s only titled elegy focuses not on death but on a moment of lived vulnerability and captivity. For a poet whose lyric ‘I’ is explicitly multiple and echoic, and is in conversation with and haunted by the dead, his constant return to the questioning of the nature of selfhood takes on a similarly elegiac tone. This echoes Jahan Ramazani’s statement that “all modern writing may be covertly self-elegiac” (215).
A child can
Keep ice in his mouth as
Ice

If his mouth is cold at night
All night. (NTSB 23)

In this image death arrives: the only mouth cold enough to perform this feat is that belonging to a corpse; the mother contemplates her child’s mortality, haunting her child’s mouth with ice. Against this ghostly image, Beachy-Quick’s Rowlandson states, “The first tooth in a child’s mouth/ Is God” (NTSB 24). The pain of teething rules over child and mother both: it is another act of becoming that stretches beyond the self, even as the first tooth marks the first step necessary for the child to take nourishment without the mother’s breast. The first tooth, then, is a tool of self-reliance: the child begins to grow centred in himself or herself.

The child’s perspective is recurrent for the poet because it is a source of wonder—an entry zone into the imagination. In allowing slippage between the child as subject and the child as speaker, Beachy-Quick brings intergenerational relationships into focus. In his “Twining of Second Themes” in This Nest, Swift Passerine Beachy-Quick writes:

let song double in some other throat

one must grow new before the thunder

he must open new eyes before the thunder
head doubles in height and doubling
a man must sing in two voices
before the warbler returns in wonder
he must open his mother’s eyes with his own
hand
before his own child points to those drops
of rain so bright with evening
the sun sets beneath the cloud we see
countless suns pour down from thundercloud

(TNSP 30)

That other throat, that newness, is present in the child’s wonder. The song doubled
can be seen as a song quadrupled: the poet’s voice sounds in the child’s, and the
child’s voice sounds in the father’s. Here, the father witnesses the child witnessing a
thunderstorm, and so becomes a new kind of witness, incorporating a vision
multiplied.

That multiple generations are present once again recalls the choral nature of
the poet’s lyric voice: Beachy-Quick is a porous reader of books and of the world,
deeply aware that he is under the influence of the past, and he folds the voices of
mother and child into his own voice until we see—anew—those “countless suns pour
down from thundercloud”. The intergenerational focus of the familial relationships he
unfolds here becomes, through the course of his poetry, the intergenerational
experience of literary inheritance as elsewhere he traces genealogies of poetic
influence through citation and annotation, or exhibits the haunting of “lyric
possession” (Stewart Poetry, 107-143) through subtler allusion. As he reminds us
earlier in This Nest, Swift Passerine, the light poured from the “countless suns” is
ancient light: “The eye is made of the light by which it sees. Every eye, and all the
world which/enters through the pin-hole of the eye, is 1,000,000 years and 8 minutes
old” (TNSP 2). Against such age, the poet’s experience of childhood and ghostliness
in a single moment makes sense: the human lifespan is inconsequential compared
with the lifespan of the light that forms the human eye.

26 This observation recalls Ronald Johnson in Ark. “Beam 4” begins with the observation that, “The
human eye, a sphere of waters and tissue, absorbs an energy that has come ninety-three million miles
from another sphere, the sun. The eye may be said to be sun in other form” (12).
Chorus

For Beachy-Quick the poet’s voice is defined by its plurality. In his essay “The ‘I’ of Lyric” he links “lyric’s potency” to the tragic chorus of ancient theatre: this chorus is, he notes, a “we that speaks as an I”, and he lingers on the notion of the individual subjectivity of that “I” when he suggests that it is “compromised by the numerous, anonymous undergrounds the word I holds within it”. These teeming “undergrounds” become sites of return, and the porosity of the self emerges as one of the poet’s central subjects. In his novel An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky, in an echo of his assertion elsewhere that “ruin and song are anonymous work” (“The Speaking Ear”), he writes, “I’m someone anonymous. A singer. A singer is no one and then being no one becomes a kind of everyone” (78). This “everyone” is in part an everyman—but it is also an echo chamber that reaches backward in time.

Sharon Cameron addresses the choral underpinnings of the lyric voice in Lyric Time when she writes, “at the center of [poetic] contradiction rises the lyric’s choral voice, however disguised under the cloak of a customary first-person speaker” (207). She notes that this merging of many-voices-within-one achieves a temporal counterpart: “vision in the lyric is often pluralistic, the perception of many moments distilled into one” (207). Both the backward glance and the echo chamber that operate in the lyric offer a simultaneity of experience in which the voice appears unified in time and space and yet constantly reveals its multiplicity. That multiplicity is imbued with disparate geographies and chronologies even as it voices a “here” and “now”.

Beachy-Quick traces the origin of the word “chorus”: “Chorus’ works back, etymologically, to a dancing ground, and from there, back to an enclosed space” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”). The bodily performance of chorality is bound up in that dancing ground, as Henrichs states when he writes, “In the beginning, there was the ‘chorus’—a collection of khoreutai performing the dance-song (khoreia)” (56). He goes on to note that “Greek musical culture is defined by khoroi” (56) and its combination of song and dance. This “dancing ground” that Beachy-Quick keeps in view maintains its importance in the classical Greek chorus of theatre and lyric in which song and dance are both crucial parts of the choral performance.27

27 For background on the dancing of the chorus see Heinrich’s “‘Why Should I Dance?’: Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Tragedy” (56-111). Meanwhile, Herbert Golder draws attention to the fact that “in most of the world’s cultures song and dance are, and always have been, the central form of human
musicality of this performance becomes a crucial part of the **lyric** and part of the somatic experience of reading, hearing or reciting poetry. Culler links this somatic experience particularly to rhythm (*Theory* 169-171), noting that this somatic aspect of rhythm is “bodily but social rather than individual” (169). The musicality of lyric contributes to its communal, choral character.

Within the enclosed space of the poem, reverberations are not stamped wholly by the individuality of the author but also by the **impersonality** of that author—an impersonality that is informed by, yet not the same as, the polyvocality of the lyric voice. The **lyric ‘I’** that is the choral self is a web of presence and absence. As Beachy-Quick writes of Keats—in a statement that applies to many writers—“A poet cannot merely be self-haunted” (*BWB* 99). Being haunted by others creates a cavernous voice within which a multitude of other voices may resound; the presence of—the haunting by—these other voices allows impersonality to emerge as poets seek less to assertively individuate themselves than to recognise the constituent parts of their own sensibilities. Discussing the poet H.D.’s work as a whole, Robert Duncan recognises in the title of her novel *Palimpsest* the way that H.D.’s voice can be read as palimpsestic throughout her writing (101); just as Duncan recognises that H. D.’s entire output is informed by a palimpsestic voice, so too can the broader concept of the choral voice be read through the concept of the palimpsest. Beachy-Quick’s palimpsestic gestures often rely on incomplete erasure, as fragments of the text upon which he writes loom through in his citational and annotative writings. This still-legible text credits the voices by which Beachy-Quick is haunted.

Many of Beachy-Quick’s poems recall the chorus, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly. In *Spell*, the poet retells the epic story of Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. Instead of retaining Ishmael’s central role as storyteller, he splits the voicing: he

---

expression, marking rites of passage and linking mankind to life’s larger patterns” (1). By placing the Greek chorus in a broader context, he links the choral voice to rituality in many cultures and, by extension, the literature those choruses influenced.

28 For further discussion of the relationship between impersonality and polyvocality, see the entry “Citation”.

29 In his preface to *A Brighter Word than Bright* Beachy-Quick cites Duncan’s *H. D. Book* as an exemplar of a poet’s meditation on another poet, invoking the work as a model for his own work on Keats. He writes that his own book is “not a work of criticism, but a ‘tribute and a study,’” and goes on to write that “The challenge is, as Robert Duncan puts it as he pays tribute to H.D. in his study of her, a semi-magical one, in which a ‘spell [may] be felt to be necessary to the works here, for weaving is necessary as I go, to keep many threads and many figures so that every thread is central and every figure central to threads and figures, with none coming to conclusion but leading further into the process’” (xviii). This citation suggests his own familiarity with Duncan’s reading of H.D.’s palimpsestic voice.
reveals that underneath Ishmael’s narration the voices of Ahab, Starbuck, Queequeg, Pip and the White Whale are all present; so too is an unnamed author. Ishmael—who has assumed this name after the close of Melville’s novel—tells a collective story in *Moby-Dick*. Beachy-Quick, in *Spell*, recognises this collectivity and individuates the members of Ishmael’s chorus. Yet even as each voice is separated, it reveals its own chorus—a chorus that includes Herman Melville—as the poet allows his guide’s voice to appear and reappear in the voices of the characters he has created.

In *This Nest, Swift Passerine* we again see the unravelling of a singular sensibility into its constituent parts. The slippage between quotation and “originality” in this work is constant and revelatory—not only of the poet’s sensibility, but of the way the allusive power of the lyric already makes a subtle show of haunting, and the way that the unravelling of such allusion is the work of an entire book. *This Nest, Swift Passerine* could be seen as the poet’s unknitting of just one of his own poems. The “Twining of Twinings” (*TNSP* 52-53) that constitutes the final segment of this work is, effectively, the final draft of the notebook-like meditations that have preceded it. The totality of the book leading to these final two pages again attempts to explicitly separate the members of the poet’s chorus.30

In *Circle’s Apprentice* Beachy-Quick explicitly invokes the chorus more than once: in each case, his poems that address the chorus (“& co.”, “Chorus and Hero” and “Chorus”) can be seen both as inhabitations of and essays upon the choral voice. The dual function of these poems makes them a vital counterpart to his prose considerations of the lyric chorus.

In the poem “& co.” Beachy-Quick explores the relative anonymity of the choral voice, its singularity blended with plurality that renders social markers indistinguishable. He writes, “The androgynous chorus bitterly laments/ No one found me, and now I don’t exist” (*CA* 26). That androgyny is one part of the anonymity of the “co.” that is the poet’s subject, and when the poet dwells on the seemingly individual experience—ordeal, even—he empathetically shows how the individual experience is echoed by the “all” of “we”, as when he writes in the same poem:

I am alone we all say it alone
At once we say it at once all

30 For a fuller discussion of the process of “unknitting” that takes place in *This Nest, Swift Passerine*, see “Annotation”.
Of us say it I am alone. (CA 26)

This expression of the common experience of aloneness is an observation of common humanity: *commonality* is an important factor in this equation. Considering the realm of Greek tragedy, the ancient writer Epictetus observed, “tragedies take place among rich people, kings, and tyrants. A *poor man* can take part in them only as member of the chorus” (my emphasis, cited in Agamben 17). This “poor man” is the *common man*, the *everyman* of later literature, or the “everyone” (78) of Beachy-Quick’s *Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky*; Beachy-Quick is aware of this historic separation of the “ordinary” and “extraordinary” when he titles another poem in *Circle’s Apprentice* “Chorus and Hero”. The traditional Greek chorus is a blended voice of observation, and when reflecting on a “self” it is an ordinary self: this reflects the societal position of members of the chorus in Greek society. Participation in the chorus was part of ritualised education and, as such, chorus members were “to be understood … as citizens-in-the-making” (Nagy 49). When, in Beachy-Quick’s work the chorus begins to unravel—as when in “& co” he shifts between “I” and “we”’, the singular voice is revealed as illusion, and the fragmentation of that voice reveals the nature of what had already been at the root of the poetic speaker: a choir, not a soloist. This is the work Beachy-Quick continues in *This Nest, Swift Passerine*.

In poems such as “& co.” Beachy-Quick makes explicit the choral aspect of this language and voicing of experience, but at the same time, paradoxically, re-unifies that voice as when he writes:

> I like how this voice performs itself inside my mouth
> This voice everyone speaks inside my mouth as me
> As I speak inside their mouths (CA 27)

This “speaking inside their mouths” is a way of writing back to the library he invokes: the mouths in which he places his voice are not just those of readers, but those of writers, of the tradition he invokes: through his poems he re-animates and re-cites.  

---

31 This term is suggested by Barbara Herrnstein Smith in *On the Margins of Discourse: The Relation of Literature* when she writes, “A poem is never spoken, not even by the poet himself. It is always re-cited; for whatever its relation to words the poem could have spoken, it has, as a poem, no initial historical occurrence” (31).
the past. This is not simply a matter of taking on historical or fictive voices (as in his citational voicing of Thomas Hariot and Mary Rowlandson in North True South Bright or of the Pequod’s crew and their quarry in Spell) but of inhabiting his reading such that his voice seems to graft itself onto the past, though incorporating awareness of subsequent scholarship. In doing so, historical periodisation is dissolved and the poet’s voice becomes part of “this dust we” (CA 27; 28). The poet himself seems to dissolve. In an interview Beachy-Quick observes:

The poem’s limits are not my own; my limits are more limited. The self of self-expression slips past the minor zone of offering its own experience as proof of its existence once a lyric space truly opens in the song it sings on the page. When that does occur, the I voices itself doubly, triply. It carries within it the reality of those others’ voices whose experience—even the experience of the word itself—secretly informs the nature of the poem. (A. King)

It is the anonymity of plurality that allows the poet to transcend his own individual limits within the narrow, enclosed like the dancing ground, space of the page.

The poet’s most direct invocation of the choral voice comes in the poem that bears the title “Chorus”. Within the narrow confines of a sonnet the poet offers constant equivalences through his use of the colon and the reversals of chiasmus; this choral set of equivalences outlines an ecology of the world, and of chorality. The poem is a series of flashes that builds a picture of the poet’s practice in its brushstrokes, arguably operating as an accelerated ars poetica:

World sufferable, world truant, world
Vestigial, world rude: locust-like fact,
Then fact-like locus: oracular curse
Inverted the field: a sentence like a
Bag of seeds dumped in the furrow
Of the ear: the audience clapped when Fate
Addressed them directly: syntax slowly
Charting zones where resemblance occurs,
No longer the sibylline speech echoing
One word with that word’s every rhyme:
We gathered around the event to sing:
Widows winnow shrapnel with the grain:
Self a syncopation between syllables:
When we say I we say I fall all: “I — (CA 62)

The first equivalents—world as “sufferable”, “truant”, “vestigial”, “rude”, echo Wittgenstein’s opening of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in which he states “The world is everything that is the case” (1): here the many-qualitied “world” is “fact”. The poet’s “oracular curse” looks to the *ancient* world of orality and magic, the “curse” linked to the *charm*, the charm, as discussed previously, in turn derived from *carmen*, or *song*. The poet revisits the notion of the oracular in his essay “The Oracular Tree Acquiring” in which he considers both Henry David Thoreau’s consideration of telegraph wires and the overheard voices that comprise *This Nest, Swift Passerine* (31-33). The “inverted field” of his chorus looks, meanwhile, to Olson’s “Projective Verse” and the open field it proposes; it also recalls the poet’s “Demonstrative Lullaby” (CA 5), which opens with the phrase “page opens field opens grave”. The seeds dumped in the ear are the many voices cited, the pre-existing chorus out of which the lyric “I” grows, the voices that form “The Speaking Ear”. The audience is formed by the “triangulated” nature of poetic address (Culler *Theory*, 8, 15, 186) in which a lyric “I” takes a lyric “you”, via which the poem reaches its anonymous reader. Syntax forms a *compass* by which we linguistically navigate and order the world through “chart[ed] zones”. The “sibylline speech”, also oracular, offers the *repetition* of echo that marks physical distance, while the “gather[ing]” brings the chorus into closeness. “Widows” reach a particular type of individuation through loss, yet play hostess to the shared voice of grief that constitutes much *elegy*. Meanwhile self emerges in the gaps, the silences—in the realms not yet articulated. “Chorus” is a grab-bag of moments, allusions: like the self that emerges in the spaces not yet articulated; here, poetic sensibility and poetic project appear in the act of juxtaposition. Through this chorus of images and ideas, Beachy-Quick offers a self-portrait of a plural self.

---

32 For further discussion of “Demonstrative Lullaby” see “Sameness”.

78
Throughout *Apology for the Book of Creatures* Beachy-Quick conducts a conversation with the essayist Montaigne, who himself conducts a conversation with the books in his library and in his memory. In the poem “[Second Objection: The Objectors]”, book is placed in conversation with book and the result is both creation (“one book argues awake a book”) and destruction marked by subsumption, as one book, become “ash”, is placed within the body of another book become “urn”. Here, the relationship between book and book is animated here, while elsewhere in Beachy-Quick’s œuvre the way prior work impinges on new is left implicit. Even where it is left implicit, the relationship of old work to new is constantly in question in Beachy-Quick’s writings. When that relationship comes through citation, the writer “reactivates” the cited, re-cited, language: this direct address to text is part of what I term, as an extension of “active Romanticism” (Carr and Robinson), active lyric. In his “Defense of Poetry”, Percy Bysshe Shelley reminds us that, “Every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification” (514). Beachy-Quick both directly acknowledges his predecessors through his citations, and innovates upon the past through direct interrogation and reinvention.

Direct quotation in poetry has a long history. It is perhaps most associated with the Modernist poets who explored fragmentation, including the fragmentation of literary traditions, and with the work of postmodern poets whose work often exemplifies the process of *bricolage* that Lyotard identifies as the fundamental feature of postmodernism (1613). Nonetheless, though citation arguably becomes more prominent during these eras, it is important to recognise precursors, such as in the
ancient form of the cento, a form named for the patchwork labour of its stitchery, and whose oldest extant example dates from the second century of the common era (Getty and Brogan 220). Moreover, literary allusion, in which other stories and voices are suggested to the attentive reader, forms a pervasive intertextual precursor to the cacophony of voices that we see in poems of the early twentieth century, (such as Eliot’s fragmentary “The Waste Land” or Pound’s Cantos already discussed, or early examples of documentary poetry such as Reznikoff’s Testimony and Williams’s Paterson) and that we continue to see in many forms in the poetry of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries since these landmark works were written.

Beachy-Quick is a poet who frequently alludes; his works constantly suggest links to the works that have come before him. Almost as frequently he brings the voices of others directly into his verse. The use of this citation is a form of what Marjorie Perloff has termed, in the title of her 2010 study, “unoriginal genius”. To Beachy-Quick the notions of “unoriginality” and “genius” are interlinked: that unoriginality marks both the indebtedness and the impersonality that renders the lyric “I” as a choral “I”. Citation is the poet’s method of answering influence, making explicit the polyphonic nature of the seemingly singular I / I / “I” he invokes in A Whaler’s Dictionary (121-123).

Considering the singular letter that represents the poet’s voice, Beachy-Quick writes:

In the telegraph pole of the letter I—a line that stands up from its slumber, a line perpendicular to the horizon—hides a labyrinth. When I say I, I speak this labyrinth. I am inside this I I speak, monster and victim indistinguishable, monster and victim both. (“The Oracular Tree” 33-34)

Beachy-Quick’s envisioning of the labyrinthine structure of the self, here expressed as duality between monster and victim, is made explicit through the use of citation, in which the words selected and quoted become part of the hall of mirrors of the poetic self.

This use of quotation, then, is one of the poet’s modes of investigating the nature of the lyric voice. This investigation through citation is thrown into relief by the poet’s constant recourse to self-reflexivity; the investigation also gains meaning
from the poet’s return to the examination of self. Beachy-Quick returns to self-reference as a strategy, a move he addresses directly in “No Man’s Land” when he writes “Self-reference marks irony/ So I’m told. But irony is when you know something/ About me I don’t know about myself. Sorry.” (gentleness 85). This complicates the image of self-reflection. Through his self-reference he is drawing attention to the materiality of his existence as a writer. His use of citation amplifies his investigation of his own material existence: the other voices he brings into his poetry operate in many ways, offering juxtaposition, interpolation and disruption, as well as repetition and echo.

Citation is the more prominent counterpart to that which I call annotative verse: while a poet’s annotations draw attention to the seams between quoted text and commentaries upon it (as in Beachy-Quick’s work This Nest, Swift Passerine), citational verse weaves in and out of quotation, allowing these citations to form a seemingly seamless part of the poetic voice. As such, where the poet draws attention to the seams through italicisation the visual effect, to carry the metaphor further, may be seen as kin to decorative embroidery. Each citation may itself be seen as a knot in the thread, as in Susan Howe’s formula that links text to textile. Howe writes:

Quotations are skeins or collected knots. “KNOT, (n., not …) The complication of threads made by knitting; a tie, union of cords by interweaving; as a knot difficult to be untied.” Quotations are lines or passages taken at hazard from piled up cultural treasures. A quotation, cut, or closely teased out as if with a needle, can interrupt the continuous flow of a poem, a tapestry, a picture, an essay; or a piece of writing like this one. (Howe, Spontaneous Particulars 31)

That “knot” that is “difficult to be untied” is a piece of language that does not bend easily to paraphrase: a combination or collocation of language so completely grafted in place that it becomes, for the poet, a single lexical item.

In Beachy-Quick’s work citation is often brought to bear in works that may be

---

33 For further discussion of the materiality of the writer’s existence and process, see “Page / Desk / Work”.
34 Metaphors of needlework seem especially appropriate as Beachy-Quick himself, dwelling on the unit of the “line” makes a note: “Etymology: a linen thread” (WD 166).
termed “re-performances” of existing works. Jennifer Scappettone uses the term “(re)performance” to refer to the act of translating (written) poems that have their roots in performative (spoken) acts. She writes that “the act of conveying linguistic creations across a distance is rarely expected to reproduce the sonic qualities of the sources in any strict sense”, and looks to theatre where “(re)vocalisation” is part of the re-creation of theatrical works. In using the term re-performance, I suggest that the “distance” over which a text is conveyed need not only be sonic or translational; it can also relate to temporal shifts and dramatic changes of perspective as well. The re-voicing of literary works, like citational verse itself, has a long history: with The Aeneid, Virgil re-staged and re-voiced the drama of Homer’s Iliad from the perspective of Aeneas; other classical works were revived and revoiced in the works of poets and playwrights such as Chaucer and Shakespeare, as when both writers retold the story of Troilus and Cressida. This revoicing can be seen as a kind of re-performance when a neutral narrative voice is shifted more substantially, whether that is through dramatic voicing, or a shift in temporal or geographical position or rendering of form. For example, the Homeric myths have continued to form a crucial backbone to nineteenth century, modernist and contemporary works, as in Tennyson’s retrospective monological revoicing by the Odyssey’s hero in “Ulysses”, Derek Walcott’s transportation and re-staging of aspects of the Odyssey into the Caribbean context and setting of St Lucia in Omeros, or Alice Oswald’s extraction of the lyric core of the Iliad in Memorial, in which she removes the actions of the poem that make it an epic, and translates only the similes and epithets that describe each of the war-dead whom Homer has named. In this vein, Beachy-Quick offers citational re-performances of multiple American prose texts in poetic form.

These re-performances or re-voicings are a way to make primary texts current again: if literature is, in Pound’s famous maxim, “News that stays news” (The ABC of Reading 29), this is in part because writers continually renew that work: allusion, re-voicing and citation have been crucial to this process. This form of renewal occurs, not simply by the transmission of older texts in new idioms, but also by reactivating those idioms that seem to have lost their relevance.

Beachy-Quick’s method often has much in common with what has come to be termed “documentary poetry”. Documentary poetry has become its own distinct area of poetics. Alongside Susan Howe, one of the best-known practitioners of this rising
form is Eleni Sikelianos; in an interview Sikelianos has spoken about her desire for a “dimensional poetry” (Morse). Documentary poetics draws attention to the way sources interact with other sources, folding in multiple voices. While still presented on the two-dimension plane of the page, documentary poetry incorporates the notion of three-dimensionality through its representation of original documents. Both Howe and Sikelianos are part of Beachy-Quick’s poetic genealogy, and have both provided book-jacket blurbs for his work. Though Beachy-Quick himself does not work within the realm of archival documents, his citational works bear a resemblance to documentary poetry in their exploration of the textures of the poetic voice. Addressing the work of one of the major practitioners of this form, Marjorie Perloff writes:

*Documentary* … is in Susan Howe’s poetic lexicon both threat and necessity. … Only by adopting the language of the library and the database … can the contemporary poet create what is paradoxically a new poetic sphere. (Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius* 122)

Perloff’s words on Howe apply in many ways to the work done by Dan Beachy-Quick: he too is a poet of retrieval, though he tends to retrieve his materials primarily from the (in Benjamin’s term “mechanically reproduced”) printed page, rather than from the unique, often ephemeral, archival materials that are interwoven in Howe’s work, such as her reproduction of needlework, fabric and handmade, handwritten booklets in *The Spontaneous Particulars*. Beachy-Quick’s retrievals are textual—and therefore lexical. In citing Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, Beachy-Quick reactivates Melville’s language, and fuses it with his own. In this moment of fusion the lyric likewise becomes active: two time periods are collapsed, such that the present moment of Melville’s Ishmael and Beachy-Quick’s Ishmael become one, and Ishmael’s voice, having been fragmented, becomes once again singular through its multiplicity.

In Beachy-Quick’s work, citation comes both in the form of “gleaned” (*WFM* 93) text pieced together as new work, as well as in the form of gleaned text that is interwoven with original work. In *Spell*, he enters his longest poetic inhabitation of

---

35 Beachy-Quick’s gleaning differs from many practices termed poetries of erasure in that the layout of words on the page of the original text from which he is “gleaning” do not affect their final appearance in the new poem Beachy-Quick creates from the gleaned language. An exception to this appears in the
another text as he creates his own version of Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. Throughout his book-length poem he uses fragments of Melville’s original language in combination with his own original words, themselves marked by Melville’s diction. This combination already suggests chorality, but Beachy-Quick’s approach goes further: rather than narrating the action only through the voice of Ishmael, as does Melville, the poet shares the story between the narrations of Ishmael, Ahab, Starbuck, Pip, Queequeg, and the unnamed contemporary author of the book. This approach doesn’t create the choral voice of *Moby-Dick*: by excavating lines from Ishmael’s overall narration and placing them in the mouths of multiple speakers, Beachy-Quick is offering a reading of Melville’s work that reveals the way in which the first person voice of Ishmael was *always* collective. Ishmael speaks, not just for his crewmates, but through them. This work, coming after the brief citational poems “At Removes” and both poems titled “Hariot’s Round” in *North True South Bright*, is a vital bridge between the individual works of his first collection and the longer—non-narrative—sequences that make up the collections that follow *Spell*. The work he performs in showing the chorality of Ishmael’s voice in Melville’s novel acts as precursor to the same work he performs on himself as, in subsequent books, he investigates the collectivity of his own lyric “I”.

While, in *Spell*’s first section, individual voices speak (with the aid of Beachy-Quick’s gleanings from Melville) one by one, in “Chapter 2” of *Spell* (“A Vain Heat” (25-39) the ostensibly discrete voices begin to mingle. Section D (37-38) of the chapter bears the title “AHAB qua STARBUCK, STARBUCK qua PIP, PIP qua AHAB; A REPETITION; AN ADDENDUM”. As each voice speaks “qua” the next voice, they fold over one another, first repeating cited language from passages of the novel, then breaking into the new language of the poet himself. In the first segment of this poem, Ahab and Starbuck speak:

Ahab — … *light, it lights not me* …

Starbuck — *I think I see … the ineffable thing… tows me* with a cable I have no knife to cut.

“Shards” and “Stitches” of *Shields & Shards & Stitches & Songs* in which Beachy-Quick performs a self-erasure; for discussion of these poems, see “Echo”.

84
Ahab—*My one cogged circle fits … and they revolve."

*Or, if you will, like so many ant-hills of powder … and I their match*

Starbuck—*My soul is more than matched …*

*(Spell 37)*

The speeches of Ahab and Starbuck are each derived from separate, though sequential, chapters of Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. As Ahab speaks (“qua Starbuck”), Beachy-Quick finds his words—in Melville’s words, in Ishmael’s words—in chapter 37 of *Moby-Dick*, “Sunset”. Starbuck’s words come from chapter 38, “Dusk”. That the two chapter titles are synonymous is suggestive of slippage: each character experiences the same vision, but offers different language. The dramatic form in which their speech is presented is suggested both by the stage direction-like introduction to each chapter of the novel (“The cabin; by the stern windows; Ahab sitting alone, and gazing out.” (Melville 196) and “By the mainmast; Starbuck leaning against it.” (Melville 198)) and by the scripted form of Chapter 40 of the novel, “Midnight, Forecastle”, in which members of the international cast of sailors speak.

Melville, before Beachy-Quick, has imagined and reimagined the form of his book from chapter to chapter; Beachy-Quick extends this, repeats and reimagines this constant formal reinvention through repetition and re-voicing. He picks up the repetition of the word “match” as Ahab stands “match” to the “ant-hills of powder” that sit alongside Starbuck’s fate as “*more than matched*” (my emphasis). This “matching” is crucial as the voices speak for—as—the voices of *other* speakers. Ahab’s “*light, it lights me not*” is now Starbuck’s speech: and the “light” that is central to Starbuck’s Quaker faith does, indeed, fail the crew of the *Pequod* by the novel’s close. Starbuck, “more than matched”, is speaking as Pip—whom Ishmael describes as “the most insignificant of the *Pequod’s crew*”, outmatched by all aboard. Pip, who completes the cycle by speaking “*qua*” Ahab with text drawn from much later in the novel, primarily from Chapter 125 “Log and Line”, shares with Captain Ahab the fate of madness. Though Ishmael’s voice is not overtly brought into this polyphonic cycle of dialogues, his original narration stands behind all three.

In the final section of Chapter 1 (“A Valiant He”) Ishmael, who opened the chapter with his “Exegesis of the First Words Spoken” (5-7), returns with “Voyages
Inside-the-Book that Take Place Outside the Book” (20-22). The Ishmael presented here is conscious of his role as writer—“A last page/ to Chapter 1—let me add” (20)—and in the midst of this final section comes Beachy-Quick’s use of the longest interpolation of Melville’s original text, here taken from the final paragraph of Chapter 102 of Moby-Dick (524). The poet does not offer his own words but instead stitches silence in the form of white space into the fabric of Melville’s words. He presents this paragraph of text in the form of columns:

[ISHMAEL’S VOICE, STILL—BUT RECOUNTING EXTRA-BIBLIO EVENTS]

The skeleton dimensions I shall now proceed to set down are copied verbatim from my right arm, where I had them tattooed; as in my wild wanderings at that period there was no other secure way of preserving such valuable statistics. But as I wished the other parts of my body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing—
at least, what untattooed parts might remain—
I did not trouble myself indeed, should inches at all measurements of the whale.
the other parts of my body or a poem I was then composing. [ISHMAEL’S VOICE, CONTINUED—INTER-BIBLIO]

(21)

The suggested distinction between “extra-biblio” and “inter-biblio” events (events that occur beyond the end of the narrative, which are also events that occur before the narrative can begin, are contrasted with those events recounted within the text of the happenings of this particular voyage) is a curious one: those events that take place outside the book are, in fact, all events that we know about only because they are recounted in the narrative of Moby-Dick, and are literally drawn, in Spell, “verbatim” from that narrative. This passage of novel and poem, then, presents the stirrings of
another story, which occurs outside of the book. Among those “extra-biblio” events, whose existence is only known through—as Beachy-Quick terms it—“inter-biblio” evidence, is the story of how Ishmael came to be Ishmael after being borne aloft on the ocean’s surface, the Pequod’s orphan. That text, in part, is revealed on Ishmael’s absent body, itself (like Queequeg’s before it) a kind of book. Ishmael’s narrative and Ishmael’s narrative self, are revealed through Beachy-Quick’s selections, citations, amplifications and re-performances to be resurrective. The voice of Ishmael is the voice of a perpetually echoing chorus.
In “Song of the Sirens” Maurice Blanchot asks his reader to remember that the sirens’ song “was a form of navigation too” (106). His notion that the song is an object by which we may navigate the world is echoed by Beachy-Quick when he says:

I feel there is something in the work of writing a poem, likewise of reading it, that is orienting [my italics]. I feel it in Dickinson’s “The Sailor cannot see the North—/ But knows the Needle can.” In ways that feel closely akin to Platonic aporia, the poem shepherds us into bewilderment—a being lost that must occur if the poem is also going to open us to finding that north that can be found in no other way save the becoming lost. (A. King)

That the poem must enact the getting lost as well as finding means that the poet and the reader both play the dual roles of sailor and needle; “Platonic aporia” could also be Keatsian negative capability: by trusting to the instrument of the compass and not the knowledge of the self, the poet remains in the fruitful lostness of uncertainty.

Beachy-Quick’s poems return often to the figure of the compass. In “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26), Mary Rowlandson’s orientation consists of time (noon), body and voice (throat) and landscape (bloom and seed, with thistle placed at the centre). In Spell, the Pequod’s orientation returns both in the form of the compass and in the presentation of the equator at the latitude zero: this zero line is a point of reference as the crew chart their course in pursuit of the white whale. This equatorial gesture appears again in This Nest, Swift Passerine when Beachy-Quick writes (centred on the page), “O—synaptic world—O” (TNSP 18): the apostrophic “O” doubles as zero, the double em-dashes recall the line of latitude, while the adjective
“synaptic” speaks to the web of interconnections by which we navigate the world. Later in the poem the compass appears explicitly:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
N & & \\
W & + & E \\
S & &
\end{array}
\]

That Definition is none—

(TNSP 26)

Here, both zero (“none”) and the full three hundred and sixty degrees of the compass appear side-by-side; the “definition” that is “none” is placed in the equator’s position. The sweep of the compass becomes the encompassing encirclement of lyric’s domain: in “The ‘I’ of Lyric” Beachy-Quick writes, “[p]art of lyric effort … is that lyric form draws a circle around itself”. He recalls, too, Emily Dickinson’s declaration that “My Business is Circumference” (Selected Letters 176) and, too, her declaration that “My Business is to Sing” (Selected Letters 177). Within the circumference of the lyric—within, as discussed previously, the enclosed space of the dancing ground to which the word chorus is etymologically linked, the poet must navigate song, must navigate via song. The compass that Beachy-Quick directly references in many of his poems is implicitly present in all of his poems as he seeks to chart a course through the world via his verse.

The compass is that particular type of circle (a figure to which the poet also returns) by which we position ourselves in the physical world; the reader must navigate both physical space (the book and the world it represents) and temporal space to comprehend Beachy-Quick’s movements. The work of This Nest, Swift Passerine, with its reconfigurations of poetic reading and its annotative poetic approach appears to scramble the temporal field, such that direction must be re-found, re-founded through the accrual of echoing voices; that locating of the lyric “I” that marks “here” (as in “Tomb Figurine [II]” (78-79) and “Tomb Figurine [V]” (82-83) of Circle’s Apprentice36) at the compass’s centre. This marks the lyric “I” as a voice that requires continual excavation, continual orientation.

36 For further discussion of “Tomb Figurine [V]” and the notion of “I” as marked by proximity or “hereness”, see the entry “I / I / ‘I’”
Deer

Like the almond, the child and ghost, and the whale, the deer is a recurrent image within, and inhabitant of, Beachy-Quick’s poetry. The backwardness of the deer’s antlers in “Hariot’s Round” locate England and America in relation to each other, between the past of the “old world” and the future of the “new”; this orientation is a continual feature of the deer’s use in Beachy-Quick’s work. The deer is another recurrent image through many poems and books, each appearance of the deer anchors the reader in a present moment that is an echo of the past and future as it contains multiple readings of history and possibility. The deer, which appears variously as leaping, as dead, as sleeping, as eating, is also a figure of woundedness, a reminder throughout Beachy-Quick’s poems of creaturely mortality. Beachy-Quick’s deer are particularly bound to the texts of Thomas Hariot, Mary Rowlandson, Emily Dickinson and George Oppen, making them likewise figures of citational investigations of inheritance; the mortality of Beachy-Quick’s deer is the mortality that marks the poet’s awareness that his verse stands on the shoulders of the dead.

As previously discussed, deer appear in each “Hariot’s Round” both as figures enabling orientation between Europe and the Americas, and also figures of metamorphosis as the Native Americans, who clothe themselves in deer hides, come to “Think themselves Deer” (NTSB 20). While this image returns to (and can be read as critiquing) well-worn tropes of animalistic representations of indigenous peoples, the figures of deer that recur over the course of Beachy-Quick’s verse come to be more broadly associated with humanity. Here, acting as guides, clothing, and linked to identity, Hariot’s deer are bound to the humans who encounter them.

This human relationship to deer also appears in “At Removes”, a poem in the voice of Mary Rowlandson and based on her work Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, written after her eleven weeks as a captive of Native Americans in 1675.37 In the “SECOND REMOVE” of the poem, Beachy-

---

37 Rowlandson (c. 1637-1711) was captured by the Native Americans in 1675 after a raid on Lancaster, Massachusetts in which many residents, including Rowlandson’s husband, were killed, and in which many more were taken captive. Rowlandson’s account of her eleven weeks of captivity are told in a series of “Removes” as the Native Americans and their captives travelled in order both to continue raiding other settlements and to avoid the English militia. Rowlandson dictated her narrative six years after her return, and in doing so instigated the genre of captivity narratives which came to include both true and fictional accounts of capture by and return from Native American societies (Howe, The Birth-Mark 89-130).
Quick, in Rowlandson’s voice, provides a catalogue:

beetle comfort me blight
beetle in the larch needle’s sap
leaf in the jaw
worm now forest is fodder
silk and shroud
sleep unknown in coils
wing on branch that dries
moth you feast where you hide
maggot in the dead deer’s mouth
bone sun-bleached bone white
needle by mending the pelt
bible in leather bound
sea by one man’s staff broke
bible with sarah’s grief
sun with stillness
wound with knife
moon with splintered light
spider no silk predicts bite
web with the blown seed caught
beetle with jaw on the leaf
doubt comfort me grief
bible with isaac with job
vein promise me lake lake promise me ice
ear I’ll do what I’m told

(NTSB 22)

This catalogue, which can be read as another inventory following from Hariot’s inventory of self and commodity in the volume’s preceding poem, distils Rowlandson’s sense of the external and internal components of the pre-Romantic natural world and the spiritual meditation that underpins her original text. While the deer in “Hariot’s Round [I]” appeared in action (“the deer do leap here as in England,
they do” (NTSB 18)), this deer now appears dead and maggot-ridden, reflecting the different relationships that white settlers such as Rowlandson have with the Native Americans from those of Hariot as visitor and observer. Hariot’s ethnography of the Native Americans he encountered was curious but passive; Rowlandson’s “removes” come after the violent activity of a raid on her village. In her essay “The Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson”, Susan Howe notes that this violence is apparent from the first paragraph of Rowlandson’s narrative. Howe writes, “In the first paragraph of the first published narrative written by an Anglo-American woman … guns fire, houses burn, a father, mother, and sucking child are killed by blows to the head” (The Birth-Mark 95), noting that all victims remain nameless in the narrative as “specificity is unnecessary in whiplash confrontation” (95). The violence of Rowlandson’s account arrives as a result of the kind of action that Hariot’s text was written to encourage: as white settlers arrived in America they displaced native populations, often through violence. Hariot’s text is written with a mercantile and pioneering eye; the raid on Rowlandson’s village occurs during the period of King Philip’s War (1675–1678), during which multiple colonial settlements were destroyed by Native Americans following the hanging for murder of three Wampanoags loyal to Metacomet (or King Philip) at Plymouth Colony (Lepore xi).38 The way Beachy-Quick portrays the deers’ bodies in his “Hariot’s Round [I and II]” and in “At Removes”, therefore, reflects the contrasting realities of peaceful and war-inflected encounters between two peoples.

The maggots and deer that Beachy-Quick includes in his catalogue are linked in Rowlandson’s own narrative when she writes of what her captors ate—a correlation to Hariot’s accounting of available foodstuffs in the New World made evident by Beachy-Quick’s juxtaposition of his two poems in North True South Bright. Rowlandson notes of the Native Americans that “they would pick old bones, and cut them to pieces at the joints, and if they were full of worms and maggots, they would scald them over the fire to make the vermine come out”. In the same passage she writes, “They would eat horse’s guts, and ears, and all sorts of wild birds which they could catch; also bear, venison, beaver, tortoise, frogs squirrels, dogs, skunks,

38 Through her work The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity Jill Lepore argues that this 17th century conflict consolidated the divisions in American society between Native American peoples and European colonisers. Mary Rowlandson’s captivity narrative helped consolidate this division, and the subsequent popularity of captivity narratives, fact or fiction, continued to emphasise the divide.
rattlesnakes”. Rowlandson marvels at the apparent abundance of food taken from “the wilderness, where there was nothing to be seen” (“The Twentieth Remove”). By placing the “maggot in the dead deer’s mouth”, the deer’s mouth itself is scalded—and Rowlandson’s admiration turns to ash. Abundance is once again turned into “nothing”, and the dead deer is once more a figure of identification for human woundedness and want.

In Mulberry deer return, first in the book’s dedication—“in this in which the wild deer / startle, and stare out”—and later in the body of the poetic sequence that comprises the volume. Though unattributed in the dedication, the quotation comes from George Oppen’s “Psalms”, a poem in which we see “wild deer bedding down” (36) and marking the landscape through the paths they “nibbled thru the fields” (36), effectively creating a network of trails that mark their passage through the landscape—as do humans. Joshua Corey, addressing the “postmodern pastoral” that he and G. C. Waldrep propose in their anthology The Arcadia Project, in which Beachy-Quick’s poetry also appears, notes that Oppen was an “angel” presiding over the act of anthology-making for his “onto-ecological astonishment” (“A Long Foreground” 2). Here, the astonishment’s of being human are necessarily placed in an ecological relationship with the astonishment of connection to the world. For Beachy-Quick, as well as for Corey and Waldrep, Oppen’s presence can be seen as “dis-scrib[ing]” (Corey 3) the domestication of the traditional pastoral mode by writing using the features of the pastoral to reconfigure the pastoral tradition. Beachy-Quick’s deer, like Oppen’s deer, are not familiar creatures put to pasture, but creatures that, while bedding down, remain “alien” (Oppen 36).

The deer that “bed down” in Oppen are echoed in “Record no oiled tongue, diary”, which takes on the voice of Samuel Sewall39; when Beachy-Quick’s Sewall receives a gloved widow as a visitor, he notes:

The deer wander
Between her hands, glean fallen
Seed at hand, bed down in fallen
Needles and grass. Those green discs
Afloat in the night are their eyes

39 For further discussion of “Record no oiled tongue” see “Almond.”
Caught in lantern light. Can it be
So many wake the forest glows
With sight? See and am seen. A pulse
At the stump is breath and rest
And breath again. (*Mulberry* 5)

These deer that wander between the widow’s hands are, in this passage, the living, watching forest: Beachy-Quick’s Sewall encounters them not as inhabitants of the landscape but as the landscape come to life—to sight. This encounter alters the speaker’s perception of the forest as an alien, undomesticated, landscape.40

Oppen’s “Psalm” is revisited in the deer of *Apology for the Book of Creatures, Circle’s Apprentice* and *gentleness*. In “Psalm”, Oppen writes that the deer’s:

… alien small teeth
Tear at the grass

The roots of it
Dangle from their mouths
Scattering earth in the strange woods. (36)

It is to the particular image of the grass roots dangling from the mouths of deer that Beachy-Quick returns in these later volumes as a literal illustration of the connection between the creature that is chewing the grass roots and the earth from which it came. In *Apology for the Book of Creatures* he writes:

One book argues…

*The deer in the garden startled the sparrow*

*the sparrow with the list in her mouth*

---

40 The “green discs” that appear in this poem recall the action Susan Howe explores in *My Emily Dickinson* of “shining the eyes” (95) in which hunter’s look for such “discs” to target in the forest. Howe is examining Daniel Boone’s account of having “mistaken the species of game” (95) after taking “the sixteen year old daughter of a neighboring farmer fleeing from what she thought was a panther” (95) for a deer. This once again links the fates of humans and deer. Though the link is oblique, Beachy-Quick’s own writing on Howe as a fellow “poet-reader, library-cormorant” (5) in “Ghosting the Line: Susan Howe and the Ethics of Haunting” suggests the aptness of this connection.
deeper inside the fronds the song flowers
the deer with the roots dangling from her mouth
as she looks up

... against a book’s pride

(“[Second objection: The Objectors]” n.pag.)

The italicised portion of the verse is another repetition of the poet’s own concerns; the roots in the deer’s mouth echo the image from Oppen’s poem. This recurs in future works by Beachy-Quick, and here Beachy-Quick imagines the scene in which the deer “startles” the sparrow, “star[ing] out” at the horizon. His return to the image means that his poem becomes an extended inhabitation of Oppen’s “Psalm”, as Beachy-Quick uses the image to make first deer—and then humans—strange again.

Beachy-Quick reconfigures the scene in Circle Apprentice with the poem “Late Pastoral”, in which birds, birdsong, grass, and startlement also reappear alongside the deer at the same time that Beachy-Quick deconstructs—destructs—the bucolic world of the typical pastoral. In this poem, the idyllic setting often associated with the pastoral is radically and perpetually disrupted; the poem’s first stanza begins with birds in the dirt and mud, “fill[ing] their mouths to sing”. The birds filling their mouth with earth and song anticipate the appearance of the deer with their mouths once more full. Dirt, mud, and song are set against the fact of a bomb that “remains/ Patiently exploding”. The explosion is continuous. The natural world so ruptured, the second and third stanzas resurrect the deer alongside the fact of killing:

We found the fact beautiful that the bullet
Could kill without wounding. We found
The deer, the roots in their mouths, wandered
Through the forest sprung up on ruins
Of the meltdown, staring out, not startled,
Not chewing the roots hanging from their mouths,
Not startled, never in fear flashing
Their luminous white tails in warning as they fled,
We found the fact beautiful that the bullet
Could kill without wounding. (CA 36)

Beachy-Quick’s “Late Pastoral” (my emphasis) interacts with Oppen’s images and his own previous reconfigurations of them, as he points to those things that the deer are not—startled, chewing, fearful. Beachy-Quick doesn’t explicitly state what the bullet has struck, and so the reader can imagine the un-startled deer as both living and dead, as both elegising witness and elegised body. This negative pastoral is another, though gentler, version of what Joyelle McSweeney terms the “necropastoral” in her book of the same title—a term with which McSweeney “re-marks the pastoral as a zone of exchange, shading this green theme park with the suspicion that the anthropocene epoch is in fact synonymous with ecological endtimes” (3). In Beachy-Quick’s “late”—or “endtimes” (McSweeney 3)—pastoral, the bullet piercing the deer’s body represents the greater incursion of the human into the world’s ‘pastoral’ spaces. The act of “kill[ing] without wounding” removes the violence of an entry wound evident in the deer’s body, and can be seen as the contest between the deer and the human occupying the same landscape played out in the paradoxical pairing of bullet and peacefulness within the body of the deer.

In Mulberry, Beachy-Quick invokes another literary deer when he writes “so the wounded deer leaps highest// so heart quickens” (58) alluding to Emily Dickinson’s poem “165” that opens with the lines “A wounded deer leaps highest/ I’ve heard the hunter tell” (77). In Mulberry the poet doesn’t require the hunter’s knowledge of the deer but instead links the image of the wounded deer to the quickened heart of love: the allusion to Dickinson’s wounded deer is placed between the weaving of the silk worm, and the shared cocoon of hand placed in hand. Preceding the appearance of the wounded deer Beachy-Quick writes:

I say now I love you
with the worm in my mouth
spinning my words
into your ear and your listening
volumes pupa
in the elm’s crotch and oak knot
do you hear as I hear
the old sins blossom from diaries
and become the faith leaves
live upon we eat not ink
but the light that burns in the blank
page so ink can more unselfish sing (Mulberry 57)

He follows the deer’s appearance with the words:

my hand cocooned in your hand
to become each one
half a wing of luna
moth waiting in woods for night’s
blossom the moon (Mulberry 58)

The woundedness of the deer, which in pain leaps up, becomes here the punctum of human love (Barthes, Camera Lucida 27): the lack that is part of desire is here only fulfilled by the unity of hands “cocooned” in one another. This image of hands forming a cocoon, and then the image of half-wings, recalls Plato’s vision of lovers voiced by Aristophanes in the Symposium: each lover requires the other for completion (24-30). The “wounded deer” that sits between the spun silk of the pupa and the emergent cocoon is the lover stricken by incompleteness before the cocoon that will heal that wound is formed. Likewise, the woundedness in which human relationships are bound up is brought to the reader’s attention when Beachy-Quick returns to this line from Dickinson’s poem: it appears alongside the dedication in This Nest, Swift Passerine, an additional paratext to that volume’s epigraph on “Being” and “Appearance”, “Unity” and “Variety” by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The use of both Oppen’s and Dickinson’s images of the deer as figures of mortality is perhaps brought to a provisional conclusion in Beachy-Quick’s sequence “Puritanisms”, which appears in gentleness. In the midst of the twenty-sixth segment of this poem the poet writes:

we startle the deer with our own
roots dangling from mouths the dirt
fecund coda of the most wounded (gentleness 45).

Both images are remixed, made human, as Beachy-Quick scrambles the components of humans, deer, mouths and roots in this new poem. The roots that dangle from our mouths are both the physical roughage that we have seen deer chew over, and likewise the deep history of human rootedness in place. That geographical rootedness reflects the wound as generations occupy and then die on the same ground. It is we who now appear with the roots in our mouths, superlatively wounded by self-consciousness, by mortality.
Echo

Echo is the constant companion of poets: it is the repetition that falls away as the original becomes ever more distant. If repetition is a marker of time in the poem, echo combines time and space. The longer the echo, the more cavernous the space the poem comes to occupy. The seemingly singular voice that originally speaks is revealed to be choral in part by echo’s resonance. The relationship of time and space that the echo reveals, too, carries a reminder of mortality: Robert Pogue Harrison writes that “human worldhood is defined above all by time” (19) and that “place is where time, in its human modes, takes place” (19). While echo is itself a natural phenomenon, its importance to poets and poetry may be seen in the way it defines a limit to the perception of human occupation of and influence on a place, even as it reflects actual sound-events with its reverberation. Echo multiplies, then disappears.

Echo comes to us first as a figure of myth, the nymph that loves Narcissus and speaks only the repetition of Narcissus’s own words. From the outset, Echo’s voice is a voice of erotic possession: having been possessed by love, Echo can speak only through her beloved, his voice multiplying inside her mouth. Having touched upon the phenomenon of echoes frequently in his previous books, in This Nest, Swift Passerine, Beachy-Quick addresses the myth of Echo directly, citing Ovid’s Metamorphoses with the words “When I seek you out, where do you go?” (9), and then moving into his own reading. When he writes, “Echo spoke her love in her love’s own words” (10), Beachy-Quick himself reflects the reflective nature of poetic desire.

This “echo”, a reflection of Narcissus’s self love, becomes a study of sameness. Echo’s repetition of the final words in each of Narcissus’s phrases is itself a reflection of Narcissus’s vision of himself, distorted by any movement in the water’s surface: to the poet, as the echo moves through space it too grows distorted—and that distortion is the source of its poetic power. The poet pictures Narcissus leaning to kiss his own image, and in that moment, he “mars” the lips of that other Narcissus in the water. The water in which he sees his own image becomes, not just a pond in the world, but also a part of Echo’s body: “Echo’s ear a pond as still as a mirror that breath moves upon to speak” (TNSP 10). The phenomenon of an echo moves sound, just as the reflectivity of water and of mirror move images: both are mimetic, but both
ultimately offer distortion, and make that distortion their virtue. Echo is a multi-sensory experience.

This mythical figure of Echo is in the poet’s mind when Dan Beachy-Quick says:

I don’t think the poet is one who speaks for herself or himself either—at least not in any normal sense. A poet speaks the already spoken words but, like Echo, has access only to those last few that remain in the air and available. But these memories of words build into a poetic resource over time, echoing again and again in heart and head, so that a poet is both Echo and echo-chamber, and to speak is to hope that those you speak toward, whose words you use to do so, hears, looks up, and steps into the poem. (A. King)

The voice that is itself an echo is also the “choral” voice previously discussed. In many poems spoken by a lyric “I”, this choral voice sounds in harmony, or in unison. In citational poems, a polyphonic effect is more apparent, as the poet individuates the many voices that echo within that “I”. Echo is, as such, both a form of impersonality, and a form of unoriginality, as it is possible to see in This Nest, Swift, Passerine when Beachy-Quick returns to the figure of Dorothy Wordsworth and her Grasmere journals at the close of the first section of the book. He writes:

Dorothy in her journal

Echoing Wm   Echoing C   Echoing Anonymous

We had the Crescent moon with the ‘auld moon in her arms’ (TNSP 16)

Dorothy Wordsworth is the overriding presence in the first “twining” of the book’s nesting structure: words from her journal are cited in the first segment of the poem, and woven through the entirety of this first of three broader parts of the work. That he ends with Dorothy Wordsworth’s words—words that echo the words of others—reflects back his own place within the annotative structure of the whole book. He is bowerbird, nesting in the words of others; that Dorothy Wordsworth is one of those
others complicates this vision. In her journal, Wordsworth records the actions and words of her brother William, the comings and goings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the quotidian details of their days in Dove Cottage at Grasmere—but those “echoes” are later echoed again by William in his poetry as the journals become a resource for his works. As such, Dorothy’s journals are truly a kind of echo chamber—as is Beachy-Quick’s own work. This particular citation from the diaries—her entry for 4 May 1802—is tellingly intermediary: at the beginning of this entry she writes “I wrote the Leech Gatherer for him [William] which he had begun the night before & of which he wrote several stanzas in bed this Monday morning” (104) and, at the end of the entry she notes that she “repeated verses” (106) to William after he retired to bed. Dorothy’s role as scrivener and muse is noted in the pages of her diary, and then echoed by Beachy-Quick as he copies out her words, repeating them in the making of new verses. The choice of the quotation he uses in the midst of this entry is even more telling: Dorothy Wordsworth often notes the advent of the crescent moon in her record of their days, but here she also cites the words “the auld moon in her arms”. These words are drawn from one version of the anonymous ballad “Sir Patrick Spens”; the same lines are later used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the epigraph to his “Dejection: An Ode” (155). Beachy-Quick continues—and amplifies—this echo that links his work with the Romantics and with the ballad tradition of the British Isles.

This process of amplification is, arguably, Beachy-Quick’s method of mining, of finding, a lyric self. Recalling Emerson’s characterisation of the orator as one who speaks words that “come to the hearer as his own”, Beachy-Quick writes:

The subtle but shocking paradox of such a moment of listening reveals genius as a different capacity from the one we normally think of—not singular and

---

41 The collaboration of the Wordsworths has been much written about; perhaps the most famous example of this collaboration is Dorothy Wordsworth’s diaristic account of encountering daffodils on a walk with William, an experience that two years later became the source for and subject of “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”. Lucy Newlyn’s critical biography William and Dorothy Wordsworth: ‘All in Each Other’ maps the collaborative work of the Wordsworth siblings, including this transformation of Dorothy’s diary entry into William’s famous poem (156-157). Crucially, Newlyn questions “why the ‘collective’ and ‘personal’ experience should be so sharply distinguished” (157) by scholars who seek to draw attention to the individual voice of William Wordsworth. This collapsing of the “collective” and “personal” makes the Wordsworths especially attractive subjects for Beachy-Quick’s choral poetics.
aloof but communal, an approach to universal insight that awakens in us the particularity of our own minds. Genius is echoic. (“The Speaking Ear”)

Beachy-Quick is here considering the erasure poet Ronald Johnson performed on Milton’s *Paradise Lost* in the work *Radi Os*, and yet we see the same process of erasure, of listening, performed by the poet upon *himself* in his sequence *Shields & Shards & Stitches & Songs.* As the poet captures and recaptures a remnant of his own words, the lyric voice becomes “both Echo and echo-chamber” (A. King). Beachy-Quick performs the act of diminishment—of capturing echo—seven times as each of his seven “shields” disintegrates before being remade as “song”.

In this form of diminishing repetition, the echo of the poet’s self-erasure in *Shields & Shards & Stitches & Songs* repeats core sounds in each section as text is taken away, leaving first the “shards” of those shields, and then mere “stitches”. Those stitches are the ghostly spine of the original “shields”. Wholeness is returned to the process when the poet produces his “songs”. The opening poem, whose shape is a rough simulacrum—a repetition—of the image of a shield, reads:

Be of ruin this rude maker.
Rubble be. Ruin be. Be not a stone.
Hellstone. Hailstone. Hellebore
Take root in the broken and bloom.
Bloom blood into bitter lake
Or let dirt drink its fill. The bee moans
In its thin cups. Pollen and trouble.
Mark it in bronze, poet. Grab the tool. Beat it.

(SSSSS 9)

---

42 Other examples of erasure poetry include those that incorporate visual art, such as Tom Phillips’s *A Humument*, those that incorporate the reproduction of the original page that has been erased, such as Mary Ruefle’s *A Little White Shadow* and Matthea Harvey’s erasure works in *If the Tabloids are True What Are You?*, and those that take the words from the original work being erased in the order of their appearance, but arrange them on a new page without consideration of their position in the original text, such as Matthea Harvey’s *Of Lamb*. Srikanth Reddy, Beachy-Quick’s collaborator on the book *Conversities*, likewise performs erasure on the text of another in his book *Voyager*—drawing on the memoir of Kurt Waldheim. This textual erasure, which could be read through the lens of the kind of conceptual writing that Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Uncreative Writing* proposes, can be seen as related to/following on from visual arts practice, such as Robert Rauschenberg’s work “Erased de Kooning Drawing” in which Rauschenberg erased the pencil drawing of Willem de Kooning.
The repetition of the word “Be” in these opening lines (echoed in the final words “Beat it” [my italics] becomes the primary feature in the opening of the poem’s second iteration as echoic erasure. This concern with being again reflects the multiplicity of a lyric speaker, as the positions he occupies multiply, and he becomes both maker and material, stone.

As the poem becomes a “stitch” it becomes simply an echo of its original form: the words “moan” and “poet” are left intact, but the rest of the “stitches” rely on the isolation of parts of words, both individual vowels, as well as the “tone” embedded in “stone”. That the “a” from “maker” precedes it suggests not just an individual tone, but also the act of atonement.
The “o” of apostrophe is also the “o” of lament, of pain—and the isolated “o”s are themselves echoes of the “tone” and “moan” of the “poet”. The atonement that will follow comes in the form of restoration, as the moan of the poet—an underlying mood, a pedalpoint in the poem—is once more filled in, becoming song.

The resulting new song is scaffolded onto the base form of the stitch remaining of the original shield: the new poem is as a new city built upon the rubble and ruins of the old. The former “stitch” is here highlighted in bold text:

Sing gold this chain’s scorched links.
Balm the scathed ear’s wounded tone by muting the dove’s
Limited cry, who or who or who or
Who into becoming so much less through the gray channel
Of her sun-lit sometimes radiant purple-flecked throat.
Beneath cloud a flake of green also moans. Makes moan.
Other heroes also pull their prisons in chains behind.
Heroes other than doves. A kind of poet. A kind of storm cloud. A wound.

(SSSS 33) [my bold]

Here the “lyric possession” (Stewart Poetry, 107-143) that happens elsewhere when Beachy-Quick cites, echoes, annotates the words of others, becomes a form of self-possession. Finding a spine to his original poem in the form of the “o”-heavy “tones”—language pared back to minimal vocalisation—the poet builds a new structure in “Song”. The “o” is further amplified by the “gold chain”, by the “purple-flecked throat”, by “Other heroes”—and that “o” is also lengthened as the dove’s cry of “who or who or who or / Who”, later echoed again in the mortality of the poet’s “wound”.
Arrive with your absence
Inside you. Don’t tell me to speak
More quietly. Arrive
With gravity inside you.
—“Fragile Elegy” (CA 49)

Elegy

Among his poems, Beachy-Quick has written only one that he designates as elegy—“Fragile Elegy”, from Circle’s Apprentice; nonetheless the pull of elegy sits behind much of Beachy-Quick’s work. This is because Beachy-Quick’s poetry is so much at home with the dead: his *citational* and *annotative* works reveal a *chorus* of those who have gone before. The poems in which he interweaves the voices of the past into his own present moment of creativity form an active lyric.⁴³ The “active” status of that *lyric* is derived in part from the *reactivation* of the voices that have gone before.⁴⁴ Those voices are frequently ancient—just as the memorialisation of elegy is among the most ancient impulses of literature (Watkin 6). Given the centrality of the dead in his body of work, it is apt that the subject of his only titled elegy is Ezra Pound, a poet he has previously cited in his work, but whose life ended before the poet was born. Pound’s legacy is shot through with his anti-Semitism, his sympathy with Fascism and the radio broadcasts he made in Italy during World War II that led to his incarceration for treason at the end of the war.⁴⁵ This history makes Pound an uneasy subject of veneration. Beachy-Quick’s “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55)—the fragility of which is, perhaps, partly born out of Pound’s politics—is the poet’s only named elegy. This differentiation from his other works is less important than the *similarity* it bears to much of his other poetry. Instead of demarcating this poem as his only elegy, the similarity—by which he inhabits the work and experiences of a dead writer as a reader and a thinker—suggests instead that his larger body of work bears the stamp of elegy.

---

⁴³ I propose the term “active lyric” as a partner to the “Active Romanticism” proposed by Robinson and Carr. For more on this, see “Lyric”.
⁴⁴ For discussion of “reactivation” as “re-performance”, see “Citation”.
⁴⁵ The details of Ezra Pound’s political beliefs and actions have been much commented upon. Editor Ira B. Nadel’s *Ezra Pound in Context* offers a comprehensive overview of the many facets of Pound’s work and legacy, including Alec Marsh on Pound’s politics (96-105), Benjamin Friedlander’s consideration of the radio broadcasts (115-124), Serenella Zanotti’s discussion of Pound and Fascism (376-390) and Alex Houen’s attention to Pound’s anti-Semitism (391-401).
Beachy-Quick as elegist may be viewed, in his own description, as a “friend” to the dead. Writing about his time in graduate school, in the article “Necessary Confusions” Beachy-Quick recalls a conversation in which his then-supervisor instructed him, “You must make friends with the dead” (18). The body of his work attests to the attention he has paid these many friendships, from those with the Graeco-Roman classical writers to those with poets of a generation before his own.\(^{46}\) This action of “making friends” is a way in which the poet writes his kinship with the dead into the present moment, making them his contemporaries. Taking Pound as his contemporary and kin, however uneasily, recalls Pound’s own genealogical gesture in the poem “A Pact”, in which Pound addresses Walt Whitman, proclaiming, “I have detested you long enough./ I come to you as a grown child/ Who has had a pig-headed father” (90). Beachy-Quick does not betray the same sense of detestation for Pound even as he portrays Pound during his period of incarceration in Pisa for treason. Like Pound addressing Walt Whitman, Beachy-Quick’s taking of Pound as his subject has the effect of making the same plea that Pound once made: “Let there be commerce between us” (90).

Though his poems may be addressed to and created with living friends (as in the poems dedicated to his wife and children, and his collaborations with his contemporaries Srikanth Reddy and Matthew Goulish), or written in the wake of living poets (as is the case for “Paperwhite” in gentleness written “for and after” Susan Howe), the work he cites in the body of his poetry comes, almost invariably, from the dead. That Beachy-Quick generally saves citation for the dead is a form of hosting.\(^{47}\) His elegy for Pound may be read as an elegy for, after and with Pound: Beachy-Quick recognises that “the scene of responsibility in writing is analogous to that of memory”, and that that responsibility is a form of “co-responsibility [my italics]” in which the writer gives voice to the dead, to the “ghost voice” (Applebaum

\(^{46}\) That Beachy-Quick uses this sense of ‘friendship’ as the starting point for a poetry of many voices recalls Stephen Greenblatt’s opening to Shakespearean Negotiations, in which Greenblatt writes, “I began with the desire to speak with the dead” (1). This desire is not simply elegiac, but is the mode of the critic. It is this relationship with the dead that underlies Beachy-Quick’s annotative poetics: his work is both memorial and elegiac, and also resurrective as he once again makes the cited works contemporary. See “annotation”.

\(^{47}\) I owe my reading of elegising as a form of hosting to Jacques Derrida’s invocation of hospitality in the essays of The Work of Mourning and Specters of Marx. In the latter, considering Max Stirner, Derrida writes of the Ego that it “would itself be inhabited and invaded by its own specter. It would be constituted by specters of which it becomes the host and which it assembles in the haunted community of a single body. Ego = ghost. Therefore ‘I am’ would mean ‘I am haunted’” (133). Beachy-Quick’s friendships with the dead become, through elegy, the empathetic examination of his own hauntedness.
This “ghost voice” joins the chorus of the poet’s lyric ‘I’.

Beachy-Quick’s poetry doesn’t mourn the dead so much as it retrieves them, an action that allows him to give voice to the dead once more as host. This act of retrieval is just as fundamental to the elegiac impulse as the act of mourning. Kristen Prevallet notes that elegy that is, actually, “anti-afterlife”: she writes that “afterlife presents itself as an assurance of a habitable unknown” (41). The elegy that seeks to retrieve the dead likewise rejects the afterlife by reviving the dead within this life.

This retrieval is also a method of making loss visible through the re-activation of lost voices that are now bound by the finitude of a completed oeuvre. The written word becomes memorial. Susan Stewart writes that, “Our terror of the unmarked grave is a terror of the insignificance of a world without writing” (On Longing 31). The poem that renders its chorus visible may be one response to that terror: citation is a form of ventriloquism that re-marks the grave of a prior work, a grave that is always in danger of falling into ruin. Elegy, as much as it also indulges the crestfallenness of mourning, is buoyant. This act of retrieval, the ebb and flow of emotion, makes each elegy an Orphic act, and creates a different form of “transactional lyric” (86) to those Daniel Tiffany outlines.

48 This characterisation is appropriate: other transactional lyrics—the charm, the lullaby, gain their urgency from the feared illness and death that such texts aim to ward off.

In Dominion of the Dead, Robert Pogue Harrison particularly investigates the way we house the dead, and draws a parallel between the interment of human remains in the earth and the interment of human thought in books—objects that, he notes, “store time” (43). Of literary grief, Harrison writes:

In giving voice to the wound of mortality itself, literature houses or gives a home to even the most desolate kinds of grief. It gives us back that which we keep on losing, namely a cognizance or recognizance of our passionate and mortal natures. Hence the intrinsically posthumous character of the literary voice. (14)

In this way, Harrison links the particular voice of the elegist to the broader voice of the literary writer. Literature hosts the grief of the human condition. That the literary

48 For discussion of the transaction that takes place in the “transactional lyric”, see “Charm”. 
voice is already “posthumous” at the moment of its creation suggests that not only Beachy-Quick’s poetry, but, indeed, all literary writing can be read under the sign of elegy. By so frequently hosting the dead, Beachy-Quick is recognising and making visible this notion.

However, the elegy gives voice to particular—though simultaneously collective—griefs as it “establish[es] the reputation and memory of the dead” (Stewart, “What Praise Poems are For” 236). The fragility of Beachy-Quick’s “fragile elegy” is both the human fragility of being mortal, and the fragility of reputation. Pound is a poetic giant, a political minefield—his reputation is itself fragile.

The collectivity of the elegy marks it as another ritual text⁴⁹: the lyric “I” that speaks in elegy is both the choral “I”—voicing, as it does, both a personal and collective response to death—and it is also a “ritual ‘I’” (Ilomäki 55). The category of elegy is itself bound in ritual: divorced from the ancient Greek form that relied on elegiac couplets to define it, the English language elegy has been characterised by “the topics of loss and death and the speech act of lament” (Braden and Fowler 398). The replication of this mode reinforces the rituality of elegy’s voice. That rituality is bound to the action of memory as it apostrophises death and the dead, lamenting the lost body as it resurrects the dead in language.

In the case of “Fragile Elegy”, that memory is readerly: the poem is written in response to Ezra Pound’s period of incarceration in Pisa, one of the most famous—infamous—periods of Pound’s life, decades before his death in 1972. In focusing on this period, and on the Pisan Cantos, Beachy-Quick again acknowledges that both he and Pound are “creature[s] of legacy” (Harrison 39). This is not his first use of Pound’s Cantos as a point of departure: a segment of “Canto LXXXI” from the Pisan Cantos is also woven into the fabric of This Nest, Swift Passerine’s fourth section. Throughout the Cantos Pound himself investigates legacy, playing host to a myriad of voices and taking apart the chorus of literary echoes that constitutes his reading. The fact that these voices appear in many languages—often dead or archaic languages—makes this monumental work a house to human history. In both This Nest, Swift Passerine and in “Fragile Elegy” Beachy-Quick extends hospitality to a voice that in

⁴⁹ “Charm” and “Lullaby” discuss the rituality of these literary forms; ritual as part of lyric poetry is also invoked in the entries “Chorus” and “Lyric.”
its own time extended hospitality to so many other voices.\textsuperscript{50}

“Fragile Elegy” appears at the opening of the fifth section of \textit{Circle’s Apprentice} and is, in a way, the climax—or as he states in an interview with Bob King, the “culmination” of the volume; the poems that precede this elegy are poems of life’s progress, and those that follow are concerned with the mythic and the posthumous. That his elegy—a text of death—focuses exclusively on the controversial prime of Pound’s life reflects that other kind of text of death, the eulogy, in which \textit{achievement} is measured as much as loss.

While there are allusions to the \textit{Pisan Cantos} throughout Beachy-Quick’s elegy, the living figure of Pound himself, and Beachy-Quick’s imagining of Pound, are more central. To illuminate this imagining of his predecessor, Beachy-Quick first positions himself temporally:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Winter knotted the water on wire to ice}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Not to deny I remember
Silence the seasonal equinox

nox, equi
knot December warm once

again my mouth figments
what

some frozen what (CA 49-50)
\end{quote}

This setting of self within the depths of winter, and within silence, allows Beachy-Quick to draw on the measure of his own life; it is the juxtaposition of the living and the dead within time that gives both meaning. Following his self-placement at the December equinox, Beachy-Quick throws his mind backward:

\begin{quote}
that speaking that speaks Winter
\end{quote}
where in my cold reaches I think
of him who in prison sand a scent
of leaf in his hand to remember
who saw through the smoke-hole
Sirius in the infirmary tent who
might do best to acquire forgetting
to add silence in who cannot
remove himself from brute time
fringes beauty with harm and he
saw on three wires the sparrows sit—
the sparrows who in the searchlights nest—
and composed the canto to varying
perches and so composed his song
and so a wire now in my eye hums
the image in blue wires and inter
lines the words on the black

sky/page speaks water in knots (CA 50)

Unnamed, we see Pound “in prison”; the “scent of leaf in his hand” comes from the
eucalyptus pip he carried into the infirmary following his breakdown. Eucalyptus
appears in “Canto LXXX”: Pound writes, “and the eucalyptus bobble is missing”
(507); he recalls “the odour of eucalyptus or sea wrack” and pictures “the cat-faced
eucalyptus nib” (512) and then refers to this item when he gives an inventory of
diminishing possession:

so that leaving America I brought with me $80
and England a letter of Thomas Hardy’s
and Italy one eucalyptus pip (Cantos 514)

This eucalyptus pip has talismanic power for Pound, and later for Beachy-Quick. That
Beachy-Quick characterises Pound’s canto as composed to “varying perches” (CA 50)
sends the reader back into Pound’s text as in Canto LXXXII we see, in notation that recalls the musical stave:

\[
\begin{align*}
8^\text{th} \text{ day of September} \\
f & f \\
d \\
g \\
\text{write the birds in their treble scale}
\end{align*}
\]

(Pound, *Cantos* 539)

These birds become yet more voices in the polyphonic *Cantos*, their notes spanning almost a full octave. The elegy, though, returns always to the writer—the reader—who dwells with Pound. Pound’s life and words are “images” that “hum” in Beachy-Quick’s eye, his elegy an act of imagination as much as an act of hosting, homage, and mourning. By focussing on life and creation, rather than on death, Beachy-Quick draws attention to that which is truly fragile—the living body. By focalising his attention on Pound through his own position and experience, he demonstrates how every poem can be read as elegiac insofar as it displays the inheritance and mortality of its writer and its subject.

Beachy-Quick’s desire to host the dead Pound is also the desire to act as apprentice: by dwelling with Pound, the younger poet seeks to learn from the elder poet’s polyvocal, citational—and elegiac?—epic. Beachy-Quick contemplates the way in which those we read become part of ourselves as he writes, “Speak me in Become my voice/ Speak it in me as if it were mine” (CA 52) and “there is no me minus/ your breathing above a page” (CA 53). This intertwining of predecessor and contemporary poet returns when he writes:

The prisoner kept a leaf of eucalyptus in his hand  
When he saw the wire he sang  
Memory on the edge of the palm and greater need  
Scented the air in his lungs and sanity was less  
A concern than the lynx he thought the woman  
He loved betrayed by his love but the birds
Composed the wires
As he sang them I listened and I grew
Audacious in

Invocation crossed by blue wires
And I soldered silence
I called mine to silence I called yours

With only the heat of my mind to say here
There is no sun no light no heat only a wire

Exerting my force in absence
To remember the poem is it always this story
Of its own utterance and nothing

I heard a voice and the voice came

Winter knotted the water on wire to ice

Past tense before the memory occurred (CA 54-55)

As the poem crosses back and forth between Pound and Beachy-Quick, between the Cantos and this “Fragile Elegy”, the poem’s apprenticeship (to Pound; to the act of reading; to life) binds it to the explicitly choral voice that dominates much of Beachy-Quick’s poetry. Beachy-Quick “heard a voice” apparently before “the voice came”, anticipating the long echo of the dead. Meanwhile, the poem itself has voice, is a “story/ of its own”, separate from the poet and subject: this is true of Pound’s Cantos, and it is now true of Beachy-Quick’s verse.

Elegy is necessarily bound up in the way the dead live on in the living. Past tense moments proliferate before they are altered into memory; they become a set of images that resound beyond a singular human life. Elegy is spoken by a lyric “I” that necessarily lays bare its underlying lyric “we”—a “we” that necessarily incorporates
its deceased subject. Beachy-Quick shows that a poem need not be labeled as such to participate in the actions of elegising.
The epigraph exists between the page and the world outside the page; between the poem and the world beyond the poem—or, as Gerard Genette describes paratext in general, it exists in “a zone between text and off-text” (Paratexts 2). Genette in particular describes an epigraph as that which appears “at the edge of the work” (Paratexts 144). This particular kind of paratext is interstitial, a hinge between poem and not-poem, book and not-book. In the action of citation, the epigraph acknowledges a debt, and yet implies incompleteness: there is more work to be done.

In his novel An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky Beachy-Quick offers one suggestion of the possible purpose of the epigraph. He writes of teaching the beginnings and endings of a book. His protagonist, Daniel, writes, “I once ended a semester’s class, after Ishmael, another orphan, had been rescued by the devious-coursing Rachel, by saying ‘A book begins by defining “Who I am”; it ends by asking “Who am I?”’ (27). Though here the author and his protagonist are speaking of Moby-Dick, the trajectory could be applied to every book: to succeed as a book it must move beyond the definition of self to the questioning of self. The question becomes, “Who am I?/I/I’?”. That opening definition—“Who I am”—begins not with the first chapter, but with, where one is provided, the epigraph; this in itself is an indication of the partial impersonality of the self. It is not just the personal relationship of the author to the epigraph and its writer, and the relationship of the epigraph to the text that follows, that are significant—it is also the relationship of the epigraph to the author’s constructed voice. At the same time, an epigraph is making a personal claim as an author seeks to cement a relationship with another author.

The epigraph’s placement at the head of the text is also designed to give that work authority: the epigraph takes on the role of benign governance over the work that is to come. Yet, to continue Beachy-Quick’s formulation, the fact that the book ends with the question “Who am I?” could be seen as undermining the authority of quotation. In On Longing Susan Stewart describes the position of the quotation as that of “a severed head, a voice whose authority is grounded in itself, and therein lies its power and its limit” (19). In the form of the epigraph, the severed head speaks, but is

51 The separation of the first-person pronoun into “I/I/I’” is Beachy-Quick’s own (WD 121-123) and is discussed in the inventory entry of the same name.
quickly talked over by the work that follows. That epigraph, however, may haunt the whole work: as the writer proceeds, an epigraph may continue to sound, *sotto voce*, as counterpoint to the main text.

Beachy-Quick’s epigraphs are many: he is a poet who acknowledges indebtedness, and he acknowledges the work of writing as also a work of reading. In *Mulberry* he opens the text with a note to his reader in which he writes. “As I mulled my lines I thought the divergent strands of my poetic interests … were not divergent at all, but simply the weaving back and forth … of those leaves I had devoured, those pages I read” (ix). Within this same text he names many of his poetic interests; these may be gleaned by attention to the poet’s choices of epigraphs. There are touchstones to which he circles back in these choices: religious thinkers, Thomas Traherne (*NTSB* n. pag.) and St Augustine (*Spell* xi); philosophers, Aristotle, (*Spell* xi) Wittgenstein (*Spell* xi), Frege (*Spell* xi), Nietzsche (*WD* ix) and Benjamin (*Spell* xii); poets William Blake (*Mulberry* vii), John Keats (*WD* ix), Emily Dickinson (*Spell* xi) and Ronald Johnson (*gentleness* n. pag.), and the American transcendentalists, Henry David Thoreau (*ISPS* n. pag.) and, most persistently, Ralph Waldo Emerson (*Spell* xi, *TNSP* n. pag., *CA* n. pag.).

Gathered together, the quotations Beachy-Quick chooses as epigraphs map the territory of his writing, which is responsive to his reading. They also show that the act of weaving, the braiding of words that the poet allows to rub against each other, produces friction: in both their “severed” state, and when reverberating more fully when the text of his books draw them out, epigraphs resound. Three out of Beachy-Quick’s six full-length collections can be seen as book-length meditations, poems conceived as books: each of these collections is especially indebted to the interweaving of his epigraphs with the original text. While Genette focuses on the way in which epigraphs often function by “commenting on the text” (*Paratexts* 157), he does not consider the fact that this relationship may be reversed, and the author’s work may be a response to, or comment upon, its own epigraph. For Beachy-Quick, epigraphs frequently seem to take on this two-way relationship, becoming another instance of his *annotative* poetics. That his book-length projects, his chapbooks and his volumes of discrete poems all return to longer poetic sequences and repetitions in the midst of shorter, discrete—though thematically cohesive—poems, adds to the powerful position the epigraph takes in governing extended poetic works. For
example, when he recalls Oppen’s “Psalm” in the dedicatory epigraph to *Mulberry*, we see the poet address and unfold the poem and image to which this epigraph refers through multiple volumes of his work.52

The epigraph, too, makes explicit the way an author positions his work in relation to that which has come before. T. S. Eliot describes this process in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” when he writes:

> the existing monuments [of art] form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered. (50)

The epigraph does its work not only in referring to that canon that the new work is re-ordering, but also in showing that the order previously considered complete was in fact incomplete: from these epigraphs the new work unfolds. The use of the epigraph may well reinforce the position of a work in the “tradition” that the “individual talent” enters, but it also severs that tradition such that tradition is represented by the quotation. This serves to bring its previously unperceived limitations, or incompleteness, to the surface. An epigraph is as an opening sally: the poet’s interrogations of the texts he or she chooses to highlight not only offer interpretation of those texts but also their extension in new directions. The epigraph represents work that can only be completed by the writing that follows it; the epigraph also reveals the production of new work as fundamentally annotative. The dead haunt Beachy-Quick’s work through explicit acknowledgement; Beachy-Quick likewise haunts the work of the dead, as much as he hosts it. The poet becomes the “sub-sub-librarian” (Melville xvii) who, through the arrangement of many quotations, is the first speaker of *Moby-Dick*; the writers of Melville’s epigraphs echo that second voice53 that is instantly forgotten the moment the novelist writes, “Call me Ishmael” (3)—forgotten, yet also subsumed into Ishmael’s self-creation. The subsumption of those epigraphic

---

52 For discussion of Beachy-Quick’s return to Oppen’s “Psalm” see “Deer”.
53 Preceding the “sub-sub-librarian” is the “Late Consumptive Usher to a Grammar School” (Melville xv) who offers the “quoted” etymology for the word “whale”. Both this Usher and the “sub-sub-librarian” “speak” through acts of quotation; nonetheless, they represent the first two speakers in the novel before the reader is introduced to Ishmael.
quotations is an act of self-creation, for the character of Ishmael, for the poet Beachy-
Quick.

The epigraph takes on a curious role in the case of works already deeply
imbued with citation: in Beachy-Quick’s poetry, such imbuation is never more
prevalent than in his book of stitchery, *This Nest, Swift Passerine*. The bridge that the
epigraph provides is one in a set of bridges, as quotation marks the join between each
part of the book-length text, the “nest” that is being built from the retrieved texts.
Once again (as in *Spell*, and later in *Circle’s Apprentice*) the poet takes his epigraph
from Emerson:

Here we find ourselves, suddenly, not in critical speculation, but in a holy
place and should go warily and reverently. We stand before the secret of the
world, there where Being passes into Appearance, and Unity into Variety.

(*TNSP n. pag.*)

As the singular epigraph both represents and spurs the whole work these words by
Emerson express not just the work at hand, but in a way the role of the epigraph itself:
that which brings the text from “Unity into Variety”. When Paul Eluard writes,
“There is another world and it is in this one”, (qtd. in Beachy-Quick “January
Notebook” 1.4)\(^{54}\) among all the worlds-within-worlds he implicates in his statement
are the worlds of individual books encapsulated in epigraphs, the Variety within
supposed Unity. These worlds that poems and books “found” have the effect of
“removing [the new work] from the world as such” (“January Notebook” 1.4).
Epigraphs begin that work of founding, set the direction of moving toward a new
variety of new work as it departs out of the Unity represented by a temporarily settled
tradition.

\(^{54}\) The history of this quotation in English is appropriately indebted to its paratextual history: I take it
from Beachy-Quick’s “January Notebook” where it appears unattributed; its popularity in English has
been attributed to Patrick White’s epigraphic use of it in *The Solid Mandala* (n. pag.); among other
usages, it has also appeared as the epigraph to the poem “Living Among the Dead” by William
Matthews, and as the epigraph to Suzanne Buffam’s *The Irrationalist* (n. pag.)—Buffam herself a
contemporary of Beachy-Quick’s, frequently receives thanks in the acknowledgements of his books.
McKenzie Wark, attempting to trace the original source of Eluard’s quotation, notes that when cited,
though usually attributed (and sometimes misattributed) it is “invariably given without source”; it is
likely that White translated the phrase himself, and may have found it in the collection of prose
writings *Donner à voir*. The text by Eluard from which the quotation is drawn is relatively unknown;
the quotation in fact owes its widespread popularity in English to its appearance as epigraph.
Etymology

her hands a comma curled inside
me calm // calm

calme from calma from kaûma
the heat of day
time for rest stillness from
kaíein to burn

the red-winged blackbirds calm
at noon in reeds weave flame (Mulberry 41)

Inside the braided coils of Mulberry, the English language twists itself back to its origins. The cited kaûma’s heat is the noonday heat of ancient Greece: calme, calma from the Romance languages through which the word passed into English. The return to words and their origins is not surprising in a poet who has himself written a dictionary: indeed, in The Whaler’s Dictionary “Etymology” receives its own entry, while throughout A Brighter Word Than Bright, the dwelling on origins and historic usages recurs as Beachy-Quick dwells on and in the poetry of John Keats. For instance, he writes:

In the ancient sense, genius referred to that god which, at the very moment of our birth, protected our life. (BWB 16)

and:

“Capability” … has within its etymology being receptive in terms of being capable of holding what is put into it. The body is a capable thing, capable of holding the mind that is itself capable of holding the world imagination realizes as truth. (BWB 53)
and:

“Flaw” here bears in it one of its oldest senses: a spot where turf is cut out.
The “flaw in happiness” speaks not simply of defect, but of an opening, as if
cut into the earth. (*BWB* 80)

For Beachy-Quick, to think **backwards** is to think etymologically, as he returns again
and again to the origins of words. His lyric thinking incorporates this search for
origins. Yet this thinking is also **associative**: that in his poem “comma” leads to
“calm” is not surprising—both suggest a pause, a lull, and contain assonantal echoes.
Nonetheless, the origins of “calm” and “comma” are different: the Greek *komma*
indicates a “piece cut off”, or a “short clause” (not pause) and itself comes from
*koptein*, or “cut”. The leap between the two creates a useful association, and recalls
the Transcendentalists, very much foundational in Beachy-Quick’s practice, who
traced the origins of language back to the concrete meanings from which metaphorical
usages arose. In particular, Emerson addresses the study of etymology as vital for the
poet, and a process fundamentally linked to **nature**, when he writes that “words are
signs of natural facts” (13)—or, as Robert D. Richardson writes, “as our aesthetics are
grounded in nature, so is our language” (230). Emerson calls on the writer to revive
dead metaphor, and part of that process is to reactivate the forgotten roots of words.
Emerson points out:

*Right* means *straight*; *wrong* means *twisted*. *Spirit* primarily means *wind*;
*transgression*, the crossing of a *line*; *supercilious*, the *raising of the eyebrow*.
We say the *heart* to express emotion, the *head* to denote thought; and *thought*
and *emotion* are words borrowed from sensible things, and now appropriated
to spiritual nature. (13-14)

This understanding of the word roots from which contemporary English is formed
allows individual words to express multiplicity; yet because for most speakers these
roots are buried, the poet must dig them up and make them explicit. Beachy-Quick is
certainly not the only contemporary poet engaged in this work; indeed, among poets
who have influenced him with their own poetry and prose we may see this work
taking place, for example when Susan Howe traces the word “enclosed” in her essay “Incloser” (The Birth-Mark), or when Bin Ramke uses the same strategy in a poem such as “Animal Intelligence”, opening with the lines “We think they are serene, as in what we think we want/ from weather: serene derived from, dry, sere—” (54). As is the case when Beachy-Quick places heat and calm next to each other, the apposition of “serene” and “sere” in Ramke’s poem suggests sameness. Yet as Aristotle suggests, accuracy is not necessarily at the root of apt sameness—or metaphor: errancy also plays a vital role. The movement of words, both shedding and acquiring meanings, inevitably leads us to acknowledge that the underlying root meanings of words introduce both sameness and difference: through their shadowy histories, singular words become multiple.

Of course, the history of words is a natural interest for the writer, and tracing etymology and usage is a point of departure for many. Meanwhile readers, and especially critics, are often more interested in a writer’s coinages or the phenomenon of a hapax legamenon in which the only extant use of a word is the subject for discussion—unless the poet explicitly calls attention to the accumulated layers of meaning in a word. This is just what Beachy-Quick does. As he unfolds the history of the word (and the world in that word) that we think we know already, the text uneasily takes on a hybrid form, and suggests the form of the essay as much as poem: the poet expounds, an act that runs the risk of didacticism. But Beachy-Quick avoids this pitfall because he does not solely expound. Crucially, he also poetically enacts the word’s origins and the current meaning. When he writes “the red-winged blackbirds calm/ at noon in reeds weave flame” (Mulberry 41), he turns his exposition 

55 Beachy-Quick’s own interest in ancientness suggests the appropriateness of invoking Aristotle’s writing on metaphor in the Rhetoric, in which he notes that “Most witticisms are … produced through metaphor and an additional illusion; for what the hearer hears becomes clearer to him through its being the opposite of what he thought, and the mind seems to say, ‘How true, and I was wrong’” (239). With the uncovering of the etymology of select words, the metaphorical expansion of meanings recreates this exact tension as the past and present are made simultaneous, same and yet not same.

56 The genre of the “lyric essay”, as championed by John D’Agata and Deborah Tall, has carved out a place for itself, especially since the Seneca Review started publishing the form in 1997. D’Agata and Tall write that “the lyric essay partakes of the poem in its density and shapeliness, its distillation of ideas and musicality of language, ” at the same time that they note, “The lyric essay does not expound. It may merely mention. Meanwhile, the phrase “lyric-essay” was used by Jorie Graham in 1990 for her editor’s introduction to that year’s Best American Poetry. She desires in poetry “the ambition to reclaim ground for eloquence and rhetoric, urgent poems of sheer argument” and notes the presences of the lyric-essay, which she characterises as the “stark offspring of the more classic meditation, also in vogue” (xxii). The version of the lyric essay that D’Agata and Tall propose emphasises the essayistic qualities in its form. Graham’s use of “lyric-essay” could be applied to Beachy-Quick’s verse explorations—in which he does at times expound.
into event. The flame woven by the reeds is both the reflective brilliance of sunlight and the burning of *kaíein*; the calmness of the curiously enflamed “red-winged blackbirds” is the calmness of unruffled tranquillity.

Beachy-Quick likewise enacts this investigation into language in the pages of *Spell*, this time in his consideration of the names of characters. In an era when Victorian authors such as Anthony Trollope and Charles Dickens were capable of providing characters with outlandishly signifying names, Beachy-Quick reads Melville’s crew through the same lens of signification. While the biblically inscribed Ahab and Ishmael are already obviously freighted, the poet performs the excavation of other crewmates: here, the etymology he offers remains within the realm of the English language, and each consideration of a name becomes an entry in a dictionary.\(^{57}\) Considering the first mate, Starbuck’s name, Beachy-Quick writes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>xxxSTARxxx</th>
<th>xxxBUCKxxx</th>
<th>xxxI’M NOTxxx</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. any of many stellar objects</td>
<td>1. orig. he-goat, male deer</td>
<td>star-buzzard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. esp. a fixed star</td>
<td>2. a man</td>
<td>star-hawk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. body of animal.</td>
<td>3. a planet, constellation, regarded as influencing human affairs</td>
<td>4. sl. a dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>star-throated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>1. (v.) to drench, to soak</td>
<td>star-drag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. radiating crack or fracture</td>
<td>2. (v) to leap vertically, feet together,</td>
<td>star-drift</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{57}\) For discussion of Beachy-Quick’s analogous treatment of the name “Pip” in *Spell*, see “Hybrid”.

121
Here, Beachy-Quick reminds us that the natural place in which we find etymology is the dictionary. In unfolding the various definitions of the constituent parts of Starbuck’s name (while also unfolding those starry combinations which Starbuck is not) man becomes meaning, meaning becomes man. The elements of Starbuck’s own character are given origin in words and their layered meanings, from the obsolete to the most typical usage. Considering the word “buck”, Beachy-Quick recalls the most commonly designated animal, a male deer (through Old English from the Germanic buc), as well as noting the word’s other original meaning, a “he-goat” (from bucca). As he moves through the definitions acquired over time—from man, to carcass, to dollar—Beachy-Quick suggests the interrelation of these definitions, from an animalistic young man, to the domesticated animal turned to commercial purpose, transformed into money. By excavating a single name in this manner, Beachy-Quick excavates the voice of Starbuck, who is in turn one of the constituent voices that contributes to the governing voice of Moby-Dick, Ishmael.

In this section of Spell, Beachy-Quick makes clear that the choral voice of Ishmael—which includes that of Starbuck—reveals its own chorality at the deeper level of the individual word, a multiplicity of denotations and connotations brought to bear within an individual character. If citational and annotative poetry is explicitly choral due to its excavation of the contributory voices of the contemporary lyricist the etymological impulse takes this excavation of lyric thought a step further. Citational poetry reveals the way allusion and literary tradition haunt the contemporary work; etymological investigation digs into the strata of individual words, showing how their usage has been shaped and changed by speakers of many languages over millennia.
Hybrid

Zoomorph

Hybridity appears in Beachy-Quick’s creative work continually, in many guises: there is vocal hybridity, in which the lyric “I” bleeds into the lyric chorus; there is allusive hybridity, in which haunting and citational voices are braided and combined—a hybridity acknowledged through annotation; there is a hybridity of approach, in which that which has been deemed “conventional” or “mainstream” is brought into conversation with that which is part of an experimental tradition; there is generic and formal hybridity, in which the defined border of a creative practice seems to bleed into another practice. In Dan Beachy-Quick’s writings, prose turns to poetry, essay moves between narrative and lyric compression. The ancient is brought into conversation with the avant-garde; the self is multiplied and melded with other voices. Beachy-Quick’s writings also show zoomorphic propensities, in which multiple forms, too, are melded together.

The image of the zoomorph is not arbitrary in relation to Beachy-Quick: in “The Hut of Poetry” Beachy-Quick dwells on the image of an “ant lion bowl”, an object he claims as his “poetic ideal” (WI 6). Of this bowl he writes:

This bowl in a sense is a found form. The potter found her model in the ground at her feet, an aspect of attention all the more remarkable for the fact that the bowl is meant to carry food, and the ant lion’s bowl-shaped trap serves the same purpose. Such work isn’t imitation; it is realization through repetition, a form of conjuring, a form of charm, a “sympathetic magic,” whose hope is that the manufactured object will share in the creative principle of the natural one. (WI 5)

The ant and lion are found first in the clay; the hybrid, zoomorphic text is found first in the material of language. The “sympathetic magic” which occurs in repetition, in creation, is an “audacious experiment in form” (WI 6), the creation of a work in which “recognition is triggered only to fail” (5). This failure of recognition comes from the failure of exact repetition: the hybrid exists in the realm of combinatory imagination.
This is also the case with the hybrid literary text. As soon as one form comes into view, throwing the other into relief, the elements brought together switch places. Hybridity creates an undecidable form, at last only describable by what it brings together.

Genre, subgenre, generic rupture

Mikhail Bakhtin’s chief claims for the novel in the twentieth century may be applied to the poetry of the twenty-first. In “Epic and Novel” he writes that “the novel gets on poorly with other genres” (5) meaning that instead of achieving “complementariness” the novel swallows those genres whole, subsuming them until they become part of the texture of the novel. Bakhtin’s assertion could be called into question from the outset, but as intergeneric and transgeneric spaces have increasingly been explored in the literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it seems that this claim accrues more and more exceptions. It is true that the novel may subsume other genres—but so too can poetry, whether in the guise of the genre-blurring “prose poem”, or in a citational form such as documentary poetry, or in the framing of found text as poetry in conceptual poetic practice. Beachy-Quick breaks into verse twice in his novel An Impenetrable Screen of Pures Sky. The work remains a novel, albeit a novel that incorporates the forms of verse, lecture and fairy tale. In This Nest, Swift Passerine Beachy-Quick borrows diary entries, novel extracts, criticism, and sermons from other voices, and the work remains a poem. Yet both of these works can be considered hybrids, their generic allegiance determined primarily by proportion (mostly novel; mostly poetry) and frame. As readers and critics we are eager to label, to synthesise a completed work into a singular category: it is the frame invoked that determines the non-“complementariness” of a work.

This desire for synthesis is antithetical to the notion of the hybrid. Swenson writes, “in a hybrid, the heterogeneous elements remain distinct; in a synthesis, they do not” (“Response”). Because there is a desire for categorisation, the resulting categories are (implied) hyphenations in the same way Beachy-Quick’s ant lion bowl is presented as hyphenation. Yet a form that includes multiple components often suffers because the emphasis falls on one part: the epistolary novel, the lyric essay, the documentary poem. For the poet, there is an undeniable attraction to being both.
Hybridity reflects the very position of the lyric speaker.

Beachy-Quick’s work has been the recipient of multiple labels, from the “lyric essays” of *The Whaler’s Dictionary* and *Wonderful Investigations* to Joseph Harrington naming him in a list of “documentary poets” as a practitioner of the form. In each case, his work can be placed within a frame—but often uneasily. Defining the basic characteristics of the form, Joseph Harrington states that “docupoetry” “(1) contains quotations from or reproductions of documents or statements not produced by the poet and (2) relates historical narratives, whether macro or micro, human or natural”. While Beachy-Quick’s work often adheres to both characteristics, this definition is also potentially reductive. Beachy-Quick’s use of historical narratives is one thread that folds into his broader investigations of philosophy and selfhood: despite the frequent macro views in his work, cosmic in perspective, the poet’s constant return to the interrogation of what it means to say “I” suggests the way that Harrington’s definition of documentary poetry, as a poetry that looks outward, may be too narrow. Ultimately, the hybridity that Beachy-Quick’s documentation explores is the hybridity, the chorality, of self. A work such as *This Nest, Swift Passerine* is a documentary exploration of text, lyric, and poetic sensibility: genuinely investigatory, this book documents internal forms of poetic thought.

These designations of intergeneric spaces in literature are perhaps most useful in revealing to us as readers the permeability of generic boundaries. Considering Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, Harrington suggests that it is possible to see genre itself as “a type of archive”: a method of sorting, of “leaving out” and placing in. The documentary poem (a poem that makes explicit its active investigation of genre and archive) gains its lyric shapeliness by selectivity—and by omission. Beachy-Quick’s

---

58 The essay “The Laurel Crown” from *Wonderful Investigations* was originally published in the *Seneca Review* as a lyric essay in the Spring 2009 issue. In the same issue, an interview with Beachy-Quick by Geoffrey Hilsabeck appeared. Addressing Hilsabeck’s query regarding the division between prose and poetry, Beachy-Quick states, “I’m not sure there are distinct divisions for me” (3) while acknowledging a “hint” of difference between the two, “hazily there, uncertainly so” (3). Arguably, the lyric essay relies on the “haziness” of that difference.

59 Morris writes that “documentary poetics is less a systematic theory or doctrine of a kind of poetry than an array of strategies and techniques that position a poem to participate in discourses of reportage for political and ethical purposes” (372). Poets such as Charles Reznikoff (in *Testimony: The United States (1885-1915): Recitative*) and Muriel Rukeyser (in works such as *Route 1* and *Book of the Dead*, included in *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*) explore the political and ethical possibilities of the form by examining voices and subjects not usually considered “poetic”. More recently, the journal *Chain*, edited by Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr dedicated its second issue to “Documentary” (Spring 1995), while *The American Reader* 1.3 (2013) presented “Archive & The Imagination” a portfolio of documentary poetry edited by Eleni Sikelianos, in which Sikelianos writes, “Documentary, or Investigative, Poetry is not new. But it has in recent years acquired a force not seen since the
documentation is, in a sense, a documentation of gaps: he highlights his use of citation as a form of “ignorance” (“The Oracular Tree” 42) and the documentation of that ignorance is a first step towards filling in the lacunae. Investigating the lacunae allows Beachy-Quick to understand the ignorances he uncovers as formative material, shaping his own poetic sensibility.

**Combination and permutation**

There is always discomfort—and, often as a result of this, productivity—in the borderlands between genres and subgenres. In her introduction to the volume *American Hybrid* (2009) Cole Swensen explicates what she and David St John mean by the word “hybrids”, those rare orchids they have collected in their anthology. She writes:

> Today’s hybrid poem might engage such conventional approaches as narrative that presumes a stable first person, yet complicate it by disrupting the linear temporal path or by scrambling the normal syntactical sequence. Or it might foreground recognizably experimental modes such as illogicality or fragmentation, yet follow the strict formal rules of a sonnet or a villanelle. (xxi)

Here, hybridity is born of combination: a pinch of convention, a dash of experiment. Invoking the sonnet and the villanelle, Swensen assumes these inherited forms belong to a conventional type of poetry. It is the same with the dramatic or singular voicing: by “conventional”, presumably Swensen means that readers have a long history of encounters with these texts, and, as such, have developed approaches to reading them. Meanwhile Swensen writes of “recognizably experimental modes”, without investigating the problems inherent in their recognisability: these experiments, too, have a history and belong to a tradition of lyric experimentalism—recent “hybrid” poets have their own forbears. The “linear temporal path” has been broken since Homer began his telling of *The Odyssey in media res.*

Modernists. Poets are feeling an urgent need to document what happens to humans and their home planet as information, activity, offence, and accrual of ‘fact’ speed to an unfathomable blur (30-31). For further discussion of documentary poetry, see the entry “Citation”. 
The complex relationship between ‘convention’ and ‘experiment’ is one that Beachy-Quick examines in his “January Notebook”. Here he writes:

Some sense in which the traditional poem—the poem that cannot remove itself from a consideration of the history that precedes it—must be the most radically experimental. (It won’t necessarily look “experimental.” Its violence isn’t a gesture but a kind of being—the experiment seen nowhere but in the fact of its own existence on the page.) Such a poem doesn’t venerate tradition but destroys it, or is willing to destroy it. The traditional poem asks a question of which tradition is not the answer sought, but that origin before tradition, underneath tradition. The traditional poem does not accept, as the more easily “experimental” poem does, that tradition is the only means of transmitting that history of which it seems the bodily evidence. It cannot take for granted the means by which it has come to what knowing it has come to, but must critique, must examine, re-arrange, tear up and tear apart, the very history that makes the present poem possible. It wants to be its own source, before the tradition of which it speaks. And to do so it must disturb its own roots. (1.18)

Through hybridisation, a poem is actively seeking to enact this disturbance.

What may seem a clumsy distinction between ‘convention’ and ‘experiment’ is simply an obvious fact that gets lost in debates around localised poetics: frequently we forget to take the longer view Beachy-Quick invokes in which the “traditional” poem is the “most radically experimental” as the result of reaching for origins, the chthonic work that lies “underneath tradition”. *American Hybrid* is useful because it serves as a reminder that that experimentation has come to have conventions too. What Swensen is gesturing towards in her introduction to the volume is a localised history: the branchings off and further branchings off of American poetry in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and as such the anthology and its counterparts offer the genealogy that makes the work of Dan Beachy-Quick possible. Swensen (who is part of Beachy-Quick’s poetic genealogy60) writes that she witnessed a resistance in younger poets to the old barriers perceived to exist between poets on

---

60 Swensen has provided a book-jacket blurb for Beachy-Quick’s work *Conversities*, written in collaboration with Srikanth Reddy. Additionally, both Swensen and Beachy-Quick were also part of a group of seventeen poets who contributed to the writing of an exquisite corpse by Kathleen Graber et. al., “To Pass the Time that Passes Away” (11), published by *The Literary Review*. 

127
either side of a self-constructed aesthetic ‘divide’. These poets we have thought about as being so different due to their production of internal and external narratives that create and reinforce poetic communities, she says, are not so different. These poets belong on a continuum—and they always have. The discussions in which these poets have been engaged are a necessary precursor to the work of Beachy-Quick; though he more frequently cites the work of the dead, his work continues a series of conversations undertaken across the work of many of the poets who rose to prominence in the decades immediately before his own work started to appear in print.

Beachy-Quick’s work, too, is combinatory, and, as when he returns to and reconfigures an image such as the deer of George Oppen’s “Psalm”, it also reveals itself to be permutational verse: as discussed previously, the deer becomes another hybrid image over the course of several books, a creature whose antlers face in two different directions, a creature now cervine, now human. This poetic “permutation” operates in the same way that a mathematical set of permutations proceeds: all elements are recombined in different orders until the possible combinations are exhausted. Images remain active as Beachy-Quick repositions them across multiple works.

Poem / Dictionary

In Spell Beachy-Quick recasts the novel Moby-Dick (a compendious work that likewise contains multiple genres within its pages) in poetic form. Already, he is concerned with the dictionary: Spell is not just a novel-in-verse, an epic divided between multiple voices. In Spell the poet begins the work that The Whaler’s Dictionary continues—he undertakes to write the dictionary that was Ishmael’s project. The definitions he hazards in the pages of Spell are personal: as we have seen he breaks down an etymology of Starbuck’s name. He likewise offers a series of

---

61 Some poets whom Swensen and St John include in their anthology, and who are frequently identified with specific traditions and aesthetic projects include John Ashbery, Barbara Guest and Alice Notley (New York school poets), C. D. Wright (labelled an “elliptical” poet (Burt 349-350)), Rae Armantrout, Mei-Mei Berssenbrugge and Lyn Hejinian (associated with Language poetry), Myung Mi Kim and Eleni Sikelianos (explorers of documentary poetry and poetics) and Jorie Graham and Robert Hass (writers of first-person-based lyric-epiphanic poems). The encampments which Swensen and St John seek to traverse are often the result of labelling by critics; as such Swensen and St John wish to explore the porousness between perceived enclosed communities.
dictionary entries defining, and in the voice of, Pip:

Pip (n.) I. A scale or horny patch on the tip of the tongue of a bird, infectious

fear of — .

Splinter-bound board, pierce foot to force my tongue to speak — . Of

Pip (n.) I. A seed in fruit, as in apples, oranges, grapes

must be bitten

To be bared, to tendril

Fathomless

Pip (n.) I. Dots on dice, domino, on playing cards the one dark spade

I am

On white ocean. Chance of losing one’s self to

Pip (n.) I. Chirp of a small bird

who owns one note to speak of

Pip (n.) I. Crack of the shell when hatching
Pip is not the only speaker who turns to strict definition to voice himself: Starbuck does the same. The dictionary definition is here subsumed into the poem, and into the self. The “one dark spade” is also Pip. He who “owns one note to speak of” is also Pip. The dictionary reveals what Pip cannot say. Each definition, though, is the first: these ideas are not ordinal, but simultaneous. The dictionary definition, folded into the poem, exists here in the constant present moment of lyric time, as the forms of the lineated poem and the delineated series of definitions are amalgamated into a singular text, recognisably made up of the recognisable characteristics of two forms, as is a zoomorph. This creation of formal hybridity, through the amalgamation of two recognisable forms into one text, undercuts the taxonomic purpose of the dictionary that works to keep word definitions and the history of their usages separate.

Each definition is not just the first: that which is Roman numeral is also pronoun, “I.” Each of these definitions is spoken, in Spell, by the voice of Pip. Pip becomes an I / I / “I” through the form of this self-definition, and his multiplicity is brought into sharp relief. This multiplicity exemplified by Pip is another instance of Beachy-Quick’s reading of his literary forebears as plural: that Pip’s voice is one part of Melville’s voicing of Ishmael that again reveals Ishmael as a hybrid narrator of Moby-Dick.
I / I / “I”

“I” is a complex concept for any poet, and this is particularly the case for Beachy-Quick. “I” is a concept that bears the emphasis of italic here, the distancing of quotation marks there. As the subject of constant interrogation in his poems, Beachy-Quick’s “I” is always unstable, a participant in the “lyric instability” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”) that he sees as part of the nature of the lyric “I”. It is this instability that links the lyric “I” to the chorus and the hybrid as the first-person singular pronoun multiplies, and its distinct parts come into view. When Beachy-Quick separates the self into “I / I / ‘I’” he separates the singular self of bodily experience (the I) from the multiple self of the choral voice (the I) and the performed self of an adopted persona (the “I”).

“I / I / ‘I’” is the title of an entry in Beachy-Quick’s The Whaler’s Dictionary; this multiple “I” especially applies to the narrator of Moby-Dick, Ishmael. This is because, as Beachy-Quick notes, Ishmael’s “actual I speaks from many voices—indeed, speaks for every voice” (WD 123). As previously discussed, Ishmael is the collective, choral self at the heart of Melville’s novel; Ishmael’s is the narratorial voice that Beachy-Quick dissects in Spell as he unfolds the other ‘I’s’ that lie beneath it.

This multiple “I” is not restricted to Ishmael, however; it is a central concern of Beachy-Quick’s body of work. The complexity of saying “I” is one that Beachy-Quick raises himself, as when he writes—as “himself”—in his “Note to Reader”, a prologue to Mulberry. Here, Beachy-Quick writes of the transparency, the porousness, of the pronoun:

A quirk in my compositional habit is the unconscious substitution of the indefinite article a when I mean to write I. For instance, before correcting the above, I had written: a found myself, and a wrote the pages. Poetry does this work in us of making I anonymous. What is a poet? A person who says I for another. (Mulberry ix)

That the poet takes on the indefinite article rather than the singularity of the first-person pronoun even at the unconscious level of drafting seems to deny a separation between self and others: the self does not have the definite singularity of the definite
article, but instead the uncertainty of the indefinite. As an indefinite entity, his “a”-rewritten-as-“I” transgresses the boundary of individual subjectivity. This transgression—a denial of self—is writerly, as the imagination enters other experience. The anonymity of the “I” Beachy-Quick describes is akin to the work of Simone Weil’s decretion (Gravity and Grace 32-39) in which the “decreator” must “develop the capacity of the self to disappear” (Miles 33). Beachy-Quick’s unconscious error echoes the ultimate impersonality he strives to achieve in his reading of the concept of unoriginality. The self becomes a sensibility only through its unoriginality, through its reflection on the texts and others it encounters. As such, the self defines itself through taking on other voices, through integrating those voices into a pluralistic “I”.

In his novel An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky, Beachy-Quick dwells on the becoming of self and the artificiality of a narrator’s name. When his own narrator (“Daniel”—Beachy-Quick plays a metafictional game with the reader) delivers a lecture on Moby-Dick, he dwells upon the fate of Ishmael, “Float[ing] there in the ocean” (145) at the end of the epic novel. He notes the circularity of self, which is also the circularity of the novel’s form and the circularity of the novel’s time:

Ishmael—but let’s remember this is before he is Ishmael—floats there in the ocean, the infinite ocean, just as Pip had done before him, below the singular god above him in the sky, above the multitudinous god below him in the water, a single man, a mote, merely a mote, but not nothing. Is it hopeless or hopeful? I can’t tell. He calls himself an orphan, but it’s not only his family that’s missing. It’s everyone. It’s everything. His name. The world. (ISPS 145)

Melville’s orphan, predecessor to the Ishmael who retrospectively narrates the Pequod’s voyage, is a vessel emptied of self; the adoption of identity at the outset of Melville’s novel—“Call me Ishmael” (Melville 3)—constitutes an act of filling that vessel. In Melville’s novel, the narrative that follows constructs the person that is Ishmael. Before Melville’s narrator completes his narrative by beginning it with his invitation to address him in his new guise as Ishmael, Ishmael is a performed identity, an “I”—an “I” that, becoming a choral I, voices the collective experience of the Pequod’s crew. The anonymity that comes before the onset of Moby-Dick’s narrative
(but after the events relayed in the novel) is not simply an example of the impersonality of an emptied vessel, but an illustration of how, when filled, that vessel of self comes to be multiple. Considering the plurality of Ishmael in the critical essays of *The Whaler's Dictionary*, Beachy-Quick writes that “I is a many and a one. I is one of the crew” (WD 121): so, too, is ‘I’ one with the *Pequod’s* crew. By reminding us of Ishmael having assumed the identity of Ishmael, Beachy-Quick invites the reader to consider the constituent parts of that identity; more broadly, Beachy-Quick’s frequent investigation of Ishmael becomes an investigation of the nature of a narratorial voice, especially as it reflects upon collective experience.

Beachy-Quick plays this game with his protagonist in *An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky*, deliberately inviting the reader to compare hero and novelist. His protagonist is a university professor; he is preoccupied with Melville and has moved on from an obsession with *Moby-Dick* (as the poet himself does in *Spell* and *The Whaler's Dictionary*) to an interest in Melville’s novella *The Encantadas*. The protagonist dwells in the novel on quantum physics (a concern that appears in Beachy-Quick’s *This Nest, Swift Passerine*) and on fairy tales (the poet himself presents four original fairy tales in *Wonderful Investigations*). Throughout *An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky* Beachy-Quick’s protagonist also dwells on the novel he is writing. And there is the protagonist’s name. He writes, in echo of Ishmael:

> Call me Daniel. I have a gift I keep to myself, the gift of self-abandon. It is the orphan’s lesson if he can learn it—not to feel abandoned, but to continue his abandonment past the bounds of where the loss should end, parent’s death that prefigures one’s own. Fate is everywhere speaking; it does not call you by name; it tells you to name yourself. Call me Daniel. (69)

The “other” (“Daniel”) for whom Beachy-Quick says “I” in this novel is an “other” who, outwardly, resembles himself in many ways; yet “Daniel” also resembles Ishmael, another orphan. Even as the poet creates a protagonist who invites the comparison with himself, he also once again punctures the stability of the comparison by inviting other comparisons with the fictional Ishmael.
Beachy-Quick proposes *Moby-Dick* as a lesson in reading that becomes a lesson in writing; Melville’s novel provides both lessons because it is also, crucially, a lesson in saying “I”. By reading Ishmael as a plural *I*, Beachy-Quick demonstrates the way a choral voice operates in telling a collective story, and this demonstration carries over into his own writings. In reading *Moby-Dick* Beachy-Quick states that it becomes necessary for the reader to acknowledge that “the very system of consciousness by which we make the world cohere in such a way that we can communicate our sense of it to another is itself a system riddled with gaps, excesses, lacunae” (“Poetic Geometries”): these gaps and excesses are part of the lyric self. His consciousness of the reading Melville teaches allows the self to emerge in Wordsworthian “spots of time” (*Prelude* 429) that reflect the exaggerated clarity of some moments of memory and the blind spots that exist in between these moments. A more recent poetic investigation of the unstable self constituted by memory is Lyn Hejinian’s *My Life* and its revisions. While Language poetry is often associated with “antilyric” (G. White 14) activity, Gillian White locates this antilyric intent as resistance to the “personal, ‘expressive’ lyric tradition” (12): as such, this “antilyric” impulse is limited to a specific type of lyric poem. The diffuseness of the accumulated memory-images of *My Life* suggests another version of life as this series of “spots of time” and can be subjected to a lyric reading that takes a broader view of lyric possibility. Beachy-Quick has noted the importance of Hejinian’s work to his own understanding of poetic practice, inviting this connection. By reading her work as inhabiting this tradition of the poetic investigation of consciousness, its “radical experiment” (Beachy-Quick “January Notebook” 1.18) becomes apparent.

The “I” that speaks—in poem, in essay, in novel—is constituted by the fallibility of memory and the empathetic entry into the experience of others as much as it is by its presence in the body. Memory, empathy and the body (another trio that may be differentiated as separate ‘I’s) are all tangled within the notion of desire, which seeks to build a bridge between the self and the world, between ‘I’ and other.

The poet links the writing of poems to desire, and links desire to the emptying of self—for Beachy-Quick desire contains the void of lack that produces wanting, as when he states “Love finds in us a lack it depends upon to thrive” (A. D. King).

62 Interviewed by G. C. Waldrep, Beachy-Quick states, “Much influenced by Lyn Hejinian’s essay ‘Strangeness,’ I began to conceive of a poem’s language as a description, miraculously a map that leads into itself, into the world that it is” (“Interview”).
Considering Keats and sexual desire he writes:

This is desire that grows desirous, empties the wanting self of the self so only wanting remains, destabilises what or who it is that says “I” so only the saying remains, and when that self returns, when I can say “I” again and mean just myself, desire has left its trace, a music so deeply felt it is almost a scent…

(BWB 60)

Such a trace of desire—which arises from a perceived lack and therefore an imbalance—is at the root of the lyric and the partial impersonality of Beachy-Quick’s lyric “I”. Here “I” remains in inverted commas, becomes a mantle for Keats just as “Ishmael” and “Daniel” become mantles for their authors: at the head of each poem the lyric speaker may as well write, “Call me ‘I’”.

The provisional nature of the self appears in the final poem of Circle’s Apprentice, the fifth poem in that collection titled “Tomb Figurine”. The poem opens with a question of the necessity of the speaker, when Beachy-Quick writes, “Must I, in this question I am asking, include myself/ Asking it?” and concludes with a consideration of origin:

In this language “I” meant “here,” it did not mean “me,”
It meant a location in which this body I am
Was not an expression of love but a word of Presence. Here I am, right here.
Voice in a boundary.
In this place I am I once had a dream.
Cylindrical seals rolled across the earth
Printing in the mud the image of a woman braiding
Her hair was loose and then her hair was bound.
These roads end at the horizon where I also end,
Present in this world as the alphabet is present
In this poem. *I. *I. Sometimes *I like to stutter.
*I like to think the sky is blue. *I see sometimes it’s red.
More soon on the nature of impossible constructions.
The man in the moon. The sea-rose. The living-room. (CA 83)
In these lines, the poet’s concern with etymology surfaces again, revealing that the pronoun ‘I’ emerges merely from its ultimate proximity: the “here”-ness of self. The self is separated from the desire that deconstructs it and becomes instead a location bounded by the edge of the body. That Beachy-Quick, in placing self on the page, writes ‘a’ in place of ‘I’ (Mulberry ix) here makes no difference as the self is “Present in this world as the alphabet is present/ in this poem”, and the poet may have used an alphabetic character to represent the here-ness of self. The pronoun itself, marked by an asterisk in the final lines of the poem, is at first provisional, a concept that needs annotation. The asterisk here recalls multiple common usages of the typographic mark—the encyclopaedic referral to another entry, the notation for denoting a footnote, and, within an etymological dictionary, the conjectured origin of a word. As such, linked to “here”-ness, the self of “Tomb Figurine [V]” refers to the body’s rootedness in place, yet ultimately the poet decides this singular self is impossible. From the mythical, but nonetheless visible, “man in the moon” his move to the “sea-rose” (an echo of H.D.’s poem of the same name (3), another failure of singularity) shows the melding of land and ocean, a collapsing of elements until the “living-room”, instead of being the centre of the home, becomes as alien a location as the performance of a provisional, alien self.
Consider the word *fugue*. On the one hand, it is a musical term, denoting a piece in which a musical theme is elaborated by several voices in polyphony. On the other hand it is a psychiatric term, denoting a particular type of amnesic state. Both words derive from the Latin word, *fuga*—flight—from which we also receive the word *fugitive* in English.

These dual senses of the word *fugue*, along with its Latin source, represent the two sides of the coin of poetic impersonality. Here we find the **choral** multiplicity of the **lyric ‘I’**, and here too we find the emptied-out self, the voice that draws on **unoriginality**. For Beachy-Quick these senses merge into a lyric speaker who, filled with the other voices to which he is openly apprenticed, destabilises the self, the personal. Giving an overview of theories of the lyric voice, Marshall Brown points to two primary narratives—one in which “poetry is utterance that wells up from the core of being” and is thus associated closely with the poet, and the other that views poems as “‘fictive utterances’—ideal objects, universal and hence impersonal” (120). Brown rejects the absolutism of sustaining only one of these views and seeks a middle path, reading two voices into any poem, those of “speaker and poet” (121). For the choral poet, these two voices stand in for the **many** voices that comprise the choral voice. The poet’s sensibility is shaped by the “connective reading” (Spahr) that helps create the speaker’s voice through intertextual interrogation and echo; the communality of that emergent voice is rendered impersonal as a result of its multiplicity.

Lyn Hejinian considers personhood and writes that “The person … is a mobile (and mobilized) reference point, or, to put it another way, subjectivity is not an entity but a dynamic” (*Language of Inquiry* 203). This “dynamic” of personhood is both amplified and undercut by the instigation of impersonality. **Citational** and **annotational** poetic practice both dwell in the seams between individuation of the poet’s voice and the blurring of self’s boundary with the texts upon which the poet draws. This tension exists in any tradition, as new work draws upon and reacts against existing work, but in his own work, Beachy-Quick makes this tension a deliberate point of departure and return. Impersonality and plurality are not equivalent, but work in tandem as the poet slips between self, anonymity and chorality in his poems.
Beachy-Quick’s return to the concept of “impersonality” recalls prior figures, a necessity for a poet whose version of impersonality links the impersonal with the choral. Among those who contribute to the rise of impersonality as a mode of lyric centring and lyric voicing are T. S. Eliot, who invokes impersonality in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” when he writes that a poet engages in “a continual surrender of himself” (52), and Simone Weil, who focuses on “decreation” (32-39) in *Gravity and Grace.* For the poet, the “surrender” or “disappearance” of self occurs so that the poem—infused with the choral voice of the re-configured tradition—can emerge.

The disappearance of the self becomes, in the poetic realm, an inescapable apprenticeship. To Beachy-Quick the self that lets “personality fall aside” finds itself experiencing—in his description of Keats—“self-destroying enthrallments” (*BWB* 45). The destruction of self he describes comes as another force, the enthraller, exerts its power over the poet: to “enthrall” once meant to enslave. Yet this negative power of impersonality is just one possible characterisation of the modes impersonality occupies: Sharon Cameron writes that we don’t actually know “what the im of impersonality means”, suggesting that the guises of impersonality variously “suspend, eclipse and even destroy the idea of the person as such” (*Impersonality* ix). In Cameron’s view this suspension of the idea of personhood “as such” comes from the recognition of the fact that “being itself is momentary” (ix). The poem, too, is a space that conducts its transactions momentarily: this makes the encounter between self and non-self, the personal and the impersonal, a source of constantly renewed tension.

This allowance of personality’s slippage into impersonality recalls the root of the word: *etymologically* linked to the Latin *persona*, the dynamic of personhood is a series of masks. In an aside in *A Lover’s Discourse* Barthes links those masks back to Greek tragedy, considering their “magical function”: he writes, such theatrical masks “give the voice a chthonic origin … alienate the voice … make it come from somewhere under the earth” (115). The chthonic voice is another choral voice, the place where personality and impersonality merge into the seemingly singular lyric “I”. The “magical function” of the tragedian’s mask becomes the ritual function of the lyric voice.64

The voice that emerges from “under the earth” also emerges from all that the poet makes speak. In his letters John Keats likewise addresses the impersonality of the

---

63 For further discussion of “decreation” see “I / I / ‘I’”.
64 For further discussion of lyric’s ritual voice, see “Charm”.

138
poet, writing that:

A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually filling in for—and filling some other Body—the Sun, the Moon, the Sea, and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of God’s Creatures. (Keats 148, qtd. in Beachy-Quick BWB 37)

For Keats, being without identity is a precursor to an empathy that allows him to imaginatively enter the subjectivity of other speakers. A poet’s work, therefore, is not a matter of exerting ego, but of being subsumed. This subsumption is what allows the plural voice to emerge.

Agamben reflects upon this curious aspect of poets and what is described as the “poetic life”, and poetic “genius”, when he writes, “the encounter with Genius is terrible. The life that maintains the tension between the person and the impersonal, between Ego and Genius, is called poetic”. Agamben describes the reaction to this encounter as inspiring “panic” when the “Genius” realises that what is encountered is “infinitely greater than what we believe ourselves able to bear” (Agamben, Profanations 14, qtd. in Beachy-Quick BWB 50). What Agamben characterises as inspiring panic, Simone Weil welcomes as inviting a “humility” in which one experiences “a radically poor opinion of one’s person in relation to what is impersonal in one’s self” (Miles 34).

The act of becoming identity-less, of becoming impersonal, is a willing act of destabilisation that leads to productive self-negation. The act of destabilising the self is one to which Beachy-Quick is attuned, and his own work on Keats reflects this. It is in Keats’s “self-destroying enthrallments” that he finds strongest expression of the relationship between “genius” and “impersonality”. Concentrating on the earlier poet’s oeuvre he first finds recourse to the ancient explanation of inspiration by speaking of the Muses when he writes in the section titled “Muse”: “to awaken to the song the Muses sing is also to ‘awaken desire’ within oneself, and the poet who can hear the god-haunted song the Muses sing finds himself haunted—for desire is a kind of haunting” (BWB 5-6). He complements this notion of the muses when he dwells on
“Genius”, writing that, “Our genius locates our most essential self outside of the boundaries we normally claim by saying “I”. It is not so much our recognition of the impersonal, but the impersonal’s recognition of us” (my emphasis) (16). Beachy-Quick doesn’t explicitly argue that impersonality is an example of his conception that the lyric voice is a descendent of the Greek chorus. However, the interplay between the singular and plural first person pronouns, the “I” and the “us”, recalls his characterisation of the chorus of ancient drama as “a we that speaks as an I” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”), a plurality-in-singleness he locates at the centre of the lyric “I”.

Impersonality, though present in some measure in all writerly personae, becomes for Beachy-Quick a prism through which he can explore his poetic concerns. Self always comes with a question mark, as in the poem “Lines”, in which he writes

The lightning struck him and left a scar.
The wind stopped blowing and the wheat stood up.
Self-tensed self, who is this I that says I? (CA 13)

The “him” and the “I” are interchangeable, a lesson in perspective and the emptying of ego. In the same poem Beachy-Quick writes, “The third person put me outside my own sphere”. That third person—the “he” that co-animates the poem—is also the third person (the impersonal voice) of influence, the voice of those to whom the poet is apprentice.

Some of the most complete explorations of “impersonality” in Beachy-Quick’s writing come in the collaborative works he has written with the poet Srikanth Reddy, first published in chapbooks and then collected in the book Conversities. Writing of the process of their collaboration, they state, “We began to write sonnets, a few lines at a time, each trusting the other to carry forward the poem though we had neither plan nor destination, unless destination is a form” (Conversities 87). This description of dovetailing voices that ultimately creates a complete work again recalls the polyphonic weaving of the musical form of the fugue.

Conversities traffics in doublings and reversals, and in its “Prologue”—the final text in the book—the play on selfhood and impersonality comes to the fore, as for both poets selfhood is subsumed into a new lyric voice.

“Prologue” begins with the shift away from the self when the poets write:
I twist myself, binding my beginning to my end, thus making of I an O.

I think of the O as a threshing floor where husks fall away from meaning.

I read that threshing when done by hand was most often carried out by pairs of workers for the labor went easier in company.

I listened to myself as if I were another person I knew better than I knew myself. (79)

The act of “binding my beginning to my end” describes the physical transformation of the letter “I” into the circularity of the “O” but it also relates to the peculiarly circular reality of the collaborative voice. Paradoxically, though the poets describe the process of their writing together as an act of alternation, the voice that emerges must be preceded by the surrender of self. That surrender is the “O” of an emptied ego: where “I” relates to the self, “O” recalls the frequent literary use of the vowel as a vocative utterance of apostrophe and devotion. In twisting “self” into “O”, the poets also create the zero of self-negation for the “self-destroying enthrallments” of inhabiting the position of the otherness. The “threshing floor”, where grain is separated by a flail becomes, through the vocative, a site and form of decreation: the “meaning” left when the “husks fall away” is here the poetic voice. The fused voice of collaboration is not simply the fusion of and tension between two personalities; more than this, it is the junction between two distinct impersonalities. The “I” that “listened to myself as if it I were another person I knew/ better than myself” (79) has been multiplied. The nature of the self and impersonality becomes a subject the poets address as a method of understanding their own poetic project.
That poetic voice—here, a choral ‘I’ that, rather than being amplified into a fugal polyphony, is performed in unison—is the “company” of “labor”. Despite the poem’s initial “twist” of selfhood into an address to the other, into the apostrophe and negation of “O”, that “I” continues to reassert itself through this poem. Most segments of the text, presented in short prose blocks, begin with the word “I”; as such the prologue, which takes the position of an epilogue, returns again and again to a singularity of self, haunted by a negation of self through the fusion of multiple poetic sensibilities.

The effect of being a choral unison that marks the poem’s beginning is soon dropped as the speaker oscillates between two apparent positions, allowing the “I” to meet itself. Beachy-Quick and Reddy write:

I walked through the Rosewood cemetery where my friend used to walk when he lived where I lived and I saw that each stone had only one side.

I used to walk through the cemetery where my friend still walks, pushing my baby in her stroller, and found in a tree before a mausoleum a bee-hive weighing down a branch, and I watched the bees return with pollen from the flowers planted between the stones. (81)

The “I” here narrates what can be read as two versions of the same memory of a habitual activity from two angles. The previously “singular” voice of the two poets has now been “threshed” to show its constituent parts, its constituent experiences. The “I” that speaks recalls that, still walking through Rosewood cemetery, he no longer meets his friend there, and that, though he is now removed from the scene of Rosewood cemetery, his friend still walks there. In the prologue-placed-as-afterword, the fusing of the Reddy/Beachy-Quick voice comes undone as the same scene is viewed twice. The two poets—and friends—are each “placed outside [their] own sphere” (CA 13) in these lines as the ‘I’ takes on dual temporal and geographic positions. That sphere of self, and the fugue-like escape of the fugitive from its grasp,
is a project of both the poem and the personal relationship as the final lines of “Prologue” reveal, when the poets write, “I thought a friend, like a poem, is what allows you to/ cease being yourself, and so be more than oneself”. The interplay between “I” and “you” (and between “I” and the “Thou” that Martin Buber differentiates from the “it”, describing the “I-Thou” relationship as that which “establishes the world of relation” (13)) dissolves into “one”-ness. This dissolution—both fusion and flight—enacts the enthrallment of an impersonal poetic.


A lullaby is a ritualistic text, sung nightly to a child. A lullaby is, in the words of Daniel Tiffany, one of many “transactional” (86) forms. In “Fugitive Lyric: The Rhymes of the Canting Crew” Tiffany focuses on poems that use “the jargon of the criminal underworld” (83), the partially recorded argots of other eras, but he glances sideways at the lullaby too, at the “vernacular tradition of lyric expression” (83) that often bears as the author’s name, “Anonymous”. Lullabies and other poems of the vernacular presage the arrival of “an elite and self-consciously literary tradition of poetry in English” (83). What then to make of the literary lullaby, authored not by “Anonymous”, but in recent years by figures such as Lyn Hejinian (in The Book of a Thousand Eyes), Julie Carr (in 100 Notes on Violence), Lynn Xu (in Debts & Lessons)—and Dan Beachy-Quick? Both Hejinian’s and Carr’s lullaby texts unpack the nonsense qualities of lullabies, while simultaneously addressing the fear of night that is associated with the lost consciousness that arrives with sleep; Xu uses her lullabies to address a poetic tradition of authored texts in an often anonymous form. In his five lullabies, which open the volume Circle’s Apprentice, Beachy-Quick performs all three of these acts, making the lullaby a form of charm, an expression of feared loss, and a show of indebtedness to both folk and “literary” traditions, in an arc of poems that each bear the title “Lullaby” or “Demonstrative Lullaby”.

In his essay “St/range: An Uncertain Range”, Pierre Joris gestures in the direction of the lullaby when he moves through the French article “la” into its “double in echolalia” to the German “lallen” (17) in his discussion of strangeness. This root word, “lallen”—to talk nonsense—is demonstrative of the strange project of the lullaby, the project of making strange the world of consciousness by saying goodbye in preparation for the world of sleep. Nonsense is one of its strategies as it highlights the melos of poetry, and seeks to draw attention away from the worldly reference language invokes, even as that nonsense may be a sensible language to the child being lulled to sleep. The appearance of lullabies in works by Hejinian and Carr offers a context for this movement away from pure nonsense. Though Hejinian employs nonsense in texts that appear to be lullabies, Hejinian’s Book of a Thousand Eyes is a take on Scheherazade’s 1,001 nights—a nightly speech that staves off violence. Carr’s

---

65 For further discussion of the “transactional” lyric, see “Charm”.
100 Notes on Violence likewise seeks to escape its own obsession with violence when Carr turns to address her children. The lulling into the “bye-byes” of sleep removes consciousness of the human iterations of violent action: lullabies are protective.

As a poetic form designed to be sung, the lullaby draws on the sonic resources of lyric poetry: rhythm, rhyme, repetition, alliteration, consonance. There is an intended recipient of intimate address: the infant being “lulled” to sleep by song. In a literary lullaby, this “you” becomes not only that infant, but also the reader of the lullaby, who is soothed by the music embedded in words. A lullaby is the counterpoint to that other lyric marker of the day, the aubade; this counterpoint is also a counterpoint of age. The lullaby is generally sung to a child, while the aubade is traditionally written as a dawn address to the lover who has remained awake with the poem’s speaker through the hours of night. In this way, these poetic genres reverse the usual identification of times of day with times of life: the nightly song is child’s play; the morning greeting is adult in content.

As such, the lullaby marks time: sung to children through a certain phase of childhood, the lullaby reflects a stage of life. Often macabre (e.g. “When the bough breaks the cradle will fall”), the lullaby’s soothing music is given drama with the inherent threat that sleep represented to the ancient and medieval world. To fall asleep was—is—to experience a kind of nightly death, and the fear that one may not reawaken becomes “the most dangerous, fear-inducing and irreversible aspect of sleep” (Risset 38). The world fades. In dream or nightmare a paradise or hell or, more likely, a state of limbo, may be visited.

Singers of lullabies address the infant, and the reader—but they also address themselves. The stage of life the song marks is a stage of life still alive within the singer. The “ghost” in the machine of the poem is both the ghost-self that acts in dream, and the ghost-self that still occupies the singer in the form of memory. The direct addresses and diminutives that mark the form (e.g. in Carr: “little girl, little laughter, little clown” and “little girl, little laughter, little joke/ Little avian” (40); in Hejinian “O boy/ O ho/ O my god” (37) and “little baby” (Book 313); in Beachy-Quick “little child”, “little ghost”, “little whale” (CA 3-4)) are not only diminutives that address the already-small child, but also diminutives that once more diminish the lullaby’s singer.

Beachy-Quick’s five lullabies (four bearing the title “Lullaby” and the third
poem in the sequence titled “Demonstrative Lullaby”) form an arc, a miniature drama that makes overt that shift in address from infant to self. Their “ghosts” and “rust” and “coffins” and “lions” contain threats that morph in dreamlike ways. Their rhythms ventriloqueue other nursery rhymes, as when, in “Lullaby [I]” he writes:

Quick goes the starling,
quick goes the thrush,
little child, little ghost
the world singing patience
speaks rust (3)

Susan Stewart proposes the notion of “lyric possession” (*Poetry* 107-143) in which “lyric practice involves a dynamic between propositional will on the one hand and somatic meaning on the other” (116): this is because “music and meter have an overdetermined semantic reference, a meaning, that they bear forward in time regardless of whether at any given moment the poet or reader can explain…such a meaning” (116). Propositional will is present in the final lines of Beachy-Quick’s “Lullaby [I]”, when the poet inserts meaning into the poem while the world—and the lullaby—“rust” into inertia. The “somatic meaning” is present in the echoes of other nursery rhymes, the familiar rhythm and sounds that indicate the poem is a form of “light verse”, the pace that quickens and slows, communicating to the body that it too must slow into sleep. With the lines, “Quick goes the starling/ quick goes the thrust”. the poet recalls “Pop! goes the weasel” and “Jack be nimble, Jack be quick” with rhythm and syntax. The slant rhyme between “thrush” and “rust” recalls on the one hand the poems of Emily Dickinson in which she frequently employs such slant rhymes, emphasised by the metrical impetus of the hymn-meters she employs, and on the other hand the most famous of five-line forms, the limerick. The limerick’s status as nonsense verse affiliates the form with childhood and with the Germanic “lallen”; the half rhyme the poet employs interrupts the allusion to the form, even as it invokes the likeness. A folk lullaby as a traditional text contains societal lore in sing-song form; a literary lullaby may be concerned with individual rather than communal

---

66 Like Beachy-Quick, Lynn Xu also echoes Dickinson in her lullaby. Her lullaby after and “for” Emily Dickinson (62) consists of four Chinese ideograms, fusing Dickinson’s tradition with a Chinese lyric tradition.
identity. Both must be at once self-conscious and un-self-conscious, addressing the fears that make “lulling” necessary while still performing the work of that lulling through the music of language.

Beachy-Quick’s lullabies progress, they circle back, they repeat. They each bear the same title—“Lullaby”—except for the centre of the arc that earns a qualifier, “Demonstrative Lullaby” (my emphasis). Without numbers to indicate progress, the lullabies resist identification as a sequence, even as they echo each other: each poem is a repetition of the act of singing, but a repetition that does not recognise its position in a poetic series. The “little child” of one lullaby (also a “little ghost”) remains a ghost in the next lullaby, but becomes, instead of “child” a “little whale”:

Little whale, little ghost,
the world grows quiet
when you speak it most—
When you see it most
it grows blank as ocean
grows blank at noon—
No boat but a coffin.
and horizon for a coast. (4)

The lullabies move from the avian space of the air to the oceanic space occupied by the whale. The vessel launched upon the water is “No boat but a coffin” (a reference to Moby-Dick, to Ishmael’s rebirth—or birth as Ishmael—but also another twinning of sleep and death) and the only “coast” the poet offers is “horizon”. As lullaby piles on lullaby, that horizon extends. When the poet circles back there is still only horizon in sight: sleep. In “Demonstrative Lullaby” he states, “when I write I study sameness”67 (5). This sameness is both the nature of metaphor, where unlike things are not only like but the same, but also—again—repetition. Crucially, these samenesses and repetitions reflect the nature of the lullaby: it is a text performed not just once, but nightly, constituting a ritual between parent and child, and between parent and self.

---

67 For further discussion of this poem, see “Sameness”.
1. An Active Lyric

Introducing their volume *Active Romanticism*, Julie Carr and Jeffrey C. Robinson draw attention to the many ways Romanticism leaves its mark on contemporary Western poetry: they look not only to the “important parallels” but also the “genuine continuities” (2) that have remained in place in the post-Romantic era. Drawing attention to poets who seek to “grapple with and participate in, rather than transcend, the intractable or irreducible real” (7), Carr and Robinson propose a view of Romantic inheritance that works against the story told by “institutional Romanticism” (5). This textbook version of Romanticism is historically bound, inclusive largely of “well-bounded” poems of “subjective coherence”, conscious of national borders, and accepting of historical poetic form (6). In contrast, Carr and Robinson’s formulation of an “active” Romanticism dissolves the false periodisation of the textbooks, and focuses on the ways in which the “the avant-garde, from Shelley’s Romanticism onward, seeks to break down the identification of poetry and the unitary self” (11)—that “unitary self”, the lyric “I”, is a key figure in one version of the lyric tradition. In emphasising historical awareness, innovations in poetic language and the dismantling of singular subjectivity, Carr and Robinson allude to continuities with later poetries; in drawing together these threads, it is possible to propose that what the Romantics themselves sought to do was create an “active” lyric. I propose that the “Active Romanticism” Carr and Robinson outline in their work is exemplary of an investigatory, self-aware, historically-aware “active lyric”.

Dan Beachy-Quick is among the essayists included in *Active Romanticism*: like other poet-critics included in the volume, he reflects on both the Romantic tradition and the way in which that tradition inhabits his own work. For Beachy-

---

*In his essay “‘The Oracular Tree Acquiring’: On Romanticism as Radical Praxis” (31-36) included in *Active Romanticism*, Beachy-Quick primarily examines his inheritances from American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau. He also addresses Thoreau in the essay “The Indweller’s Aversion: Thoreau’s Sacred Wonder” (31-62) in *Wonderful Investigations*. He has addressed the English Romantics elsewhere in his work—particularly the work of John Keats in *A Brighter Word than Bright* and Dorothy Wordsworth through the first section of *This Nest, Swift Passerine*, as well as*
Quick this inhabitation is a form of “lyric possession” (Stewart, *Poetry* 107-143). His own active lyric is a lyric that investigates its origins, forms and voicing. In his verse, Beachy-Quick moves back and forth through poetic traditions, remaining open to many different conceptions of what a lyric poem may be. While the body of work on the lyric, both historical and critical, is extensive, here I focus on the way contemporary American practitioners of hybrid poetries use the term “lyric”, and I consider Aristotle’s lasting influence in shaping historic understanding of the lyric, the Romantic reenvisioning of mimesis, and the way these inform Beachy-Quick’s activation of his own lyric practice.

2. *What is lyric now?*

The term “lyric” is slippery. There are more questions than answers. Perhaps rather than asking the question, “What is lyric?” it is possible to ask only, “What is lyric now?” Even answering this question may be beyond us, as when Brenda Hillman writes in “On Song, Lyric, and Strings”:

> It’s hard to know what lyric means for post-romantics, post-symbolists, post-modernists and post-postmodernists. Lyric is an element in poetry, not a type, rendering human emotion in language; attention to subjective experience in a song-like fashion seems to be key in all definitions of lyric… Once lyric meant unbroken music, but since the nineteenth century, it may be broken. It cries out in singular, dialogic or in polyphonic protest. There is the question of the individual “singer,” not to mention the individual lyre or the famous problem of the solitary self…Since the twentieth century unseated all certainty, the lyric is rendered on torn, damaged or twisted strings. (qtd. in Shepherd, *Lyric Postmodernisms* xiii-xiv)

Hillman is writing in the twenty-first century, almost a hundred years after the famous “first heave” Pound described in Canto LXXXI of *The Cantos* (532)—jettisoning the regular metric of the iamb that had dominated modern English poetry—and in the

---

the work of Thoreau’s fellow-Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson in the brief “Typhonic Meditation” (97-100) in *Wonderful Investigations*.
69 For further discussion of “lyric possession” see especially the entry “Lullaby”.

---

149
interim there have been other interventions that contribute to a sense of instability, fragmentation in lyric practice.

Hillman’s notion that the lyric has fundamentally changed since the nineteenth century—that it may now come to us as a “broken” music arriving on “torn, damaged or twisted strings”—itself suggests a kind of post-Romantic, or actively Romantic, continuity. The brokenness and damage varies with each new poetic school, but the new sense of poetic possibility that comes with new self-consciousness remains. Though she uses the word “damaged” to describe the contemporary iteration of lyric affect, this “damage” need not be read as pejorative. In raising the “famous problem of the solitary self” Hillman suggests the reason “damaged” strings may be necessary: the solitary nature of the lyric self is illusory. Its fragmentation, the damage done to its music, reflects the work of the active lyric.

Shepherd, as one of the poets, critics and anthologists who help to create the space of a “third way poetics” (G. White 22-24), cites Hillman’s exploration of lyric’s current status in his introduction to Lyric Postmodernisms; in this way, her description of lyric becomes one of the governing visions of Shepherd’s conception of a postmodern, active lyric. The formerly “unbroken” music that Hillman invokes has become, in the work of poets such as Dan Beachy-Quick, the fragmented chorus. The lyric that “cries out in singular, dialogic or in polyphonic protest” comes to us, not as unity, but as a patchwork.

3. What has lyric been?

Despite the instability of the term, the features by which we have come to understand the lyric come from a particular trajectory that the term has taken since Aristotle’s discussions of lyric poetry and its devices in the Poetics and the Rhetoric. Key features of the lyric include a lyric speaker who addresses or apostrophises another; an occasion that seems to be removed from historic temporality, recurring in a perpetual now; attention to the musicality of language and form; and linguistic compression and brevity. The trajectory of our understanding of lyric has been unsteady; it has involved both seeking roots in Aristotelian edicts and inventing and

---

70 For fuller discussion of this lyric speaker, see “Lyric ‘I’”
reinventing the methods by which it proceeds. The result is that, as Culler states, “Lyric poetry has a long history … but an uncertain generic status” (Theory 1). It is that very “uncertain generic status” that is the source of both the anxiety and the immense vitality surrounding the form. This uncertainty, reconfigured, has made the activation of an active lyric possible.

Beachy-Quick himself looks back to ancient precepts when he discusses the lyric; by returning to both the Greek chorus and the pre-Socratic philosophers in his work, he is seeking pre-Aristotelian roots for lyric verse. When Beachy-Quick invokes the Greek chorus as one source of the Western lyric, he is characterising the lyric “I” as a collective voice, and, too, as a voice whose parameters were yet to be strictly defined—and arguably curtailed—by Aristotle and the critics and poets that followed him. Beachy-Quick’s interest in the ancient Greeks also comes through in his glance towards the fragments of pre-Socratic philosophers: in his “Artist’s Statement” for The Iowa Anthology of New American Poetries he begins by invoking Heraclitus, noting that “A poetic, if true, exists as does Heraclitus’s river—it is never the same twice” (1). The lack of sameness exists not just from poet to poet, but for the same poet in each new poem. This seems especially true for Beachy-Quick, a poet whose poetic explorations cover such a vast terrain. In an echo of pre-Socratic philosophers such as Heraclitus, he adopts a gnomic voice in the sequence of “monadisms” that opens gentleness. A series of one-line aphorisms, the sequence opens by fusing the gnomic voice to the choral when he writes in the first “monadism”, “that that what is is an all” (3). This singularity of “what is” as “all” (my emphasis) links the individual to the collective at the outset of a volume of poems that moves through poetic moments, inhabiting poetic modes as an act of investigation. By beginning these inhabitations with pre-Aristotelian writers, Beachy-Quick undoes the Aristotelian limitations by which we understand lyric as a genre or medium.

Beachy-Quick’s “monadisms” are just one example of his own exploration of lyric’s multiple traditions, reflecting a form of recollection and innovation rather than a direct throughline of lyric continuity. This approach echoes Gerard Genette’s work in The Architext. Throughout this work, Genette draws attention to the fact that our current usage of the term lyric is actually relatively recent, primarily based on

---

71 This process of reinvention is the overall subject of Genette’s The Architext as he considers the genre of lyric. Critic David Gorman notes that Genette’s work represents a “conceptual ground-clearing” as he traces the received “myths and confusions” (271) that form the basis of literary genres; the establishment of lyric as a genre constitutes Genette’s central example of the rise of a literary genre.
Romantic and post-Romantic usage. As such, the contemporary lyric does not, in fact, represent a strict continuity with the lyricists and lyre-ists of Graeco-Roman classical literature, though the term is etymologically linked with the ancient instrument and thus retains a link to the fundamental role of musicality in poetry. Genette traces lyric as it is practised in the vernacular literatures of the Renaissance through the Romantic and Victorian eras—including the resurrection of the term lyric in the eighteenth century by Abbé Batteux, who took imitation as the goal of the fine arts including lyric poetry (Architext 5), placing mimesis at the centre of discussion. Genette notes the way in which the German and British Romantic poets followed Batteux’s example. Genette states that the poets of the era sought to forge a link to Aristotelean poetics through an emphasis on mimesis, and so these poets denied their own innovative force in reinventing what it was that the lyric “imitates”: the expansion of the notion of imitation brings with it the renewal of the concept. By claiming a link to Aristotelean ideas, Romantic poets could claim a link to the classical era that may have made what looked like a radical shift in poetic practice more palatable.

The tension between seeking a link with the literary tradition while wishing to create a new poetic paradigm is one that is reflected in contemporary hybrid poetics. The Romantic expansion of mimesis also reflects the fact that, despite Aristotle’s nod to lyric as a “medium” in the Poetics (3), he invokes lyric only, in fact, to offer a “massive silence” (Genette, Architext 5) on the form. It is subsequent poetries that have filled that silence, shifting the purview of lyric and creating with each shift the tradition on which Aristotle was largely silent, even as so many poets invoke his name. As a result of these shifts, perhaps, we cannot ask the question “What is lyric now?” without examining what lyric meant then—and then.

Jeffrey Walker offers a suggestion for why it is useful for contemporary writers to, in Beachy-Quick’s phrase, “think anciently” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”) by examining the openness of the pre-Aristotelian lyric poetry of Ancient Greece. Walker shows that Aristotle’s poetics had the effect of limiting discourse on, and definitions of, lyric poetry. He uses pre-Aristotelian lyric poems by Pindar to demonstrate the limitations of Aristotle’s comments on lyric in the Poetics. He points out that Aristotle’s prescriptiveness is aimed at tragedians and epic poets, and he primarily considers lyric as a medium, and as one component of the larger genres on

---

32 For further discussion of “think[ing] anciently”, see the entry “Ancientness.”
which he concentrates (Poetics 10). Nevertheless, he argues that this prescriptiveness
effectively reduces the scope of what is termed “lyric”. Characterising Pindar’s odes
as discursive and at times didactic texts, Walker notes that the poems fall outside of
Aristotelian strictures that centre on mimesis (Aristotle, Poetics 3), though they
exemplify what, prior to the Aristotelean model, formed a significant portion of the
oeuvre of lyric poetry. Walker writes that following Aristotle, “dramatism”, or
“theatrically rendered act[s] of utterance” are prized, and that “neither argument nor
verse are the essential, ‘poetic’ elements of lyric of the ‘speeches’ in a drama” (36).
This focus on “dramatism” has led to interpretations of lyric hinging on the persona of
the speaker that treat every lyric poem as a form of dramatic monologue. As a result,
the imitation that is effected is that of staging identity rather than experiencing it.
Beachy-Quick both inhabits and seeks to undo this kind of staging in poems such as
“Lines” when he asks the question, “Who is this I that says I?” (CA 13). At such
moments Beachy-Quick foregrounds the artificiality of the lyric “I”, seeking to pierce
the theatricality of lyric speech.

The primary hangover from Aristotelian definitions of the lyric, and the desire
of many European poets to find continuity with the Graeco-Roman tradition, has been
the persistence of Aristotle’s proposal of mimesis as central to lyric poetry. Imitation
enters the Poetics at the outset when Aristotle writes, “Epic poetry and the
composition of tragedy, as well as comedy and the arts of dithryambic poetry and (for
the most part) of music for pipe and or lyre, are all (taken together) imitations” (3),
allowing for differences between these genres via their “media”, “objects” and
“mode” of imitation (3). In The Architext Gerard Genette traces our now-dominant
vision of the lyric to the innovations of the Romantics.

In showing how Aristotle’s Poetics has been used and reused to create links
between new literatures and Graeco-Roman traditions, Genette seeks to show the way
that Romanticism “bur[ies]” (Architext 5) its own innovations (or its own activations)
in order to gain the authority of ancient models. In particular, he notes the way in
which the Romantics arrive at a response to the Aristotelian focus on mimesis,
particularly the imitation of “men in action” (28) that marks epic and dramatic
genres. Through Romanticism, mimesis is reconceived, broadened, to include the

---

73 The centrality of drama to Aristotle’s Poetics haunts such versions of lyric poetry as the one offered
by John Stuart Mills, who separates poetry from “eloquence” with the words “eloquence is heard,
poetry is overheard” (348). Here Mills supposes that the speaker of eloquence is conscious of an
imitation of feelings (32). This imitation of feelings can be seen as central to the subjective individuation that is itself so central to Romantic poetry, and so influential upon post-Romantic poetry and Active Romanticism.

Throughout *The Mirror and the Lamp* M. H. Abrams uses his reading of Romanticism to again remodel *mimesis*; in this conception *mimesis* could include the imitation of *experience*—a form of imitation arguably most fully realised in Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*, as Wordsworth seeks not just to narrate but to recreate, as the poem’s subtitle suggested, the “growth of a poet’s mind”. This experiential mimesis, and the mirroring of the development of thought, is particularly important in Beachy-Quick’s verse which dwells so much in the mind, as when, in his “Lullaby [IV]”, he writes in echo of Wordsworth’s exploration of the experience and the mind that, as a child, “thought became my home” (CA 8).

The innovations of Romanticism represent the largest re-conception of lyric poetry in the Western literary tradition until the advent of Modernism; Modern Postmodern concerns with the fragmentation of the self which informed the version of lyric poetry through which many avant-garde practitioners worked. Arguably the rise of *citational* poetics in predominantly American Anglophone modernisms as practised by poets such as Eliot, Pound, Williams (in *Paterson*), Marianne Moore, and later Reznikoff gave rise to this prevalence of fragmentation. Addressing what he sees as the prominent place given to the “disjunctive” poetics that highlights fragmentation over a mode of digression that maps wandering thoughts rather than juxtaposing disparate moments of arrival, Srikanth Reddy argues, “contemporary criticism has inclined toward what could be called a disjunctive fallacy within twentieth-century American poetics” (*Changing Subjects* 19). The recent discussion of hybrid poetics seeks not to entirely overturn this fallacy, but to integrate it into a broader conception of contemporary poetic practice.

Integration is the primary goal of *hybrid* poetics, as practitioners and critics wish to read a broader spectrum of approaches as innovative and “actively” engaged.

---

74 For further discussion of “Lullaby [IV]” see the entry “Lyric ‘I’.”
The broadening of the scope of lyric in work considered “hybrid” by Swensen and St John or as “new lyricism” [my emphasis] by David McCooey fits a more inclusive tradition that has its origins in ancient traditions as much as it also brings in all the lessons of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Elizabeth Willis states of her own poetics that, “I would place my work among those who recognize an evolving relation to both the ‘traditional’ and the ‘new’ and who tend to recognize as new this reconfiguring or re-engagement with traditions” (259). This “evolving relationship” is central to a combinatory poetics. These writers do not repudiate avant-garde developments, but seek to engage them actively alongside other poetries. Those engaged in “third way” poetics (G. White 22-24) seek a self-aware, self-investigating vision of the lyric, one that is actively engaged in its present and futurity.

This notion of self-investigation, and the place that mimesis may hold within a self-investigating lyric, is fruitful. The centrality of mimesis to historical Western accounts of lyric poetry is felt when Mutlu Konuk Blasing, at the outset of advancing a new theory of the lyric voice, writes:

Lyric poetry is not mimesis. Above everything else, it is a formal practice that keeps in view the linguistic code and the otherness of the material medium of language to all that humans do with it—refer, represent, express, narrative, imitate, communicate, think, reason, theorize, philosophize. It offers an experience of another kind of order, a system that operates independently of the production of the meaningful discourse that it enables. (2)

Here, even as she forcefully denies that mimesis is the defining gesture of lyric poetry, Blasing nonetheless allows space for imitation in lyric verse, as she describes the many linguistic moves poets may make in constructing their poems. Imitation is, in her view, just one of the uses of the medium of language: meanwhile, expanded notions of mimesis might include other uses, including representing, expressing (potentially attempting an emotional mimesis) and thinking (creating, for the reader, the experience of another’s mental process). Dan Beachy-Quick’s verse traverses the terrain of lyricisms, of lyric imitations, and of the uses of the “linguistic code” that

---

75 For further discussion of combinatory poetics, see the entry “Hybrid”.
76 This active engagement of multiple traditions has led to writers such as Barbara Guest, Lyn Hejinian and Susan Howe—aligned with “schools” of writing that White locates on the avant-garde side of the argument—as, in fact, hybrid in Swensen and St John’s anthology.
Blasing notes. Often, he combines lyric modes in the same poem. In *Mulberry*’s “that yellow silk not Chinese” (16-18) he combines the descriptive mode of *ekphrasis*—often viewed as, though not limited to, a form of translational mimesis—with an experiential account of moving through a museum, and the shift from the movement of the body to the movement of thought. He describes Tintoretto’s *Tarquin & Lucretia* with the lines:

```
courtesy broke the bed broke
the god knocked
to floor where the knife lay
she’d slay
herself later in shame at rape (16)
```

With these lines, Beachy-Quick remains inside the frame of the painting and the Roman story to which it refers. In the same poem he describes the spatial and temporal experience of the museum when he writes:

```
people walk through our visions
and don’t look // their passing
a universe // each time
their teeth a world of pearl (17)
```

and:

```
continuous
that day I meant to be so still

and out in December the sun
a light bulb caught in oak

the sun that March // months ago (18)
```

These lines disrupt his ekphrasis, and Beachy-Quick’s poem becomes an examination
of a common experience of encounter with art when it recognises the bustle of the space of the museum, and the move not just beyond the frame of the canvas but beyond the controlled, bounded space of the museum as the speaker once again moves outside. Breaking the bounds of a descriptive or imitative mode, Beachy-Quick investigates lyricism. Showing his indebtedness to multiple lyric traditions and terrains as he moves through them, this poem demonstrates Beachy-Quick’s conception of the “lyric” form not as fixed, but instead as a form that may be constantly re-traversed, extended and renewed.

4. Beachy-Quick’s Lyric

For Beachy-Quick, the lyric is bound up in the transactions of selfhood and experience. These transactions frequently examine the fragmentary consciousness and its experience of “historical” time. The reader constantly finds the poet questioning himself, his self. The relation between an “I” and a “we” can be porous, as the speaker dissolves into the surrounds of his lyric space, into anonymity. This questioning of the self speaking the poem offers an interrogation of the particular type of lyric that Lyn Hejinian has termed “the coercive, epiphanic mode” that contains a “pretension to universality and … a tendency to cast the poet as guardian to Truth” (Language of Inquiry 41). Hejinian’s resistance to the epiphanic mode is not a negation of the possibility of lyric, or of the possible contemporaneity of lyric, but rather a call for resistance to what she sees as an accepted model of the lyric poem associated with the post-confessional mode often marked by the subjective experience of epiphany. In his short lyric poems, Beachy-Quick remains an inquirer, resisting the act of narrativising experience as epiphany—even when the occasion of the poem includes a lightning strike.

In Circle’s Apprentice a short work entitled “Poem [III]” appears. In this poem Beachy-Quick does offer narrative (not a necessary feature of lyric, but a frequent element in the poem of subjective epiphany), but in place of “truth” there is negation, repetition, anonymity and the mere entering into, without the voyage back out. Through these actions, Beachy-Quick offers his own lyrical resistance to the mode of subjective epiphany. He writes:

No wind blew the clouds across the sky.
No wind blew the darkness into the clouds.  
We sat below mixing the water into the dirt  
At the river’s edge, the water we carried  
In the little cups we made with our hands  
This mud. We poured the mud into the frames  
The librarian gave us. We hoped the sun  
Wouldn’t fail. When someone spoke the words  
We began to dream. The wind spiraled down  
In a cloud. Trees heaved. The sun blinked out.  
Lightning struck as light. Lightning struck  
My hand. Our dreams ended when someone  
In pain cried out My hand. Anonymous life  
Among definite articles. We carved our names.

°

Into the same mud we carved our dreams.  
When someone said Forget we threw our dreams  
Into a river. This work that is our work  
Remembers a fact as a form of inheritance.  
A cloud begins as a mote of dust moisture  
Adheres to a motion heaving earth into air.  
Little mirrors walking through the sky  
Above us, reflecting nothing but the dark  
Earth’s brute shoulder shrugging the day  
Into the dirt, bearing the dreamless names  
In the dark that is our dark, our names  
Carried away by the wind we call a river,  
With the muddy crescent beneath one hand’s nail  
Digging out the old dirt beneath the other.

(CA 30)

The poem moves between inscription and erasure, and creates of the earth itself a
palimpsest. Because it is a librarian that provides the speaker and his cohort with the “frames” into which they deposit their mud, the poem suggests the scene is a school exercise, as students create mud-tablets for the purpose of inscription. That the language inscribed, and immediately “carried away” once more, comes in the form of names seeks to both fix identity through writing, and to necessarily undo that fixity as the world acts upon the words written.

The poem’s speaker, however, does not speak of the act of carving a name as singular: “we carved our names” [my italics] the poet writes. The singular self enters the poem only as the singular body acted upon by the world, when Beachy-Quick writes, “Lightning struck as light. Lightning struck/ My hand”. Yet that “I” whose hand is struck is immediately anonymised, when he notes that, “someone/ in pain cried out My hand”. Becoming an unspecified “someone”, even the body, a seemingly continuous fact of selfhood, is rendered strange. At the poem’s close the hand appears again, as “one hand’s nail/ dig[s] out the old dirt beneath the other”. Again the dissociation—not “my” hand, but “one” hand—serves to distance the unitary body from the choral speaker of the poem.

The intangibility of the singular self continues in the poem’s second stanza when Beachy-Quick adds to the action that “we carved our names” the words, “Into the same mud we carved our dreams”. He describes the names themselves as “dreamless”, and the dreams themselves are discarded when a word is spoken (not written)—“Forget”. Always unspoken alongside this command is its opposite: remember. The mud-tablets discarded, the memory of the work and the pliability of a name written into earth remain. The “we” in whose voice the speaker writes is not simply a collective of which he is part—it is also the collective that is part of him. The collective voice can be read, in itself, as a critique of the subjective epiphanic mode.

The “epiphanic mode” that Hejinian highlights, and Beachy-Quick implicitly critiques, has been explored by others addressing the nature of lyric in the past several decades of American poetry. In her essay “From Image to Action: The Return of Story in Postmodern Poetry”, Marjorie Perloff turns her attention to a poem by James Wright, arguably as canonical a “lyric” poet as any in the second half of the twentieth century, and traces the “conventions” of one poem, finally characterising the poem as one in which:
the isolated speaker (whether or not the poet himself), located in a specific landscape, meditates or ruminates on some aspect of his or her relationship to the external world, coming finally to some sort of epiphany, a moment of insight or vision with which the poem closes. (413)

The apparently unified voice and singular moment, the epiphanic conclusion: these are the characteristics we now associate with the term “lyric”77, even as we allow the lyric to defy definition, and they constitute the same characteristics Gillian White recognises in her subtler formulation of the “personal, expressive lyric” (12, 20, 28). To define the form would be to risk delimiting it, and its looseness may ultimately be its attraction: by drawing attention to formulaic versions of the lyric speaker and the lyric poem, Hejinian and Perloff champion alternative lyricisms. Beachy-Quick shows that it is possible to use the features of the subjective epiphanic poem in order to keep embracing those alternative lyricisms.

In “Poem” Beachy-Quick directly engages these defining features—while his speaker is stripped of social markers by being part of a collective “we”, it is still his own reading of the actions, his contemplation of a singular body completing those actions, that is the subject of this poem. The relationship to the external world is mediated by instruction: he physically moves mud into frames, impresses his identity in the form of a name upon that mud, and then once again releases it into the world that continues to exist without him. That the poem includes a lightning strike reinforces the proposed characterisation: lightning is one of the fundamental metaphors for the epiphanic moment. Yet even as the poem engages all these

77 The compositional mode Perloff outlines in “From Image to Action” bears a striking similarity to the observations she makes of what she typifies as the “workshop poem” thirty years later in her essay “Poetry on the Brink” in which she typifies many contemporary American poems as containing:

1) irregular lines of free verse, with little or no emphasis on the construction of the line itself … 2) prose syntax with lots of prepositional and parenthetical phrases, laced with graphic imagery or even extravagant metaphor (the sign of “poeticity”); 3) the expression of a profound thought or small epiphany, usually based on a particular memory, designating the lyric speaker as a particularly sensitive person who really feels the pain….

Three decades on, Perloff is yet more invested in the divide between the poets whose work she champions and those whom she sees as contributing a predictable, “conventional” approach. “Poetry on the Brink” displays similar concerns, with a new target—the MFA “workshop poem”, again epiphanic—and a deeper sense of division. Perhaps as the result of tracing the sameness she sees in poems over many decades, Perloff shows more interest in the iconoclastic action of rejection than in quieter methods of reinvention and integration that hybrid poetics seeks, even as poets about whom she has written, such as Lyn Hejinian and Susan Howe, are included in the American Hybrid anthology she critiques.
elements of the lyric, it actively resists them. Rather than the construction of insight, the poet ends with an action of erasure, one hand removing the worldliness of mud from under the fingernails of the other, an action no doubt mirrored when the other hand reciprocates.

5. The Ancient Contemporary

As already discussed, Beachy-Quick wants to “think anciently” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”)?8, and that thinking comes in the shape of lyric. Though the word “lyric” might link the form to the Ancient Greek lyre, the lyric poem’s origins are not from the Graeco-Roman world alone. There is no singular chronology, just as the meaning of the term has from the start been unstable. In his introduction to New Definitions of Lyric Mark Jeffreys writes of the impulse to invoke a singular line of development, a single tradition of lyric, and calls it a “largely unexamined fiction” (xvi), a fiction created:

in order to complain of some vital attribute lost along the way—the close ties to actual songs, for instance, or to the human breath…or to oratory and occasion … All the while, the “dynamically present” abundance of songs and oral performances and rhythmic oratory in the surrounding culture is ignored. (Jeffreys, xvi)

These “dynamically present” texts that lie outside our literary traditions are important to Beachy-Quick: while his “Fragile Elegy” echoes a traditional lyric form?9 whose texts more often than not come to us from a single named author, other forms he chooses owe their longevity to folk traditions that are collective in authorship. His lullabies and charms might be works for the page, but their antecedents are works for performance—either vocally, or, in the case of the charm, bodily. In “Old Song” (CA 21)?0 he turns to the earliest English-language texts as inspiration; the Anglo-Saxon verse of the Exeter Book and the Beowulf poet possess Beachy-Quick in the accentual, alliterative opening of that poem: for a long time, these early texts lay outside of the

---

?8 See “Ancientness” and “Song”.
?9 For further discussion of “Fragile Elegy” see “Elegy”.
?0 For further discussion of “Old Song” see “Song”.

161
traditional development of English poetry, simply because they were not readable by those versed in middle and modern English. By reaching to these sources—oral traditions; neglected, by-passed literatures—Beachy-Quick takes a disjunctive route through poetic history, reinventing, and reactivating, lyric over and over through his rereading and rewriting.

Perhaps it is this “fiction” of lyric continuity that has prompted writers such as Hadara Bar-Nadav to adopt the mantle of “post-lyric” when describing the contemporary poetic landscape. She writes:

The post-lyric is informed by or at least aware of the definitions of the lyric …; seeks to explore, expand, and even explode such definitions; and enjoys the plurality and malleability of the lyric poem. Post-lyric reveals an interest in constructing a self that is aware of its construction, questions singularities and absolutes, and uses innovative techniques and forms. (“Post-Lyric Impulse”)

What Bar-Nadav describes here is both the fact that there has never been a singular lyric tradition, but also a desire for those poets she claims are working in the post-lyric vein to consciously engage with the supposed project of lyricism. The self-consciousness of the post-lyric speaker she describes is exactly what I propose as the active lyric speaker. Beachy-Quick exemplifies this self-consciousness as he explicitly embraces the tradition and folds the plurality of preceding voices into his own work, into his own voice.
In the final poem bearing the title “Lullaby” in *Circle’s Apprentice*, Beachy-Quick writes:

> When a child I thought myself
> a thought—
> Then thought became my home (8)

In this opening, the poet becomes himself at home in thought, and becomes thought itself: this is not a hall of mirrors, but a mirrored and mirroring hall of thoughts. In the course of the poem the poet’s own thought becomes a (female) child—“I thought myself/ a child. I named her little ghost”. This *child* is, of course, the next generation that is the traditional addressee of a lullaby, but it is also the poet himself: the “I” that speaks slips between the adult speaking to his child, and the adult that reflects upon his own childhood. This child addressee, too, is the product of the poet’s own thought: the speaker is not just himself, but also the things he thinks. He is not just young again in the thinking child he was, but is also the female child he has thought into being: once again, “he” is multiple, a *chorus*. At stake when considering the lyric speaker is the nature of the speaker’s multiplicity. Consideration of the lyric “I” also requires consideration of the—named or implied—lyric “you” of poetic address, as the speaker, addressee and reader find themselves in a shifting relationship.

When invoking a lyric “I” we imagine a singular speaker, to match the singular pronoun; Beachy-Quick resists this urge to imagine singularity. Instead, he refers to the *lyric* speaker as polyvocal. In his essay “The ‘I’ of Lyric”, he adopts the mantle of lyric poet, and characterises the titular “I” of lyric poetry as a “we that speaks as an I”. Through the singular pronoun, myriad voices speak at once. As previously discussed, this lyric speaker reflects the collective voice of literary tradition. Writing of the way in which we describe the lyric speaker, James Longenbach notes:

> It’s a commonplace to talk about the speaker of any poem, but the notion of a speaker may or may not be useful; a poem might feel more like a
concatenation of various linguistic strands than like the utterance of a single person. (14)

This “concatenation” of “linguistic strands”—for example, of citations, allusions, word histories and inherited collocations as discussed previously—is another way to view the multiplicity of that “we” speaking through a singular pronoun.

Meanwhile, Helen Vendler tells us that, even without that link to plurality, the traditional lyric “I” has always worn the comfort of relative anonymity. In *Soul Says* she writes that, “the traditional lyric desires a stripping away of all the details associated with a socially specified self in order to reach its desired all-purpose abstraction” (2-3). The identities stripped include: gender, race, age sexuality, but this is not all; explicitly autobiographical details are stripped away too.81 This formulation, while not universal, is a useful counterpart to Beachy-Quick’s conception of the choral lyric speaker. Vendler’s conception allows the reader to bypass the interpretive game of determining the identity of the speaker by which readers associate the ‘I’ with the poet or with the adopted persona of a dramatic poem. Vendler’s formulation allows the lyric speaker to be an “any voice”, and for that “any voice” to become an “*every voice*”.82

Ultimately, the lyric speaker who adheres to this model of the non-socially specific self becomes, at least in part, an **impersonal** speaker; the social self is replaced by a kind of ritual self—or “ritual ‘I’” (Ilomäki 55).83 A collective voice stands behind the works we ascribe to Homer in the form of the oral tradition that shaped the foundational **epics** of the Western tradition (Ong 17-30). In the wake of such beginnings, when a male, corporeal speaker such as Beachy-Quick takes a thought—a self—and “name[s] her little ghost” he not only addresses that little ghost but becomes it, inviting the reader to do the same.

A lyric “I” supposes a lyric “you”: even if the lyric “I” that speaks is actually a “we”, its address is nonetheless still directed toward a “you”, whether explicit or

---

81 Vendler’s assertion can of course be read as limiting, as it discards the possibility of poetry that addresses identity as its subject, or that addresses it through observation of non-standard Englishes being read as “lyric”. Additionally, this formulation can be seen as aligning an anonymous or Vatic voice with the dominant white male voice of much of the Western poetic tradition. At the same time, she labels this voice as traditional, allowing space for it to be challenged or, in a hybrid poetics, combined with other approaches to lyric speech.

82 For discussion of the lyric speaker as “everyone” or “everyman”, see “Chorus”.

83 For further discussion of the “ritual ‘I’” see “Charm”.
implicit. The lyric speaker, stripped of specific identity in this way, initiates a complex choreography with the reader. The reader knows that the “you” addressed is usually not, personally, him or her, and yet he or she slips into the role of that “you”. At the same time, when the reader voices the poem, he or she becomes the poem’s “I”, taking on multiple roles. Beachy-Quick recognises this move when he considers the “lyric reader”, stating that, “the lyric reader is the reader who sings of what she reads, whose reading becomes a singing” (Hilsabeck 4). The lyric’s multiplicity, its link to the chorus of ancient theatre, derives not only from the canon of authors bound up in the lyric “I”, but also from the assembly of readers that will voice that “I”. This creates a “circuit of … communication” (Culler, “Apostrophe” 59) that is revealed by the lyric speaker to be a constant reversal of polarity: “I” and “you” swap places again and again.

The literary tradition has pulled this lyric speaker in many directions: on the one hand, with the plurality of modernist works, such as Pound’s The Cantos, its abstraction has multiplied: the voice of The Cantos is not merely the “I” of Pound, but also the “I” of the many authors of Pound’s canon, to whom his poem frequently offers annotation. It is, as befits its title which invokes song, a genuinely choral work. On the other hand, the “personal, expressive lyric” (G. White 12, 20, 28) of the post-Confessional era has often stripped away a sense of abstraction and the impersonal, even where it may do so through the construction of a dramatic voice that is not, strictly speaking, the author’s own. In the case of the Confessional poets, readers can no longer dissociate the details of the poet’s life, in the case of Plath, Sexton, and Lowell (particularly in the latter poet’s Life Studies), from the poetry itself, even where the reference is oblique. The pulling of the lyric voice in multiple directions renders it unstable as a concept. Yet that “lyric instability” (Beachy-Quick “The ‘I’ of Lyric”) is the very reason lyric address is so fruitful. That instability may also, in practice, contribute to the potential centrality of a lyric speaker to a genuinely

---

84 While apostrophe is a particular kind of lyric address, the notion that it opens a “circuit of communication” can be broadened to include the relationship between lyric speaker and lyric addressee.

85 Post-confessional discussions of the lyric voice often equate the lyric speaker, not with a voice rendered anonymous, but with a personal voice; such readings both limit the scope of lyric and fail to consider the ways in which confessional poets frequently take the position of mythic figures, as when Plath adopts the voice of “Lady Lazarus” (244-246), narrating multiple deaths and resurrections, or when Sexton inhabits the folk narratives of fairy tale in Transformations. While autobiographical details have been exhaustively mapped onto the narrative events of such poems, the lyric voice in which confessional poets render their work can also be read through a lens that emphasises the ritualistic, Vatic and choral origins of lyric speech.
innovative poetry.

The relationship between lyric speaker and lyric addressee is ultimately revivifying. Maurice Blanchot shows us Orpheus, opening the night with song to reach Eurydice. Blanchot writes, “He is only Orpheus in his song” (101). Likewise, the now irretrievable Eurydice is no longer Eurydice—except, again, in song. Lyric speech is always an act of retrieval, collectively voiced, that brings the speaker and addressee once more into being, and once more into relation, if only temporarily. It is this attempt to retrieve the irretrievable that makes sense of Beachy-Quick’s own description of the relationship between the “I” that ostensibly represents the poet and the “you” that becomes the reader as that of an “agonistic encounter” (“The ‘I’ of Lyric”).

These words, “agonistic encounter”, of course recall suffering, but also the agonist (which can be used in place of the word protagonist). The words derive from the Greek agon—the ‘contest’. The agonism of the encounter between speaker and reader retains this sense of contestation as the roles of the participants shift when the poem is voiced. Beachy-Quick also recalls agonism’s oldest sense when, in an interview, he states that the agon is “descriptive of the process by which anything comes into being, a gathering toward existence that precedes existence”, defining the poet’s blank page as “agony’s blank ground” (Waldrep, “Interview”). This sense of “gathering toward existence” is expressed by William Carlos Williams in Spring and All when he writes:

In the imagination, we are from henceforth (so long as you read) locked in a fraternal embrace, the classic caress of author and reader. We are one.
Whenever I say ,, I ” I mean also ,, you ”. And so, together, as one, we shall begin. (3-4)

The linking of agon to a process of becoming allows us to see the protean power of lyric speech.

What begins anew with each reading of each poem is not simply lyric “I”, lyric “you” and their “fraternal embrace”, but also a new poetic world. The lyric speaker brings not only the self, but also that world into being. Beachy-Quick’s lullaby continues:
When thought became my habit
the ocean grew
absent above the stone

but pressed a ripple’s weight
in wave
onto the stone. (CA 8)

If the first act of the lyric speaker is to become a collective “I”, and the second act is to conjure a “you”, then this opening of the world (as Orpheus opens the darkness) is also necessary. The initial thought is an ocean, and its constant habitation reveals the bedrock down to which the “little ghost” may be brought in thought. Over this bedrock roll the oceans of new thought and with those waters come the sediment and fossils of history. Beachy-Quick writes:

inspired by alone—
a sediment
for memory, a fossil for a tome. (8)

The sediment, the fossil: these are the true ground for lyric habitation. The memory, the tome: another record of the lyric speaker’s multiplicity.
The mouth and the eyes appear frequently in Beachy-Quick’s poems: they are the bodily conduits to and from the mind where so much of his poetry dwells. The mouth and the eyes appear, linked with song, as when Beachy-Quick writes “Poetry is a form of sight cast into song” (WI 23). The mouth and the eyes appear often enough together to suggest Beachy-Quick sees his poetry as a translation of the world he perceives into the words he speaks, writes—a mimesis of sight and experience into words. The translation from sight to speech indicates another form of the sameness, through the creation of likeness, that the poet purports to “study” (CA 5).

Beachy-Quick is engaged in a broader idea of the translation of sight into speech than that inspired only by the physical world that surrounds him: he also recognises imagination as a form of sight, whether through the received images of other texts, or through those generated in his own mind. In An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky he addresses the problem when his protagonist tries to understand the work on quantum physics his colleague is undertaking:

“Gravity working in reverse?” I offered. “Purple skies? Warm ice?”

“Well, sort of, but no, not at all. The difficulty, I find, in trying to explain any of this to anyone, even to myself, is that it is impossible to imagine. We always imagine other worlds by imagining this one.”

“We put wings on a horse!” Olin exclaimed.

“Yes. Pegasus. Monsters. Faeries. They are the other-worldly-this world; it doesn’t help me in my work. It is, I think, I sort of fear, my imagination that is the problem. I’m trying to think about another world, another universe. I do the math and the math points at the possibility. But when I describe it to myself, when I write about it in my notes, I reconfigure only what I already know, have seen already, or felt. There’s only this world to imagine another. It is a serious problem for me. The world becomes what I imagine of a world.” (52-53)

This passage, in which Beachy-Quick’s protagonist “Daniel” meets the woman who will become his lover, reflects both the possibilities and the ultimate limitations of the
imagination. The “new worlds” (*Apology* n. pag.) that Beachy-Quick writes of may be derived from the imagination—yet he recognises here the problem that the imagination is always drawn from *this* world, just as when, in his January notebook, he cites Eluard’s famous aphorism that, “There is another world. It is in this one” (qtd in “January Notebook” 1.4). Both the real and imagined experiences he renders in verse are drawn from the eye.

If this passage in his novel indicates that imagination is limited by the math it knows—or the world it sees and in some measure mimics—then Beachy-Quick’s writings in his essay “The Hut of Poetry” indicate that art is designed to traverse the edge of that mimetic limit:

> Language is the ancient crisis that introduces us, over and over again, to the necessary failure words bear in relation to the world. It is not necessarily a semiotic difficulty so much as it is a mimetic one. (*WI* 15)

and:

> a home is never the world—a home is a separation from the world. A poem is never the world—a poem is a separation from the world. The world we read, and in reading see, never stays a world. (*WI* 15)

Art’s work, in Beachy-Quick’s estimation, is to place us on the “threshold” (*WI* 7) between this world and another, to straddle mimesis and the imagined realm that at last moves beyond the limitations of experience and into the realm of the “wonder” that is his subject in the essays collected in *Wonderful Investigations*.

The “thresholds” on which the combination of sight and the imagination that cannot be separated from it are derived from worldly experience are multiple; in the poem “North / South Composition”\(^87\), the opening poem of his first collection, Beachy-Quick is already amidst the “necessary failure” (*WI* 15) of words as he places the reader in the imaginative space of the creaturely through the co-presence of sight, speech and song. He writes:

---

\(^86\) For discussion of Eluard’s aphorism see “Epigraph / Sub-sub-librarian”.

\(^87\) For further discussion of “North/South Composition” see also “Nature / Ecology”.
When the falcon rose the falcon
Rose to focus
The whole field into a single blade
Of grass the mole did not know not
To move
I would my song worse if truer
If truer my song falconed
My eye wide in falcon’s eye

(NTSB 3)

Transplanting his own eye into the eye of the falcon is of course an imaginative act—in Coleridge’s terminology, an “esemplastic” (239, 312) unification of two sights— that brings Beachy-Quick back to the verbalising—the mouthing—of his song when he writes:

I would my song worse if truer
Sing in two my tongue to snap the cord
Tethering its talon to my tooth
And let the falcon free of chord and cord (NTSB 3)

and:

How sing the sharp wing unbroken
When my mouth is broken wing?—
How be bird but sing the bird
Truer than I sing me (NTSB 3)

If Beachy-Quick’s eyes are also the eyes of the falcon, his mouth becomes the falcon’s mouth, ultimately translated into (falcon’s) song. This is an attempt to occupy the “creaturely” position. Devin Johnston writes of this process that “if anthropomorphism interprets the world in human terms, we can with patience arrive

---

Coleridge coins this term in the Biographia Literaria (155-482) to describe the process of shaping into one. Of imagination Beachy-Quick writes that, “Imagination turns I into many” (BWB 22), allowing the division of the self; it also, however, turns the “many” into “I”, in an act of unification.
at its inversion: not humanizing but creaturely” (12). This “creaturely” position may be sought, but in his poetry Beachy-Quick acknowledges that we cannot whether know it has been achieved. The attempt at such occupation of the creaturely position combines evidentiary sight with imaginative insight; yet Beachy-Quick proclaims that his vision is ultimately a failure when he ends the poem with an assertion that he “cannot see” (NTSB 6). He remains on the threshold, but cannot cross over.

If the poem and poet fail to be possessed by the creaturely voice, it is in part because vision is clouded by lyric inheritance: the opening image of the falcon inevitably alludes to and inverts Yeats’s “The Second Coming” in which “The falcon cannot hear the falconer” (89). Though he strains to do so, as poetic falconer Beachy-Quick acknowledges in sight’s failure, in song’s failure, that he cannot see and sing as the falcon. This link between the eye, the mouth, the song and the self, repeated through the poem as he contemplates the falcon, the egret, his desk, his compass, are parts of a broader vision of nature. Even though he fails in his attempt to “see” and sing as the falcon and egret of the poem, his attempts once more speak to his notion of the lyric speaker as a plural self whose plural constituents meet in voice as he traverses the limits of that plurality.

The expression of the plural self through attempts to “see” as the other is a game that marks not just Beachy-Quick’s poetry, but also his prose writings. This becomes apparent in An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky, a novel that itself breaks down the barriers between genres as the prose narrative streamlines itself into verse. As previously discussed, with its setting in a university, and its protagonist, Daniel, a writer telling the story of his life and his father’s life in a novel bearing the same title as the novel we are reading, Beachy-Quick not only plays a metafictional game; additionally he uses the space of the novel to investigate the writer’s voice and the poet’s voice. When the narrative shifts from prose into verse, the text plays with the notion of the poetic speaker, as Beachy-Quick writes, “There is a man in the mouth./ That man is me (ISPS 22)”. This splitting of the poetic speaker between a first- and third-person perspective, between the dominant prose and the occasional interpolation of verse, is echoed later in the novel when he writes:

and the poet jumps into the mouth
the poet is the hero of this poem
but he burns up before he can read it

here I am writing my poem “what
shall I do?” he says lamentably he holds up

the page on which he’s written one line

this is the only line I can write (*ISPS* 161)

This blended “I” and “he” meet in the mouth—an image that recalls the orality of pre-chirographic verse (Ong). That “the poet is the hero of this poem” establishes the third person “poet” in a role that the first person author cannot occupy: in this way, the “we” that makes up the singular voice of the lyric is not simply a we speaking in unison, but a polyphonic voice simultaneously occupying multiple roles. The eye is the site of self-creation, the means of perceiving the real world and the imaginative worlds presented in books; the mouth is the site in which the poet assembles the song of himself.
Beachy-Quick’s nature is expansive: through all his books what we often term the “natural world” is a constant presence, but its presence always bleeds into the so-called non-natural—or human-made—world. For Beachy-Quick, this division is itself artificial. In his interview with the Kenyon Review he states, “I guess I do consider myself a nature poet. I should qualify that by saying I don’t know what else a poet can be. It feels to me there is a world, and we write into it to write about it” (A. King). At the same time that he places himself within a poetic genre, the poet collapses that genre: by stating his uncertainty about what other genre a poet might occupy, he suggests that there is nothing outside nature. Rather than invoking a non-existent division, Beachy-Quick instead seeks out positions of plurality, by which “nature” is transformed into “ecology”, and the lyric ‘I’ that witnesses the world itself consists of a web of connections. Interviewed for The Arcadia Project he says:

In terms of poetic practice … the work of writing a poem is always tending to the world it forges in ways that care more deeply for it … In terms of ecological practice, it is one that understands that if the poem is a place of dwelling, one does not get to stay in it—it is in motion, and you yourself are in motion in it… (Waldrep, “Interview”).

The plurality of positions Beachy-Quick takes reflects this sense of being in motion, but a motion that is both within and yet separate to those positions. His attempt to “dwell” is tied to his attempt to occupy other positions of sight; his conception of the nature poet is tied up with observation, and with the failure of (singular) observation as he destabilises the authority of the nature poet. This destabilisation can be read as a way by which Beachy-Quick recognises his poetic as ecological.

While Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street, the editors of The Ecopoetry Anthology, note that the term ecopoetry “has no precise definition and rather fluid boundaries” (xxviii), they isolate three main groupings within the area of ecopoetry. These groupings are: “nature poetry”, which takes the natural world as its primary subject; “environmental poetry”, a political poetry that advocates for the integrity of the non-human; and “ecological poetry”, that, more abstract than the other two
groupings and often involving avant-garde practices, self-reflexively engages form and concept in ways that reflect and reflect upon ecological processes (xxviii-xxix). The editors note, however, that much that is labelled “ecopoetry” is, in fact, combinatory in nature.

These combinations are another iteration of hybrid poetics, as poets drawing from these multiple approaches are also, frequently, combining the so-called conventional and experimental practices they include. The multiplicity of the contemporary ecopoem is echoed by John Shoptaw, who states that the ecopoem must be both “environmental” and “environmentalist”. To be environmental, Shoptaw notes, a poem must be “ecocentric, not anthropocentric”. To be environmentalist, an ecopoem must recognise the human impact upon the environment. Beachy-Quick’s poetry frequently navigates these combinations, as when he explores the impact of the human upon the animal body in his “Late Pastoral”, dwelling up on the “fact” (CA 36) of a bullet that kills the deer as central to the poem.89

Beachy-Quick’s poetics, choral and citational, can also be recalled in Shoptaw’s description of ecopoetry. Discussing a poem he “do[es] not hesitate to call an ecopoem”, Shoptaw points to Juliana Spahr’s “Gentle Now, Don’t Add to Heartache”90, and uses the same words—“choral and citational”—to describe the poem. This chorality allows space, not just for other human voices, but also for an ecocentric perspective to enter the poem. The citational and annotative method of writing poetry—echoed in Beachy-Quick’s work in, particularly, This Nest, Swift Passerine—allows the conceptual ecological poetic of recycling to enter the verse, at the same time nodding to what Jonathan Skinner calls the “nonfiction impulse” (“The Simple Fact of Foxes”) within ecopoetry. That “nonfiction impulse” combines research often evidenced in citation with the careful, precise observation that has long been a mainstay of nature poetry.

While the area of ecopoetics is multi-faceted and its boundaries are not fixed, one constant strategy it employs is the denial of a singular perspective, as ecopoets focus instead on the desire to recognise in the writerly perspective the interconnected relationships the poetic speaker has with the world. The de-centring of the human within ecopoetry is a way of acknowledging “entanglement” (xxix), and is, in itself,

89 For further discussion of “Late Pastoral”, see the entry “Deer”.
90 This poem is from Spahr’s collection Well Then There Now, and is excerpted in both The Ecopoetry Anthology and the anthology The Arcadia Project.
part of an intellectual tradition of upheaval that questions anthropocentric thinking: Fisher-Wirth and Street recall Copernicus, whose work placed the sun, not the earth, at the centre of universe (before, of course, other solar systems were discovered), and Darwin’s work on evolution, that established human kinship with the animal kingdom (xxx). At the same time, recent scientific work on consciousness in other species gives weight to attempts to occupy other perspectives—though that work leads to failure, as seen below in Beachy-Quick’s “North/South Composition”.  

Beachy-Quick expands on the complexities of nature poetry in his essay “The Hut of Poetry”. Here, he offers two observations on the difficulty of identifying as a nature poet—or, as he has already stated, simply as a poet. He writes first:

The difficulty of being a nature poet is that nature always intervenes. The virtue of an honest ethic, to write only what one sees, to write only what one lives, becomes complicated by vision, becomes entangled by the experience of being in the world. (WI 3)

The intervention of nature that he here describes can be seen as nature asserting itself in all its realism, against the poetic temptation to allow imagination to enter the poem and romanticise the scene. In describing this difficulty, the intervention of nature, Beachy-Quick points to the danger of the idealisation of nature.

At the same time, Beachy-Quick’s work recalls the fact that the act of human observation is more than human. He writes of how vision is itself larger than the human, being informed by light that has taken millions of years to emerge from the sun’s centre. As such, even the act of witness incorporates eons present within not just the fact of geological time, but also the presence of geological and cosmic time, within the human body (WI 3-4). In this way, cosmic time becomes lyric time.  

Even as Beachy-Quick implicates the wider universe into his consideration of his positioning of the nature poet, he returns to earthliness. He writes:

---

91 In a 1974 essay of the same title, Thomas Nagel posed the question “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”. This essay is important forerunner of many studies into what kind of consciousness non-human animals possess, as in Donald Redfield Griffin’s Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness and Carl Safina’s Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel. Recent studies in botanical sciences have begun to consider plant consciousness. An extended consideration of plant consciousness is Peter Wohlleben’s The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate.

92 For further discussion of “North/South Composition” see also the entry “Mouth/Eyes”

93 For further discussion of the link between eyesight and sunlight see “Child / Ghost”.

175
The difficulty with wanting to write about the world, the nature poet’s truest creed, is that one finds there is nothing other than the world about which to write. The world is a limit—but a limit whose boundary is evanescent, the drama of the horizon line. (WI 4)

With that evanescence, the boundary becomes boundlessness: indeed, the world is not even limited by the atmosphere of earth, but incorporates the universe. The horizon is unfathomable.

This position is an inversion of Timothy Morton’s primary point in *Ecology Without Nature*; throughout this work Morton points to the fact that nature itself is an artificial construct, its contemporary rhetoric an inheritance from pastoral traditions and, especially, from the Romantics. To do away with the concept of nature is to instead propose that there is nothing outside ecology. While this renders all literature—all endeavour—ecological, there is great profit in reading the work of poets who explore the interface of bounded consciousness with the greater being in the world, attempting, in the words of Amy Brown, an “environmental empathy”. If all literature becomes in Morton’s formulation ecological, this environmental empathy is necessary, as empathy between humans is no longer enough in an entangled world. In both *Romantic Ecology* and *Song of the Earth*, Jonathan Bate begins the process of tracking the ways in which the Romantic poets explore an ecological consciousness and environmental empathy; it is this growing ecological consciousness that places the work of the Romantics and the Transcendentalists at the centre of Beachy-Quick’s work. Beachy-Quick’s own verse takes an expansive view, exploring interconnection and the possibilities and limitations of environmental empathy.

Beachy-Quick’s expansiveness is present from his first book *North True South Bright*, and is explored in his “North/South Composition” that opens the volume.94 Even the poem’s title incorporates the sweep of the compass, the gamut of the longitudinal axis: the poem is explicitly worldly, earthly, in its consideration of place and relation. Within the poem, Beachy-Quick dwells on the letter ‘S’, and this preoccupation reveals a plurality within ecological connectivity. “North/South Composition” is a poem that approaches the plurality of being with the knowledge—

---

94 For further discussion of “North/South Composition” see “Mouth / Eye”.

176
the lament—that the poet himself is, in body, singular. At the same time that, through sight, his eyes seem to enter other spaces, the mouth through which he speaks what he sees remains planted within his singular body. In the poem’s second stanza Beachy-Quick writes:

No grace on tongue when grace is ease
I know, I’ve begged my tongue
To ease inside the egret’s neck
To ease my tongue into the egret’s neck
Is to speak at least the letter s
Without regret, without regret

(NTSB 4)

The “ease” he invokes may be general ease with the self, but it is also specifically the ease—and the easing—of the tongue, the vehicle of speech and song. When the poet writes, “I’ve begged my tongue/ to ease...” the implication is that this tongue has not succeeded fully: the poet’s tongue has failed to achieve the ease of grace. His emotional plea—he has “begged” his tongue to take this position inside the egret’s neck—betrays a desire to gain the worldly experience of another creature. He bears his failure “without regret”.

Meanwhile, “the letter s” in its simplicity is multivalent: ’s’ denotes both possession and plurality. As onomatopoeia, s is the sound of air in movement through narrow space: as when a tyre deflates or, perhaps, breath moves through the egret’s throat. The s is also the central sound of the “ease” which the poet does not possess: the plural fails him, even as it becomes his point of return. Reducing song and speech to a single sound, Beachy-Quick avoids a single meaning, but such possibilities are suggestive (and by no means exhaustive).

The letter s reappears in the final moments of the poem, becoming more various in its iteration, but also taking a physical as well as a sonic form. Beachy-Quick writes:

The egret’s neck snakes when clenched
And curls into the letter s
Into distance
slighting
sighing
see
silence ease ess
shh

“S” says the snake that never was
Don’t sing, don’t sing
The egret’s neck uncurls into my tongue

The “letter s” is once more twinned with Beachy-Quick’s egret, and that twinning here not only contemplates the inner workings of the bird’s throat, but also the outer presentation of its neck. In the figure of the “snaking” neck, the poet further elaborates on the possibilities of his s: the sibilance of the letter—its defining quality—are registered as the bird becomes a snake, albeit a snake “that never was”. Though the snake’s appearance here is suggested by a physical resemblance, the appearance of the snake in a poem that begins in the grass and concerns itself with grace brings with it Edenic associations. Eden, a garden, itself marks the tension of our construction of nature: a mythic source of the species of the world, as a garden it is a world tamed—not yet wild. When Beachy-Quick writes “Don’t sing, don’t sing” he is, in a sense, denying Edenic knowledge just as he is denying grace.

In this way, the poem once more circles back to the impossibility of speaking for any other being, even as it considers such empathetic attempts vital: even in failure, the attempt de-centres the human perspective, asserting ecological interconnectedness. Such failures, to echo Simone Weil on separation, become a “link” (Gravity and Grace 145). In failing to become other, the poet announces allegiance to that which is not himself and achieves a greater intimacy with the bird whose voice he has failed to occupy. Jonathan Skinner addresses Beachy-Quick’s meditations on “self and other” in This Nest, Swift Passerine: he is the first critic to make the gesture of reading Beachy-Quick through an ecocritical lens. The “interspecies and intraspecies” relationships that Skinner highlights as central to This

---

95 Beachy-Quick recalls Simone Weil’s statement that “every separation is a link” in his “January Notebook” (1.3) and in The Quiet Book (45). In the latter work he follows his citation of Weil with the words “Fine. I agree. Mostly” (45).
Nest, Swift Passerine are present from the outset of Beachy-Quick’s career.

The reappearances of “the letter s” marry sight and sound (“see”; “sighing”; “silence”; “ess”; “shh”) with a sense of inadequate representation (“slighting”). This brief list of the possibilities represented by the letter is, like so much else in the poem, suggested so that those possibilities may be questioned, withdrawn; like the failed attempt to speak for another creature, however, their withdrawal nonetheless makes them present in the first place. This presenting, before silencing, demonstrates the complexity of human consciousness of the non-human world to which it is necessarily linked.

The sound of the letter leads the poet to “silence”, the voicing of which breaks that silence. “Ease      ess” echoes the vocal qualities of the word silence, but the subsequent appearance of “shh” suggests a command. The italicised voicing of the letter s ends with this hushing, and is soon followed by the words, “Don’t sing, don’t sing”. Once more, this may be a command the poet speaks to self, and indeed this does not long precede the final moves of the poem. The poem has invoked song throughout, and the song that fails the poet paradoxically gives birth to the poem. In spite of Beachy-Quick’s cognisance of failure, worldliness nonetheless asserts itself.

So too does the ultimate failure of sight, also linked to song, prove to be productive:

Listen, let’s pretend to pluck the string
Pluck the string
The eye open in the mouth won’t sing

Sight is misplaced, found in the site of speech—and what it voices is refusal: it “won’t sing” (my emphasis) obeying the imperative the poet has previously voiced with his “don’t”. And yet, this refusal of the eye is once again redefined as failure in the poem’s final line when the poet writes “Grace is how I cannot see” (6). This refusal of the eye recalls Beachy-Quick’s statement that “nature always intervenes” (WI 3): the world as the eye perceives it won’t be poeticised into song.

Perhaps grace lies, in Beachy-Quick’s imagining, in a life integrated with the wilder world around it—as in Thoreau’s half-wild bean field (Walden 200-212)—but
that vision, that song, that grace remains ultimately unattainable. This “Composition”
is merely a prelude to the other poem he can envision and yet “can’t see can’t see”
(6). The inability to see may be the fulfilment of the ethic Beachy-Quick describes for
the nature poet: if the nature poet writes “only what [he] sees”, the admission of the
failure of that sight, of the limitations of vision, perform the act of placing the human
within the field of ecology. It is not separate, omniscient, but instead exists under
limitation.
In the nest, the bird takes pieces and weaves a whole; in *This Nest, Swift Passerine* Dan Beachy-Quick does the same. Many of these pieces are like unraveled threads, and in the writing of the book the poet re-ravels the words of others. Beachy-Quick’s nest is formed of scraps taken from authors such as Dorothy Wordsworth, Henry David Thoreau, Martin Buber and Ronald Johnson; his nest is bound together with the thread of his own voice. The nest is an embroidered sampler. The nest is a commonplace book. Beachy-Quick fashions his nest with the ingenuity of combination: the nest is an act and a product of collage. In the act of weaving the parts together in words, the poet uses the silk from the silkworm’s mouth that is central to the work of *Mulberry*, in the final poem of which the nest and silk are brought together as a “silken nest” (57). Both *Mulberry* and *This Nest, Swift Passerine* are, in the words of Jonathan Skinner, “a thorough demonstration of poetic intertextuality as nesting” (“Looking up from ‘Sparrow’”). Where *Mulberry* “touches upon” (M 61) the words of others, *This Nest, Swift Passerine* imports often-substantial fragments of text directly into the poem in order to poetically annotate them.

Beachy-Quick’s “poetic intertextuality” in *This Nest, Swift Passerine* forms a complex web, and spiders and their webs are another repeated set of images in the work. In this work he cites three stanzas of Edward Taylor’s poem “Upon a Spider Catching a Fly”; elsewhere he addresses the poem in a brief essay. Of the spider’s web he writes, “The web is a conceit—that metaphysical extravagance of metaphor weaving together the boundaries it breaks … The web—attached always to the stuff of the world … —exists by linking together unlike things” (“On Edward Taylor”). The citations Beachy-Quick chooses are the stuff of the world—“a cornice and a tree” (“On Edward Taylor”)—between which he weaves a web. The book as a whole, in the words of its author, “twines” its “themes”, and in doing so it mimics the commonplace book of the past: the collection of quotations that reflect the pith of an individual’s reading. The poet incorporates and inhabits his reading directly, and his own additions both weave the nest of reading and comment upon it. This inhabitation, in which the voices, even as they are separated, weave together, is another form of lyric chorus.

---

96 For further discussion of the commonplace book see “Unoriginality”.


In *Mulberry*’s opening address “*To the Reader*”, Beachy-Quick recalls first holding an ancient Chinese coil pot, and then the transformation of the mulberry leaf into the silkworm’s cocoon by way of the silkworm’s mouth. This cocoon—also a type of nest—is “spun of a single thread” (ix). Of the silkworm’s action of “weaving its head back and forth” he makes an analogy to the work of the poet:

“As I mulled my lines I thought the divergent strands of my poetic interests … were not divergent at all, but simply the weaving back and forth, as the head moves almost unnoticeably left to right and right to left as one reads, of those leaves I had devoured, those pages I read” (ix).

Weaving is the labour that produces the silk of the poem; weaving is the labour that combines the leaves and silk into the nest. Critic Jonathan Skinner, editors Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street of the *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, and editors G. C. Waldrep and Joshua Corey of *The Arcadia Project*, suggest Beachy-Quick may be read from an eco-poetic angle. His return to observations of *nature*, combined with his technique of bower-birding from existing texts, expresses the concerns of eco-poetics—these are acts of witness and preservation that at the same time build something new, frequently questioning the perspective of nature poetry that centres on human perception. Beachy-Quick’s poetry always reminds the reader that the human is not separate from the natural world: the silk of his poetry is earthy, ecological—and is also the internal made external, bodily and affective. As such, he takes an eco-centric perspective in his works.

In Beachy-Quick’s poetry we see silk in the *mouth* of the silkworm, and also on the human body: as the image of silk moves between its natural production and its human appropriation, Beachy-Quick shows the entanglements of the human and the natural literally. In *Mulberry*’s “Record no oiled tongue” (5-6) the poet occupies the voice of the Salem witch trial judge Samuel Sewall; he is visited by a woman “in widow’s silk” (5). This visitation is the occasion of the poem.97 In “guess the house from the angle” (*Mulberry* 9-12) Beachy-Quick returns to the process of silk’s production when he writes “caterpillar undoes some leaf/ my mouth // some leaf // into silk” (11-12). From the mouth, silk covers, *shrouds*, the throat when he writes in

---

97 For further discussion of “Record no oiled tongue” see “Almond” and “Deer”.
“that yellow silk not Chinese” (16-18) “that yellow silk not Chinese/ the museum
your throat/ wound that day Kristy in shroud” (16). Conflating the neck with the
yellow scarf wrapped around it, the act of unwinding—“unwind your neck the yellow
silk” (18)—becomes the action of the poem. Elsewhere in Mulberry silk appears as a
“the sun thin in silken lines” (13); “time a silk ribbon” (25); “the violin string/ of one
strand of silken hair” (29); “water thin veil thin silk” (32); “a silken art / / philosophy”
(33); “in my heart some dark silk” (34); the web of which “spider sews one point to
branch/ and leaps where wind carries/ sews one point of silk to fern” (56) and finally
as a “silken nest” (57).

With these appearances, Beachy-Quick attaches his silk to almost all the
themes of his book, and finally leads that silk to rest within the nest that will become
This Nest, Swift, Passerine, a book of further “twining” (13, 30, 48, 52-53). In
associating silk with the widow and the shroud in Mulberry, Beachy-Quick
emphasises the fabric’s use in clothing made for liminal states; that his silk is also
used as the thread for this “twining” reminds the reader that the role of thread in
joining—or twining—sections places it in a threshold position. Though more
sparingly used in This Nest, Swift Passerine, silk appears again: in the spider’s web
(of the irregular cobweb “—loops in the silk trap prey; no design” (9); and of the Orb
web, “Upon this first silk the whole web will be spun” (9)), in the bird’s nest (“Some
birds snatch cobwebs from corners to help hold together
Nestling hatched in silk on which the imago died” (33)) and as word. In the book’s final page
he writes “a word/ by silken tie tethers world to world” (53). Though less present in
the later book, silk is nonetheless the thread with which Beachy-Quick binds his
annotative work. The recurring image here connects to form, to poetic practice, and to
the correspondence between disparate things, just as other images come to revolve
around recurrent, abstract, ideas.

As seen previously, with the almond and the deer, Beachy-Quick builds a
vocabulary and set of images that carries from book to book; Beachy-Quick’s silk
webs not across just one book, but through many. The nest comprises his œuvre. In
this way, Beachy-Quick builds a body of work that, though formally different in each
new collection, produces an obsessive continuity that comes to constitute not just a
meditation upon these subjects but, through their repetition, a meditation upon

98 For further discussion of “this yellow silk not Chinese” see “Lyric”.
poetry’s ability to dwell in thought. In a journal-like note he writes, “Nine months now nesting in these pages” (TNSP 42). The page becomes lined with a silk-like scrawl; becomes, with this nesting, a home.
Page / Desk / Work

In the eighth section of *This Nest, Swift Passerine*, the poet shows us his own nest: “Nine months now nesting in these pages” (42). Beachy-Quick frequently shows us the labour of reading and writing; not infrequently he shows us the setting of that labour. We see the materiality of the page and the solidity—or false solidity—of his working surface. Work, thought, time and material are linked, and the fact of work is a repeated concern. As a poet, Beachy-Quick investigates the nature of poetry, from its inception in reading and allusion, to its voicing by the lyric ‘I’, to the poetic traditions on which it draws, and to the act of setting material on the page. These returns are self-reflexive: they are part of the “active romanticism” proposed by Carr and Robinson, and they are crucial to the investigatory nature of an active lyric.

The writer’s desk appears from the outset of Beachy-Quick’s work: in *North True South Bright*’s “North/South Composition”99, the desk materialises—and appears to dissolve. He writes:

Water is not wood  
My desk where I am and write is wood  
Where I lisp each night the egret’s neck  
Where I curse the lamp for same of light  (*NTSB 4*)

This poem reminds the reader of the poet’s position, but even as he invokes the solidity of his desk, he places the egret and the desk lamp side by side, suggesting the transformation of lamp’s neck into egret’s neck, and back again. As he attempts to write the natural world and its inhabitants he finds his page illuminated by electricity. Yet the imagination dissolves the scene and breaks through to inhabit the world away from his desk with the imagistic resemblance he sees in the bird; paradoxically, it is the desk that allows this passage to occur: “My desk is north at which I write/ My desk is frozen water/ Is breath held at the edge of a pond” (*NTSB 5*). That compass position of “north” orients the poet (and, through its title, the poem), allowing him to establish the other compass points around himself. The desk itself is transformed into what he has previously told us it is not: this metamorphosis evokes the errant

99 For further discussion of “North/South Composition” see “Mouth / Eye” and “Nature / Ecology”
suggestion of sameness in metaphor, bringing the imaginary and the real close together.

Beachy-Quick begins A Brighter Word Than Bright with a portrait of the child Keats: what he shows the reader is the young poet huddled under a desk. Of this image he writes, “The portrait is the desk itself, where forever in the cloistered dark a bereft boy weeps, where in the room’s light sit pen and ink and a sheaf of paper waiting to be darkened into song” (1). His suggestion that the desk constitutes the portrait—the poet himself may be eliminated—again emphasises the material reality that exists behind the poetic work. This focus on the desk is also a focus on one form of poetic impersonality: what matters, what lasts, is the poem and the page on which it is printed, while the poet can (and inevitably will) be removed from the equation.

The nine months of nesting to which Beachy-Quick refers in This Nest, Swift Passerine (42) reflect the fact that the desk, the page, are constant points of return in his poetry; these sites are also the sites of anxiety about what is yet undone. In the brief essay “As in the Green Trees” Beachy-Quick writes, “I want to be at work”—a statement immediately amplified by his assertion that, “The most profound gift I know is the gift of being at work” (3). His glimpses of the desk and the page are touchstones of workmanship; at the same time his expression of “want” points to those periods when work is impossible, or worklessness is a necessity.

Blanchot reminds us that, for Orpheus, “the ordeal of eternal worklessness is necessary to the work” (101). This worklessness is suggested by the “ignorance” (42) Beachy-Quick invokes in “The Oracular Tree Acquiring”. Such ignorance reflects all the work of reading left undone; it is what is left undone that informs Beachy-Quick’s poetic sensibility as much as what has already been achieved.

The concern with worklessness is likewise present in his exploration of Keatsian indolence: he poses the question, “how to teach the eye not to take in light, but to reach into it?” and replies with the assertion that, “One answer is to become lazy. One answer is to laze in the field’s long grasses until one becomes field-like—until one becomes an aspect of the field” (BWB 65). This lazing is another form of nesting into the place of work: the field is both bed for indolence and desk for the strange, poetic worklessness of working self into field.

Another version of worklessness can be seen in the silence that Beachy-Quick sees surrounding writing. He states:
In some sense, every order is artificial, is artifice; and so a poet works in *techne*, and a poem is a made thing. The blank page is a form of chaos, and in ways perhaps too easily forgotten each poem is a work made possible—as is the cosmos that is world—by the silence from which it emerges and to which it helplessly opposes itself. (A. King)

The desk is the surface on which the chaos of silence lays as, through the act of writing, the blank page becomes darkened with the order of the made thing.

The desk appears in poems that are apparently spoken in the poet’s “own” voice, but is also present when he takes on dramatic, historical voices. It is this surface that grounds the poet, the poem and the reader. In “Posterity, this me is Now” (*Mulberry* 15-13) he writes:

I am blood at oak, my hand
A blood petal unfurled over oak,
My desk, my wooded den, a pistil,
A pen. Believe me: I speak honest
And true.

(13)

The self and the desk become one, both bloody and oaken; the pen, placed in apposition with the pistil, becomes a reproductive organ. The voice—contemporary, or temporally sited in, for example, the “Virginia, 1705” of William Byrd of Westover—is rooted in work. Beachy-Quick’s voice is “honest and true” as the result of being investigative of the world it occupies, from the most immediate surroundings of the work space, to the imaginative realms of the past of Byrd, or the fiction of *Moby-Dick*.

The act of work and its interruption (that other form of worklessness) play a central role in the *whale*-chase of *Spell*. This poetic re-performance of *Moby-Dick* is punctuated by the appearance of the anonymous narrator, addressing a projected publisher for the work. In the book’s “Prologue” he first writes:

---

100 For further discussion of “re-performance” see “Citation”.


Editor,

Here are the lines my mind fathomed.
They are tar-dark. I wrote them on a page
Breathless and blank

(Spell xv)

and then later he presents the plight of the writer as interruption arrives:

Don’t knock, don’t knock. Sir—
Oh, it is not you. My wife’s at my study door
And knows the wood won’t open from wanting
Wood to. I must seal this craft’s last plank
In place, and voyage it over ocean to you.
“Come in.” She’s knocking.” Come in”
Her hand’s on my wooden shore, door—
I go. Send word, send word. If you don’t, I’ll know.

(Spell xv)

The work is done, the page filled with “tar-dark” lines that stand in stark contrast to the famously white whale, Moby-Dick—and then the work is again disrupted. The plea to “Send word, send word” for a poet who “wants to be at work” is a plea not only to his editor, but also to himself. Beachy-Quick, in his return to page, desk and work, shows us that the writer must once more return to his desk, return to the “hundred pages I left blank to fill other days” (Spell 101), begin again, and let the page itself blend with the world beyond its edge.
Poets repeat themselves: the tools of poetry are based in repetition, the repetition that creates rhythm and melody. Embedded in alliteration, assonance and rhyme, and the definitional nature of the refrain, repetition is felt in the reader’s body as homecoming, just as, in music, the return to the home key is felt as resolution. In Beachy-Quick’s own words, “Sometimes I think … that repetition is what holds the whole together … Repetition, from refrain to the return to thematic concerns to repeated images, is just such a stitch-work for me” (A. King). Each repetition, each recurrence, is a temporal fold. No longer linear, lyric time wraps around each refrain, returning past and future to the ever-present moment.

This concern with time is a central fact of repetition: Cecile Chu-Chin Sun opens her work on the “Poetics of Repetition” with time, noting that through repetition time becomes “intelligible” (1). Recurrence allows us to consider the time that has passed since the previous occurrence, gives new markers, whether regular or irregular; repetition is a supplement to the calendrical time that gives our days shape and meaning. Sun goes on to note both the centrality of repetition to lyric (1), as well as the ways in which repetition has figured in the work of major thinkers—most important to lyric’s thrust, Plato’s conception of the sameness of mimesis as the repetition of worldly objects in art (2) and Heidegger’s linking of history, not to the past or present, but instead to the future (5). The thinking of both Plato and Aristotle on the subject of mimesis has proven to be elastic enough to allow poets to reimagine the way in which the poet “imitates” or “repeats” the world over millennia; Heidegger’s understanding of history relates to the rituality of poetry, as the poem takes place not only in the past in which it was written, but also in the future present moment of its re-voicing. Repetition creates anticipation.

As such, poetic voice and poetic form both rely on repetition. Both mimesis and the combination of history and anticipation make repetition not only a musical force in which refrain forms a “home key”, but also a ritual force. A ritual is defined by the fact of it being repeated, and its power is drawn from those repetitions. As already discussed, the ritualistic forms of the charm and the lullaby, themselves seek repetition: what the author and the speak give in words they hope will be returned in

\[101\] For further discussion of mimesis, see the entry “Lyric”.

189
the form of an event—a variation on the Platonic idea of mimesis in which the object or event is then given as word or representation. The elegy is an act of retrieval, of returning the departed to the world in words; its nature as a text of memory is bound to this retrieval that is repeated in each rereading: elegiac writing, seemingly bound to the past, is actually always a projection into the future as it anticipates the necessity of remembrance.

So too is the lyric speaker a construction defined by recurrence: the lyric “I” is created and multiplied with each iteration of the word “I”, and by its juxtaposition against all that is the not “I”, especially that represented in the act of poetic address. Susan Stewart describes the act of self-creation through recursion when she writes, “Without this repetition … the one cannot come to be, for it is only by means of difference that identity can be articulated” (On Longing 20). Meanwhile, the repetition that underlies “lyric possession” (Stewart, Poetry 107-143) or, more directly, citation, lays bare another layer of the choral voice.

The music and ritual of the repeat, when pushed to the level of monotony, can become either sublime or unbearable. Take Simone Weil’s account of monotony in “The Mysticism of Work”:

Monotony is the most beautiful or the most atrocious thing. The most atrocious if it is the sign of an unvarying perpetuity. It is time surpassed or time sterilized.

The circle is the symbol of monotony which is beautiful, the swinging of a pendulum of monotony is atrocious. (Anthology 159)

For Weil, monotony is the essence of work—this is true for the writer too. The desk is Beachy-Quick’s point of return; the circle is, in the title of his fifth collection and in his frequent return to Emersonian thought, his apprenticeship. Taking up a position as a “circle’s apprentice” the poet ensures the perpetuity of that apprenticeship. This form of monotony takes place at many levels in the work of any poet: from the repetition of vowel and consonant sounds that form rhyme, assonance and alliteration, to the refrain that returns, even as it is given different shades by the development of each section or verse, to the recurring images and allusions that begin to form a lexicon that spreads through the poet’s oeuvre, as when the almond, the deer, the
**whale** return: from the miniature to the gigantic, images come again. Beachy-Quick’s repeated images and concerns—which he describes as part of the “stitch-work” of writing—give a through-line to his work, making it comprehensible in whole as well as in its parts.

With repetition, too, comes the opportunity for disruption. In the poem “Unworn” (*NTSB* 9) Beachy-Quick employs the disruption of variation through pause, in the form of white space:

```
Count me among those almonds your eyes
Count me among those almonds your eyes
Never opened. Your mouth on the floor-fallen pear
Never opened your mouth on the floor-fallen pear
Count among those almonds floor-fallen, your eyes
Your mouth on the pear never opened me
```

(*NTSB* 9)

Beachy-Quick’s movement of white space within the line, and his re-punctuation of the same words, introduce syncopation to his utterance. Repetition naturally divides the sestet into couplets, and the lines appear both enjambed (“your eyes/ Never opened”) and unenjambed (“Never opened your mouth on the floor-fallen pear”). In the final two lines of the sestet Beachy-Quick reconfigures the already repeated material to make new sense of the images of eyes coupled with almonds, mouth coupled with pear, and the relationship between the speaker and addressee: the stanza ends not on “you” but on “me”, centring the poem within a still-in-construction lyric voice that is inscribed and reinscribed through its repetitions and variations.¹⁰²

Beachy-Quick carries out the same variations present within an individual poem on larger scales: repetition is a key organisational principle of *Circle’s Apprentice*, which begins on a sequence of lullabies, and ends on a series of “Tomb Figurines”. The repetitions between the first and second lullaby indicate that an arc of meaning is being built; when Beachy-Quick departs from this subject matter in the third, “Demonstrative Lullaby” the reader seeks to find the repetition which connects

---

¹⁰² For further discussion of “Unworn” see “Almond”. 
these poems. The connection is found in the persistent twinning of the “child” and the “ghost” as Beachy-Quick portrays the cyclical nature of life over the course of the poems.

The same effect comes into play as the reader is confronted with an arc of five poems, each bearing the title “Tomb Figurine” at the volume’s close. These poems, though taking different narratives as their points of departure, particularly play on the relationship—and sonic repetition—between the “I” and the “eye”. In the first of these poems Beachy-Quick opens and closes the work with a meditation on the likeness of eye and sun with the lines “My eye was a little sun working/ In reverse” and “The sun a distant eye working in reverse” (CA 77). The second “Tomb Figurine” opens with the words, “Watched the video of myself watching myself/ On video” (CA 78), enacting the same kind of recursion that operates in the opening and close of the first poem of the series. The fourth “Tomb Figurine” ends on the words, “The echo is in the eye” (CA 81), while the fifth ends by marking each iteration of “I” in its final four lines with an asterisk.

The third “Tomb Figurine”, then, departs from the pattern, and instead of concerning itself with the I/eye (indeed, the poet doesn’t use the “I” throughout the poem) it instead, crucially, dwells in the mind and repetition. The poem opens:

Retrograde mind: Beehive: Yesterday’s drone
repeats the vibrating stem into flower-dull
field, buzzing near blindness, the live-feed
grown grainy, grown gray, as the transmission fades
on the screen: (CA 80)

The mind is where the self (I) and its eye meet; the past here is projected into the future through its repetition, even as the poet invokes the constant present moment of a “live feed”, and its failure as “the transmission fades”. Repetition here threatens to become Weil’s negative monotony of the pendulum described above (Anthology 159), as the day becomes a “pollen-weight”, and the mind exhibits a “sterile heat” and becomes an “electric hollow”, “a frequency lost in abstract/ reason” (CA 80). Weight,

103 These lullabies are variously discussed in the entries, “Child/Ghost”, “Lullaby”, “Lyric ‘I’”, and “Sameness”.
104 For discussion of “Tomb Figurine [V]” see “Impersonality”.

192
sterility, hollowness and pure abstraction loom as burdens. The mind (home of thought) and the brain (biological processor) meet in the poem, as reason and truth give way to “hemispheres, hives, a road on the synapse”. As consciousness becomes somatic, the “I” becomes the “eye”—the central relationship that underlies the “Tomb Figurine” series is here repeated beneath the surface of the poem.

As seen here in the “Tomb Figurine” series, surface acts of repetition invite the reader to look for these same repetitions occurring beneath the surface, beyond the repetitions of language and sound that are themselves so central to the lyric poem that explores the musical qualities of language even as it is severed from its historical, musical and choric settings. The movement in a single arc of poems presented consecutively allows the reader to fold Beachy-Quick’s work over, such that we can see the way that, published more than a decade later, gentleness dovetails with North True, South Bright. The same concerns and literary periods are repeated—though reconfigured in the latter volume. Beachy-Quick’s repetitions allow his body of work, at the micro and macro levels, to perform many kinds of continuity. It is through this sense of continuity that we are able to see that the poet’s repetitions and returns form an active enquiry into self and poetic practice.
**Sameness**

“Sameness”. The word appears in Beachy-Quick’s “Demonstrative Lullaby”, third in an arc of five **lullabies** (CA 5).\(^\text{105}\) The poem’s “demonstration” is, in a sense, a consideration and enactment of Beachy-Quick’s poetics. Like **repetition** and **echo**, which deal with time and the reverberation of the voice in space, “sameness” lies at the core of his poetry: it is the figuration of attention into verse through simile, metaphor and re-presentation as the world is translated onto the **page**. At the same time, the mention of sameness brings with it the spectre of difference, as the poet inhabits multiple traditions and, in the midst of the **unoriginal** forges something genuinely new.

When discussing the medium in which poetry exists—the materiality of language—Beachy-Quick states:

> Part of the nature of the material is its metaphoricity, its pointing at that which it isn’t, and in pointing, verging into what it’s not. Not only does language have within it the ability to alter perception, it is a remarkable forging of perception. …Language is always in the process of learning from that which it isn’t. It is a medium of encounter. (A. King)

The “metaphoricity” of language can be seen as a form of rhetorical and associative forging of **ecology**.\(^\text{106}\) Metaphor creates a web of interrelatedness between unlike things, “learning from what [they aren’t]”. Fundamentally, metaphor brings images and ideas into relationship with each other, and their relatedness creates the worlds of poems. The “sameness” that is not, in fact, the same, asks the reader to think laterally about resemblance, and to see interconnectedness between unlike objects. The poetic

\(^\text{105}\) For discussion of the first two lullabies see the entry “Lullaby”; the fourth and fifth lullabies are discussed in “Child / Ghost”.

\(^\text{106}\) The notion of the metaphor as a figure of ecology was suggested by my reading of Rebecca Solnit’s essay “Drawing the Constellations”. Considering artist Meridel Rubenstein’s photograph “Home”, she notes “disparate things are stacked and ordered by their visual resemblance”, and that this stacking “refuses the distinction between landscape and body, between animal and human, traditional and technological” instead seeking “affinities between them” (167). At its core, metaphor invokes distinctions in order to refute them; at the same time, this refutation is overturned as the mind assimilates the suggested resemblance: the images produced by metaphor exist within a single system. While not forging an **actual** ecology, metaphoricity is a tool that allows writers and readers to view the world in terms of interconnection and likeness.
ecologies that Beachy-Quick creates in his verse through his “study” of sameness help to shape the silken web of connections he finds in the world as his subject.

The study of “sameness” also indicates the empathetic project of Beachy-Quick’s poetry, an empathy that is directed to both the human and non-human throughout his verse.\(^{107}\) Sameness doubles the world by naming it in multiple ways, and by doing so it doubles the self that exists in the doubled world. This doubling is the “forging of perception” the poet notes as a remarkable feature of language—an action available to the poet because thought is framed by language.

An act of doubling occurs in Beachy-Quick’s “Demonstrative Lullaby” when the poet writes, “‘not me’ doubles love into a page” (CA 5). That love “double[d] … into a page” is a form, not just of finding sameness, but also of creating it. The “not me” that takes to the page is necessarily encompassed within what is “me” in order for the poem to come to us authored. The poem starts at the level of the page and then conjures—doubles—world and that which lies beyond the world:

```
page opens field opens grave
Eveningstar each night exhumed
is Morningstar at morning

both dim and by dimming grow deep
my mind and I ponder Figure A
the orbit in dashed line planet a dot

to explain the coffin the child opens
the book opens the field to find
Lucifer and Venus in a bridal knot

For example ivy twines by twinning
as do I when I write I study sameness
narcissus lazy drops petals for tears

and echo knows daisy in margins
```

\(^{107}\) The notion of “environmental empathy” (A. Brown) is further discussed in “Nature / Ecology”. “
silences virtue when she’s torn we see
“not me” doubles love into a page

the field speaks twice the cunning
duplicate in mind see Figure A in which
the mind pivots to fool the eye

(CA 5)

This third lullaby is the most overtly writerly of this arc of lullabies, as Beachy-Quick refers to the act of poetic creation with the words “when I write I study sameness”. While he studies “sameness” through the act of metaphor-making, by declaring the 
unlike
to be like, Beachy-Quick reveals the errancy of that equivalence.108

The study of sameness is simultaneously the study of difference, and Beachy-Quick follows this declaration that he studies “sameness” with the words, “narcissus lazy drops petals for tears/ and echo knows daisy in margins”. Twinned as they appear here, the pair cannot help but recall their classical myth, but the also recall their more ordinary places in our language. The narcissus, a flower as well as a Greek man in love with his own reflection, drops petals for tears: the man weeps petals in place of water, the flower drops tears in the form of petals. These tear-petals are a form of Beachy-Quick’s sameness. Echo’s “margins” suggest the answering back that occurs in places simultaneously empty and enclosed.

The act of studying “sameness” recalls Wittgenstein’s observation that “There must be something identical in a picture and what it depicts, to enable the one to be a picture of the other at all” (2.161). The poet reflects on the partially “identical” nature of the picture and what it depicts when he refers to an astronomical “Figure A”—an illustration of planetary orbit that, in order to be accurate, must display Wittgensteinian identicality—and then shifts his perception of the sameness between planet and planetary diagram to the metaphorical understanding of this scientific

108 In the errancy of metaphor poets have long found a paradoxical truth. In her poem “Essay on What I Think About Most”, the poet Anne Carson writes through Aristotle’s Rhetoric to explore the mathematical mistakenness, and the extra-rational rightness of metaphor. Adhering to strict logic and rationality, of course what is metaphorically the “same” is not literally the same. Extra-rational consideration steps outside the binary of rational/irrational, instead considering emotional and other experiences where rationality does not apply. Carson writes, “The poet does not seem to know/ that 2 + 2 = 4” (Men 31) stating that “Aristotle says that metaphor causes the mind to experience itself/ in the act of making a mistake” (30). Carson’s poem, itself a kind of ars poetica, finds an echo in Beachy-Quick’s own consideration of what is involved in writing a poem.
illustration as explanation of “the coffin the child opens”. This coffin is the expanded narrative of time that contemplation on the cosmic scale enables. As the vision of this poem “opens”, it widens: page becomes field (both landscape and poetic figure), and then inhabits death in the grave.

Beachy-Quick separates the mind, not only from the self, but from the physical body when he writes “the mind pivots to fool the eye”. Beachy-Quick here begins to separate his poetic “I” into a multiple “I”. This fragmented “I” suggests that the speaker is being broken down into constituent parts, and therefore Beachy-Quick’s speaker can be read as being in agreement with and as an extension of Olson’s supposition that “man is himself an object” [my italics] (48). Olson’s “objectism” calls for “the getting rid of the lyric interference of the individual as ego” (47); this attempt to jettison the ego is reflected in Beachy-Quick’s poem as he separates and interrogates the nature of the poetic speaker. The “me” and “not me” of this poem occupy the same body, allowing this subjective experience to be both distant and empathetic. The “me” and “not me” are, like metaphors, mistaken equivalences, samenesses that are not the same.

The words “opens field”, by recalling Charles Olson’s “Projective Verse” and its suggestion of an “open field” (40), mean that in studying sameness, Beachy-Quick once more enters into dialogue with poetic forebears. Olson’s call for a poetry of “open field” whereby, “if a contemporary poet leaves a space as long as the phrase before it, he means that space to be held, by the breath, an equal length of time” (46) looks at an alternative use of the page that does not involve the pre-set or elaborated stanzaic structures that were a mainstay of much English language poetry in the previous five hundred years: Olson instead suggests a use of the page that extends Pound’s imagist injunction to do away with the strict meter, as though the stanza were itself another kind of metronome, albeit set to a slower tempo. Set against Olson’s idea of composition by field, Beachy-Quick’s tercets seem even more tightly wound: the lack of punctuation is bound up with the lack of white space, and the largely-uniform line length creates the impression of regularity. Nonetheless, by directly recalling Olson, these tightly-wound stanzas stand as the poet’s perspective on that poetic field.

This tightly-wound quality has the poem echo the “bridal knot” of “Lucifer and Venus”, a marriage of Hebraic and Graeco-Roman mythologies; when the poet
acknowledges that “the field speaks twice” this directly relates not only to the subject matter and mode of the poem, but also to its formal appearance on the page. Once the field has been “opened”, to opt for a traditional form is a choice (elsewhere in his poetry Beachy-Quick has made use of the full page and its possible white spaces): by recalling Olson while making use of the left-aligned tercet, Beachy-Quick invokes Swensen and St John’s hybridisation of multiple traditions. The “open field” of Olson, a poet whose work is “claimed for ‘experimental’ or ‘oppositional’ genealogies” (McLane 19), is enveloped within regular tercets and the seemingly ‘closed’ field of the “personal, expressive lyric tradition” (G. White 12). Through this envelopment, the poem embodies multiple genealogies, eliciting sameness within difference.
Song

Beachy-Quick constantly links his verse to *song*. This frequent return serves a particular purpose: it is a reminder of the aurality, the orality, and through them the voiced musicality of poetry. It is a reminder that poetry is both a vehicle of mental content—and also a vehicle of the somatic meaning, because the book resides in the hand, the poem in the mouth. The lyric voice becomes the reader’s voice: the poem is ostensibly not completed until it is *voiced* by another.

Just as the genre of “lyric” is linked to music through its *etymological* root in the lyre, sub-genres too emphasise the musicality of poetry and its link to ritual life: as previously discussed, the ritualistic *charm* derives from *carmen*, the Latin song. Other forms Beachy-Quick uses—the hymn, the psalm—are traditionally sung. Even when the poet does not name a poetic form that is also a song-form, song lies at the root of his verse. The rituality of the *lyric* “I” is reinforced when the melodious *repetitions* of song’s incantation are voiced. Incantation in turn becomes incarnation as the music arises in and occupies the body. Beachy-Quick opens his *Apology for the Book of Creatures* with the lines, “Song commits melody, words commit memory/ to words, to world” (“Preface” n. pag.). That rhyme between “melody” and “memory” recalls the mnemonic uses of both language and song, as song *becomes* memory.

That memory is both personal and, once again, collective: Beachy-Quick’s use of language in association with music puts his song in relation to his conception of the *chorus*. Alongside that *ancient* chorus of Greek tragedy comes the choir and the chorale. Beachy-Quick’s song may be monodic or it may be polyvocal, in either homophonic or polyphonic configurations. Just as, for this poet, language is haunted by the individual etymologies that stand behind individual words, song is haunted by the many melodies born out of the same material. In conceiving of poetry as song, the work can be doubly allusive, multiply possessed. Discussing “all the singers of the Western lyric”, Susan Stewart designates the ballad singer as “most radically haunted by others” (*Poetry* 121). Not a balladeer, Beachy-Quick finds other ways to explore his friendship with the dead\(^\text{109}\), seeking to be radically haunted by the songs of those who have come before him.

Beachy-Quick reminds the reader that song doesn’t just sit behind poetry, but

\(^{109}\) For further discussion of this “friendship” see “Elegy”.

can be heard in the world: while birdsong is the most frequently cited of the songs of nature for many poets (including Beachy-Quick), he is also drawn to Thoreau’s interest in the telegraph wire, to which he returns in both his “January Notebook” and “The Oracular Tree Acquiring”. Noting Thoreau’s recognition of a “‘supernal’ hum or music in the air”\(^\text{110}\), he writes first that, “Those taut wires carry human voices”, and that, “A line in a poem is also a taut wire, and what the wire contains is a human voice” (“January Notebook” 1.7). The celestial—“supernal”—music of the telegraph wires is the music of the spheres; that cosmic music inhabits the poetic line.

The poet’s exploration of poetic traditions and song traditions is an exploration of the poetics of different historical moments: this is perhaps most evident in his poem “Old Song” (CA 21). Rather than inhabiting the accentual-syllabic or free verse poetics of much modern English-language poetry, this work looks back to the earliest English language prosody. While terms such as “lyric” and “hymn” arrive from the Greek, and “psalm” comes through ecclesiastical Latin, “song” is Germanic in origin, and present from the beginnings of written English.

The Anglo-Saxon influence is unmistakeable in the opening lines of “Old Song” when Beachy-Quick writes:

Hurt-sick, say it, heart-sick, you say it
Sea-swell, sea-pulse, sea-push-sway (CA 21)

These opening lines make explicit the four-beat line familiar from Old English verse: the use of the comma echoes the placement of the caesura at the middle of the Old English line, and the repetitions of the “h” and “s” sounds recall the organisation of Anglo-Saxon poetry around alliterative stresses (Fussell 63). While the language chosen comes from a mixture of Old English and Old French sources, the reliance on single-syllable words reinforces the Germanic heritage of this imagining of his “song”; that the first multi-syllable word (“question”) arrives as an explanation of the poem’s only true kenning\(^\text{111}\) (“heart-stone”, which the poet defines as “a question/

\(^{110}\) Thoreau’s mention of the telegraph wire in his journal comes on 3 September 1851 when he writes, “As I went under the new telegraph-wire, I heard it vibrating like a harp high overhead. It was as the sound of a far-off glorious life, a supernal life, which came down to us, and vibrated the lattice-work of this life of ours” (Journal 71).

\(^{111}\) This is another example of the combinatorial coinage of new words and phrases that was also discussed in “Ancientness”. The kenning is a construction in which multiple nouns are used as a single
Tormenting itself” (CA 21)) makes the arrival of this Latinate language a genuine bridge connecting an iteration of ancient Anglo-Saxon lyric form to the contemporary English language. Other compounds words Beachy-Quick employs are not the metaphoric kennings characteristic of Beowulf and other heroic poems, but echoes of the kinds of compound Gerard Manley Hopkins uses in his verse, which likewise owe a debt to the oldest English-language poetry.

So too does the subject matter of the poem link it to the tradition of Old English literature: it is a song not only of heart-sickness, but also a song of the sea. From Beowulf’s “whale road” to the traverses of “The Seafarer”, the sea is the source of secular subject matter in much Anglo-Saxon verse\(^\text{112}\); this is not surprising given that Anglo-Saxon poetry is an island literature written by those who have come from across the sea. Beachy-Quick has oceanic sympathies as a poet whose compass is set to that other whale-road traversed by Moby-Dick.

In “Old Song”, “hurt-sick[ness]” becomes aligned with “heart-sickness [my italics]” (CA 21) through apposition; the poem’s addressee enters the poem directly after this more familiar emotional malady enters the poem. The poem shifts from the imperative (“say it”) to the second person (“you say it”). As the poem proceeds, this “you” slides into the background as the poem turns attention to the scene: the “anemone in tide-pool” and the “dove as it flies between rocks” (CA 21). The “you” combines with the implicit “I” as the poem watches the third person “she”. This triangulation of poetic subject is echoed by the water-bound “sea-swell, sea-pulse, sea-push-sway”, the earth-bound “crashing rocks, wandering rocks, deadly/Rocks” (CA 21) and the dove flying through and above this scene. The emotional centre of the poem (the repeated appearance of the heart and its heartsickness) is blended with the thought event and the musical event that constitute poetry, as Beachy-Quick links our received notions of the bodily counterparts to feeling, thought and sound: he shows us a “Heart that thinks, mind that rhymes” (my emphasis). Both the feeling of the heart and the thought it produces are subject to semantic considerations; meanwhile, the rhyme of the mind reminds the reader that we are in the realm of the somatic effects of song.

\(^{112}\) The “whale-road” appears near the beginning of the extant text of Beowulf, as “hron-rāde” (2). One of the most famous translations of “The Seafarer” is that by Ezra Pound, forging a link between Anglo-Saxon and modernism.
Beachy-Quick’s own dual return to both thought and song suggest a poetry that must be approached with both the hermeneutic and poetic concerns kept constantly in view. The sonic elements may not be strictly interpretable in the same way that poetic subjects and subjectivity can be interpreted, but Beachy-Quick reminds us that poetics and hermeneutics are inextricably linked. In his allusions to, and citations and annotations of tradition, Beachy-Quick shows us how the song is interwoven with the thought it produces. In his essay, “As in the Green Trees”, he considers this interweaving when he asks the question, “Can a poem know and also not know what it knows?” He answers this first with the words, “Another riddle to which I don’t know the answer”, and also writes of the process of making a poem—of singing it—that:

I can just write a line that might become two, two that might become four, and so on, maybe eternally, until I realize I’m lost, the page’s leaf has become the forest tree, I’m lost in the green trees, my hands filled with silken threads, wondering how it is one lassoes song, wondering if song knows the way out, wondering if song ignores what it knows, and wants those who find themselves lost only to become, to become more lost. (“As in the Green Trees” 3)

Here, Beachy-Quick trusts—must trust—in the inexplicable, unexplicatable, knowledge bound up in the musicality of the poem. That song may be read as an unoriginal element in the poem because it is in song that the poem exhibits its hauntedness. For Beachy-Quick, song is necessary to becoming lost, and that lostness is itself a kind of orientation. Song enables him to inhabit the negative capability that leads from sight to insight.
Unoriginality

Writing of Ronald Johnson’s *Radi os*, Beachy-Quick recalls Emerson: “Genius is echoic” (“The Speaking Ear”). Writing of John Keats, Beachy-Quick writes, “Genius listens with parted lips” (*BWB* 17). In these assertions, Beachy-Quick locates ingenuity in *echo*—in unoriginality. His return to the pairing of genius and echo recalls, even as it precedes the publication of, recent discussions of conceptual poetry in Marjorie Perloff’s *Unoriginal Genius* (2010) and Kenneth Goldsmith’s *Uncreative Writing* (2011). For Beachy-Quick, poetic allusion and poetic *citation* are ways in which the poet enters a mode of *impersonality*, a process by which he believes the poet “opens the ‘I’ into anonymity” (A. King). Unoriginality plays a central role in the creation of the *choral* voice.

While Beachy-Quick’s verse does not itself fall into the category of “conceptual poetry”, Goldsmith’s and Perloff’s writings provide useful insight into the concept of unoriginality, a concept to which Beachy-Quick himself returns. In *Uncreative Writing*, Kenneth Goldsmith offers not just the provocation of his notion of appropriative conceptual writing but also, more importantly, the beginnings of a genealogy of literary embodiments of citational writing. Goldsmith draws a comparison between the techniques employed by Ezra Pound in *The Cantos* and the “scrivenerlike” (112) process Walter Benjamin uses in *The Arcades Project*; in *Unoriginal Genius*, Perloff names the same forebears to conceptual writing. Where Pound’s *Cantos* offer a synthesis of the many sources he provides, forged into a poetic sensibility, Benjamin’s project remains in the form of quotation with interspersed notation. According to Goldsmith, *The Arcades Project* is an *annotative* endeavour made up of a “flotsam [of] offhanded notes, price lists, shards of language, erratic typography and odd spacing, chunks of correspondence, arcane legalese, slabs of dialogue, a dozen languages, and numerous unreferenced footnotes…all bound together in a life’s work” (113). This “flotsam” reflects a restive intellectual inquiry that is itself part of a greater history, a history that crosses disciplines.

While Goldsmith’s genealogy for the most part reaches only back to the advent of Modernism—and as such, offers a mostly already well-rehearsed line of

---

113 For further discussion of Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* as a model for Beachy-Quick’s verse, see “Annotation”. 
avant-garde inheritances\textsuperscript{114}—he also shows an interest in a longer view when he offers James Boswell, the biographer of the encyclopaedic Samuel Johnson, as a forerunner of “uncreativity”. \textit{The Life of Samuel Johnson} (1791) is, Goldsmith reminds us, “an accumulation of bits and pieces of the quotidian ephemera: letters, observations, patches of dialogue, and descriptions of daily life” (190). Yet Goldsmith could go further back: he could cite Montaigne, Shakespeare, Chaucer among the appropriators. He could offer, as the forerunner to Benjamin’s immense project, that other compendious annotative undertaking, Burton’s \textit{Anatomy of Melancholy}, in which he compiles a huge array of material on the affliction that is his subject. The sense of appropriative tradition is one that Beachy-Quick feels when he responds in interview that, “this lack of originality within creative work is something that is very important to me. I think often about \textit{genius} in the oldest sense—not a capacity of mind, but that most intimate aspect of self that also is other than the self” (A. King). Here, “uncreativity” is not linked to provocation but to tradition: in “unoriginality” the chorus of history, literary and otherwise, enters the text.

Unoriginality is not merely the province of conceptual poetry and its critics. The poet Donald Revell also contemplates unoriginality in \textit{The Art of Attention} when he writes, “In accepting a limited role, a limited originality … the poet of attention makes a liberating peace with what, in fact, eventually enlarges his vision beyond imagining” (31-32). The enlargement of vision Revell describes can be seen as allowing that chorus of history to become a conscious, active, part of the lyric.

Beachy-Quick thinks of the \textit{lyric} as a “gathering place” (A. King), an embodiment of Eliot’s re-ordered tradition in the wake of the “individual talent” (47-59). This re-ordered tradition is evident not only through poetic allusion and the “lyric possession” previously discussed (Stewart, \textit{Poetry} 107-143), but is likewise evidenced in the unoriginal “scrivening” of literary quotation that allows writing to dwell in the act of reading. In \textit{This Nest, Swift Passerine} Beachy-Quick’s unoriginality is given its fullest expression as the texts he cites, presented in italics, generally stand separate from his own poetry, only occasionally woven together. The work is appropriative; more importantly it is \textit{appreciative}. Like Benjamin’s \textit{Arcades Project}, yet even more

\textsuperscript{114} In particular, the roles of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot in English-language modernist verse are widely discussed by scholars of modernism. Multiple works by each author are cited as important primary texts of modernist poetry by Nicholls in his discussion of modernism in the \textit{Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics}, indicating their centrality (889).

204
like the commonplace book in which quotations are gathered\textsuperscript{115}, this book is an act of uncreative bower-birding, stitched together with the poet’s own meditations.

In part 2 of \textit{This Nest, Swift Passerine} Beachy-Quick returns to Dorothy Wordsworth’s \textit{Grasmere Journal}, a text that dominates the first section of the book.\textsuperscript{116} He writes:

\begin{quote}
A fine wild innocence not ease
We hear when we cannot see
The wooddeep shade where the aster grows
\textit{Wm went into the wood to compose (TNSP 6)}
\end{quote}

Here he enters the scene imaginatively: “innocence” is a recurrent theme for the Romantic poets who dwelled in childhood’s imaginative possibilities, just as “wildness” reflects the sublimity of Romanticism’s idealisation of rugged nature.\textsuperscript{117} The shifting senses (hearing/seeing/\textit{not} seeing) reflect the way the poem makes images. The “aster” is the flower named by Dorothy, and then the poet—the \textit{other} poet—enters the scene. Beachy-Quick not only appropriates Dorothy Wordsworth’s text, but elaborates upon it, casting the wood and the aster in the “wooddeep shade” of his imagination.

Later Beachy-Quick’s quotations from Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal are

\textsuperscript{115} The commonplace book is a genre of notebook that many writers have kept. As noted by Jillian M. Hess in her essay “Coleridge’s Fly-Catchers: Adapting Commonplace-Book Form”, Samuel Taylor Coleridge referred to his own notebooks as commonplace books (463). Hess writes, “though scholars have long called Coleridge’s collection ‘notebooks,’ here I retrieve the name of the tradition within which he understood himself to be working” (464). By seeking to reassess Coleridge’s notebooks as commonplace books, Hess herself is engaging in an investigation of “how Romantics…thought about the creation and formation of knowledge” (464) in a form that may be read under the sign of “unoriginality”. At the same time she creates a bridge from the commonplace book of the medieval and early modern era to the writers’ notebooks of the contemporary era, of which Beachy-Quick’s “January Notebook” is an example.

\textsuperscript{116} For further discussion of the use of Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals in \textit{This Nest, Swift Passerine}, see “echo”.

\textsuperscript{117} Childhood and innocence are a constant subject of contemplation in many works of British Romantic poetry, from Blake’s “Songs of Innocence” (\textit{Complete} 104-117), to Wordsworth’s exploration of his own younger self’s growing consciousness of the world in \textit{The Prelude}, or in narrative to Coleridge’s contemplative poem of fatherhood, “Frost at Midnight”. “Wildness” varies in its ruggedness: the images of Wordsworth’s famous “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey…” shift from pastoral “plots of cottage-ground” to the urban “din/ Of Towns and cities” to the wilder vision of “the tall rock,/ The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood”, while in Keats’s “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” the attention moves from “realms of gold” to Cortez, who inspired in his men “wild surmise” with his “discovery” of the Pacific ocean from “upon a peak in Darien” (32).
uninterrupted, as when he includes the fragment:

William was disturbed in the night by the rain coming into
his room, for it was a very rainy night. The Ash leaves lay
across the road. (TNSP 7)

Like the quotidian details Goldsmith locates in Boswell’s account of Johnson (and that he makes central to his own conceptual writing), Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal provides a record of the daily activity of the Wordsworth siblings. The account of William being disturbed by the inclement weather rounds out an entry that saw the siblings walking to Rydale and immediately follows Dorothy’s note that “When we came home the fire was out. We ate our supper in the dark & went to bed immediately” (Monday 20 October 1800). When Beachy-Quick drops this text into his own, he selects only that which Dorothy records after she notes they have retired for the night; nonetheless, the expired fire is soon revived in Beachy-Quick’s imagination.

After Beachy-Quick notes an interruption by, apparently, his own wife that likewise reflects the quotidian details of the poem’s creation with the words “the knock on the door her lips, my wife/ night invisibles the pine” (TNSP 7) he returns to the text in front of him when he writes:

Attention in Ash to Ash
Went into wood to compose
Books composed of leaves
Literal Ash becomes Ash
Book in the fire thrown
Ash attends in Ash to Ash

—

The Ash leaves lay across the road The ash in our garden green, one close to it bare the next nearly so A rainy morning—a whirlwind came that tossed about the leaves & tore off the green leaves of the
Beachy-Quick’s own text is a writing-through of the text before him, of the central image of ash (both the leaves of the ash tree, but also the aftermath of the fire whose extinguishment Dorothy had noted) and of the act of reading. The work of *This Nest*, *Swift Passerine* is jointed: it shifts between Beachy-Quick’s own voice and the voices he reads through, folding the texts together so that quotations touch upon each other, and Beachy-Quick draws out the latent resonances. The materials he gathers and arranges reveal, just as much as his own words, the emergence of poetic sensibility. This collection demonstrates the way in which Emerson’s “creative reading” (48) and Goldsmith’s “uncreative writing” find a meeting ground throughout Beachy-Quick’s work. The separation of citation and annotation here unravels the process by which his reading and writing are stitched together elsewhere, historical texts woven into new textile.
Whale

For Beachy-Quick the whale is a central image. The whale appears both as a form of intimate, diminutive address to child and self in the lullabies of Circle’s Apprentice and, crucially, variously dissected but ultimately unknowable in his writings on Moby-Dick in Spell, The Whaler’s Dictionary, An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky and the essay “Poetic Geometries”. In this latter essay he aligns himself with “those readers who…find themselves saying, as Ishmael does, that ‘I was one of that crew’”\(^\text{118}\); in becoming a (writer-as-)“reader-as-whaler” the poet’s pursuit of the whale travels across books and across genres. Just as recurrent images such as the almond and the deer can be read as figures of time, place and mortality, Beachy-Quick’s whale is, too, that Rimbaudian “other” comprising the “I”\(^\text{119}\).

More than most poets who conceive of each individual book as a singular canvas, Beachy-Quick’s overall oeuvre represents a singular body that circles around images, ideas, forms, etymologies, references and citations. Among these books, Spell is his singular epic poem, a retelling of Melville’s unclassifiable Moby-Dick— itself a work described by an early reviewer as a “chowder” (qtd in Cotkin 7), that in its obsessive quest and vast scope is itself epic. Spell transforms the epic, dividing Ishmael’s narrative among many voices, anatomising the whale through a chorus rather than a singular narrator.

Ishmael’s role as the choral narrator was recognised by Charles Olson, who writes that he has “that cleansing ubiquity of the chorus in all drama” (Call Me Ishmael 58): this ubiquity is evinced by his role as witness to and scribe of moments in which his fellow crew members are seemingly solitary. Beachy-Quick shatters the ubiquity of this lone narrator by dividing the voicing of Spell between epigraphs in many voices, an unnamed author addressing the editor to whom he is delivering the

---

\(^{118}\) This description of Moby-Dick’s effect echoes the assertion by another “reader-as-whaler”, Charles Olson. In Call Me Ishmael, Olson writes that with his novel, Melville made a myth “for a people of Ishmaels” (15). In Dive Deeper: Journeys with Moby-Dick, George Cotkin explores the myriad responses to and appropriations of Moby-Dick, indicating just how populous this tribe of Ishmaels is.\(^{119}\) On 13 May, 1871 Rimbaud wrote a letter to George Izambard about his intent to become a poet, noting (in Wyatt Mason’s translation) that, “I is someone else” (365). Beachy-Quick refers to this in his interview with Andrew David King when he says, “Genius seems to me not only what is realised most in Rimbaud’s ‘I is other,’ but genius is the space between that ‘I’ and ‘other’”. He refers to this again in his interview with Mickey Kenny when, speaking of Emily Dickinson, he states, “her ‘supposed’ person is the self ‘put under’ the difficulty of the poem, that place in which (as Rimbaud has it) ‘I is other.’ For the choral self, I is also we even as it is other, and the pronominal life becomes adhesive rather than exclusive.”
pages of this poem, and the characters of Ishmael, Ahab, Pip, Queequeg, Starbuck. Though Ishmael is the sole survivor of the wrecked Pequod, his persona is adopted and his voice is dredged up from the dead. (In Spell the resurrective quality of his voice is made explicit when Queequeg speaks “Pre- and Post- Deathbed” (34).) That voice, like Beachy-Quick’s own, includes the figure of the white whale as well, voiced by the careful cataloguing of the whale’s body.

By anatomising the novel of Moby-Dick, Beachy-Quick is not just dwelling on the nature of Ishmael’s voice, and the mysterious others it contains; he is also dwelling on and in the relationship between the lyric and the epic. While in Melville’s hands, the “ubiquity” of the Greek chorus becomes the unifying voice of the narrator that dictates the motion of the novel, in Beachy-Quick’s hands, the division of the voice privileges lyric meditation over epic action. The process of division is foregrounded by an unnamed speaker dwelling on the whale: scattered across the “chapters” of Spell are the “Stanz[a[s of the Poem for the Body’s Blank” (23, 39, 61, 71, 85), five quatrains that end the first five chapters of the work, each presented in the position on the page it would occupy if the stanzas appeared together. The “Final Stanza of the Poem for the Body’s Blank” reads:

My hand’s curved anchor holds my anchored thought
That hawsers me down to the Belly-of-Blank
Anchoring me to you. I see my hand’s slip-knot
Let go a gold coin in me not spent in any bank. (Spell 85)

Speaker and subject anchored together, the “blank” of the body is the whiteness of the whale. Beachy-Quick notes that “the page and the child and the whale are white” (WD 31): that whiteness is an emptiness upon which may be written story, experience, identity. He also writes, “A whale is a book, and a book is a whale” (WD 32). Presumably the whale, without human language, may be a book because a book may be projected upon him. The whale may also be a book because he allows the poet the mystery of being other.

The whale’s radical otherness is revealed by the detail with which Melville and Beachy-Quick divide his body. In Spell’s third “chapter” Beachy-Quick revisits the detail of Melville’s/Ishmael’s whaler’s dictionary. This chapter begins with
sections titled “The Head of the Whale (An Epistemology, a Psychology, an Economy, a Flame, Tooth, Bone, A Theology of the Blind, a Murder, a Dear Ear)” (43-46) and “Skin of the Whale; or, an Epidermal Inquiry (an Analytic Glance, Moving from the Deepest Depth of the Skin to the Shallowest)” (47-49). Though the crew and the text penetrate deeper into the whale, its “electric mind” (44) remains veiled to them, its consciousness containing no profit margin. “The Head of the Whale” opens with the lines:

No thought in the brain-cask
But flame’s account: 500 gallons

Save those sparks that in the ocean spilled
Off the lance-lip and drowned.

A profit cut from out the head
Of the whale (43)

Though the speaker denies the whale’s capacity for thought, by opening the poem on thought’s negation the problem of the mysterious consciousness of the whale is immediately brought to light. The spermaceti derived from the head cavity is “A liquid that is not flame/ But promises flame” (43) and ultimately promises the light that will “coax ink to be darkness/ Leaping (each night) from bright pages” (43). In this way, the brain fluid of the whale—that which is “no thought” is also “fluid-thought” (43)—becomes the vehicle by which the writer’s thought is recorded. For the whaler, profit is determined by flame; for the writer (Melville, Beachy-Quick), the profit is in the alchemy by which two heads—the whale’s, via its lamp-oil, and the writer’s via his words—illuminate and fill a page with ideas. This alchemical collaboration belies the prosaic accounting:

Whale’s head, unfolded. Uses thereof.
1. Brain-cask, to-be-flame. (A profit)
2. Papered-mouth, tooth-to-be-carved.
3. Eyes, ears (A physiology). (45)
Profit, the trinket of the scrimshawed tooth, and knowledge—all here illuminate. All are souvenirs of the whale’s body, yet none explain the fact that the whale haunts the writer, inhabits the writer. Yes, as Rimbaud reminds us, “I is someone else” (365). Lyric “I” and lyric “other” plumb the deep and the realms of the dead. The taxonomy of the whale and the products of the whale’s body remind the reader what is classifiable—in some way knowable—about the whale. Yet Moby Dick remains, despite Ishmael’s epic tale, ultimately unknowable, his whiteness a silence embedded in the Pequod’s crew’s choral voice.
In “Theme & Variations”, a collection of aphorisms that applied to his entire artistic practice, John Cage wrote the words, “Move from zero” (623). Facing the blank page, it is the poet’s task each day to once again “move from zero”. That zero extends beyond the blankness of the page to the decreated self, that part of the lyric speaker waiting to fill the “zero” of silence with the “something” of song. Perhaps it is this constant encounter with blankness that makes Ishmael such an attractive figure to Beachy-Quick: he is an orphan who, at the opening of Moby-Dick, adopts the persona of Ishmael. In order to become Ishmael he has first had to unbecome his previous self. Between his former and current identities lies the spectre of blankness. It is this same blankness that Beachy-Quick himself occupies with each poem.

At the end of Spell, Beachy-Quick’s narratorial voice begins to break through in the narrative more frequently, first, in Chapter 5, “The Anvil, a” (73-85) in a series of “Razos”, and once again in an “Afterword” (107-108). The author at once makes a show of his anonymity and at the same time throws it off, as he continuously—insistently—addresses the “Sir” who is the editor who will receive the pages: being unnamed, writing to another who is unnamed, he nonetheless asserts himself. This set of narratorial intrusions shift the focalisation of the narrative voice, which reduces the kaleidoscopic set of voices into both a singular voice and a non-voice.

Meanwhile, the voices of the crew sound once more, in presence and absence, in the subsections of Chapter 6, “Then Avail” (87-104) between the narrator’s incursions. Significantly, there is jump between subsection “C. Ahab” and subsection “E. Ishmael” in this final chapter of Beachy-Quick’s epic. This chapter is subtitled “(in which we find destinations of those to whom we’ve been introduced”)”; the missing subsection D. belongs to Pip, who now exists in a state of erasure. Robert Harrison notes, in Dominion of the Dead that the sea stands in opposition to the “humus” in which we bury our dead and thereby, in his estimation, become human: the sea not only erases the body, but also erases the possibility of a marker for the site

---

120 Again John Cage is useful: he reminds us that for living beings silence is a fiction; even in an “anechoic chamber” (Silence 8, 13, 51), cut off from external noise, the listener is attuned to the metronomic noise of her or his own body. What this shows us is the paradox that “nothing” is indeed “something”. 

212
of the dead, becoming “the imaginary agent of ultimate obliteration” (4). After his
death, Pip exists only in absence.

Similarly, the narrator behind this chorus—whom this chorus constitutes—is
himself negated as he signals to his editor his “last request” in his “Afterword”:

I’ve printed my words
On one side of each page. Now turn each
Page over. Spread them out on the floor
Until the floor is blank with no words.
Spill out into hallway on this wave. Walk it.
When the blank page ends in white tile
You won’t notice.

(108)

The labour of the re-told epic, laid face down, is to be undone. The page is reset to
zero, and the self that comes into being by weaving together these voices and then
pieces together the manuscript for this “sir” is revealed to be another blank. 122

So too does Ishmael reset to zero. The original narrator of Moby-Dick is an
invention: his opening gambit, “Call me Ishmael”, suggests an adopted persona, a
naming anew. This command comes after the events of the novel have taken place,
and the erasure of Ishmael’s former identity is complete. Through his division of the
re-voicing of Melville’s epic between several characters, Beachy-Quick suggests that
Ishmael, too, has always been a choral voice, constituted by his shipmates: each of
these voices bears distinctive features and obsessions, but at the same time a shared
tendency towards certain poetic devices such as the hyphenation of words into
phrases. Ishmael’s ultimate impersonality has allowed this: Ishmael is the blank upon
which the Pequod’s crew has written itself. Ishmael’s narration is the move from zero.

In his final appearance in Spell Ishmael nullifies himself. Recalling the
compass and the ocean’s charts he first recalls that “Ahab bent/ The needle that
refused North” (102), asks “How do you point at a horizon?” (102), and then answers
his own question:

122 For further discussion of “Afterword” see “Page / Desk / Work”.
Ask me. I know.

Needle out your arm: close eyes:

And turn in a circle. Inscribe a zero on the wood-deck—
The Equator on zero

latitude lies. That is the truth, I know

(102)

The equator’s nullity has already suggested deep unease in Ahab’s first narration, in which he characterises it as:

Equator ———— the ———— Dark ———— Line

(10)

That “dark line”, set at “zero”, becomes the horizon to which the compass points and it also becomes the horizon of the self when Ishmael states, “I’m/ Orphan, Ishmael, Equator-Line” (103). This apposition of orphan identity (orphaned from the crew and the ship, more importantly Ishmael is orphaned from his former identity) to self to the latitude of zero touches on the mathematical curiosity of zero: once zero becomes a factor in multiplication, the equation’s answer must always be zero. Nullity forces and re-forces the reset, such that:

A man alone equals the wave before it crests,
Wave, before crest, equals the needle turning,
Needle turning equals the flinch of a hawk-wing,
A hawk-wing’s flinch is heaven turning

Away. Men swallow water
…
And then water swallows men.

(103)
With these acts of equation, the world of these men, compass and bird are all negated. All that is left is the nullifying ocean that erases all other surfaces, acting as the factor of zero. And with the horizon likewise come into non-being, the exit can only be cosmic as Ishmael acknowledges when he writes, “A man with five needles on each hand/ Pointing heavenward. Heed me. I’m lost” (104). Pointing heavenward, Ishmael at once ascends and descends into decreation. Beachy-Quick’s narrator, each day at his desk, does the same, seeking the “zero” from which he can once again move, to which he will soon return.
Appendix: Index of Themes

This appendix traces the recurrence of many themes and images across Beachy-Quick’s poetry; I do not here include the appearances of the same themes in his prose works. Included within his poetic texts are, however, the instances of poems interpolated in his novel An Impenetrable Screen of Purest Sky. While I do not include poems that have only appeared in journals, I do include the selection of poems published in The Iowa Anthology of New American Poetries edited by Reginald Shepherd which have not subsequently appeared in individual collections of Beachy-Quick’s verse.

Because Beachy-Quick often has more than one poem sharing a single title within his collections, I have differentiated these poems by numbering them with Roman Numerals in square brackets: e.g. “Tomb Figurine [I]”. Parentheses within titles are the poet’s own, as are the square brackets with English text in them.

Where an entry applies not just to a single poem, but to a whole collection, that collection is included in bold-type face.

**Almond:** “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “Hariot’s Round (II)” (NTSB 34-36); “Posterity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Record no oiled tongue, diary—” (Mulberry 5-6); “Unworn” (NTSB 9)

**Bird:** “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “Arcadian” (CA 57-58); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “Bend down my head to look up” (NTSP 41-42); “But how find how as it flew onward” (NTSP 2); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “deep within I turned from reading” (NTSP 21); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “Fragment Elegy” (CA 49-55); “hours blow heaven below these clouds” (NTSP 32); “Irregular, or cobweb” (NTSP 9); “I suffered between seasons…” (NTSP 25); “The lake was most still...” (NTSP 5); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Lullaby (III)” (CA 6-7); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “Paperwhite” (gentleness 93); “Poem (Achilles’ Shield)” (CA 68-69); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “[Preface]” (Apology n. pag.); “Psalms (Philomela)” (NTSB 12-13); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Some birds snatch cobwebs…” (NTSP 33); “Spin out of myself this web” (NTSP 11); “spring the bright veil” (NTSP 23); “The thrush sang almost continually…” (NTSP 15); “Twining of Twinings” (NTSP 52-53); “‘Will ye do one little favor for me?’ (Pip)” (Spell 11-13)

**Bird (Albatross):** “Etymology of: The Unabridged (Ishmael Mulls)” (Spell 27-29)

**Bird (Blackbird):** “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42)

**Bird (Buzzard):** “Pay No Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19)

**Bird (Crane):** “Bend down my head to look up” (NTSP 41-42); “Nine months now nesting in these pages…” (NTSP 42-43)

**Bird (Crow):** “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “I hear faintly the cawing of a crow…” (NTSP 49); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “a mortal blossom and a blossom unseen” (NTSP 48-49)

**Bird (Dove):** “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “Bend down my head to look up” (NTSP 41-42); “my hand is vineyard is vine, is vineyard” (NTSP 28-29); “Old Song” (CA 21); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)
Bird (Duck): “Bend down my head to look up” (TNSP 41-42)

Bird (Eagle): “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25)

Bird (Egret): “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6)

Bird (Falcon): “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6)

Bird (Flamingo): “Lullaby [III]” (CA 6-7)

Bird (Goose): “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45)

Bird (Gull): “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “overtakeliness” (gentleness 47-63); “Vellum Charm” (NTSB 39-40); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “The Zigzurat” (CA 42-43)

Bird (Hawk): “Afterword” (Spell 107-108); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Etymology of: The Unabridged (Ishmael Mulls)” (Spell 27-29); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “Pay No Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19)

Bird (Lark): “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80)

Bird (Loon): “Cant” (Conversities 3-10)

Bird (Nightingale): “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80)

Bird (Ostrich): “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.)

Bird (Phoebe): “I suffered between seasons…” (TNSP 25); “spring the bright veil” (TNSP 23)

Bird (Pigeon): “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29)

Bird (Raven): “But how find how as it flew onward” (TNSP 2); “The lake was most still…” (TNSP 5)

Bird (Sparrow): “ash in the eye not ruin” (TNSP 21-22); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “Ceased thinking / my sweete delight / and only listened” (TNSP 51); “clamor at ecstasy but ecstasy” (TNSP 46-47); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “ear at the edge of words” (TNSP 13-14); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “hours blow heaven below these clouds” (TNSP 32); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “a key turning in the fields turns” (TNSP 38); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “a mortal blossom and a blossom untold” (TNSP 48-49); “my facts shall be falsehoods” (TNSP 44); “Narcissus, the flow, also called Paperwhite…” (TNSP 49-50); “Nightbook” (IANAP 8); “night not the night / echoes / these words” (TNSP 50-51); “Orion winters home my eye” (TNSP 19); “O, sparrow” (TNSP 33); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “[Second objection: The Objectors]” (Apology n. pag.); “The sparrows below zero” (TNSP 7-8); “the sparrows frantic in the pine” (TNSP 15); “sparrow swift spring” (TNSP 33); “The thrush sang almost continually…” (TNSP 15); “Twining of Twdings” (TNSP 52-53)

Bird (Starling): “Lullaby (I)” (CA 3); “Lullaby (III)” (CA 6-7); “[On Happiness & Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “Twining of Twdings” (TNSP 52-53)

Bird (Swallow): “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “without contraries is n0” (Mulberry 47-51)

Bird (Tanager): “Bend down my head to look up” (TNSP 41-42); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60)

Bird (Thrush): “A friend of mine studied chaos…” (TNSP 31); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “Lullaby (I)” (CA 3); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Portrait” (gentleness 94-96); “Spring the morning I woke” (TNSP 29); “The thrush sang almost continually…” (TNSP 15)

Bird (Woodpecker): “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20)

Child: “z” (Conversities 33-46); “a key turning in the fields turns” (TNSP 38); “a mortal blossom and a blossom untold” (TNSP 48-49); “Another time, in a lowering and sad evening…” (TNSP 26); “Antique Foundation” (CA 11-12); “Arcadian” (CA 57-58); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “Chorus & Hero” (CA 66-67); “Combray (I)” (WFM 3-13); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “The Cricket
and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Demonstrative Lullaby” (CA 5); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “Each one an Echo and Echo myself” (NTSB 12); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “I hear faintly the cawing of a crow…” (NTSP 49); “let song double in some other throat” (NTSP 30); “The Long Sentence (I)” (WFM 32-42); “Lullaby [I]” (CA 3); “Lullaby [IV]” (CA 8); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “none of the schoolchildren could explain” (ISPS 20-22); “Place-Names: The Name” (WFM 27-29); “Poem [I]” (CA 16-18); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Song [IV]” (SSSS 36); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (NTSB 28-30); “Starbuck, or the Cormorant’s Wings…” (Spell 93-96); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “Twining of Twinings” (NTSP 52-53); “Wm composing in the wood” (NTSP 14); “Work / Poem” (CA 14-15); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Child (Baby): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “Prologue” (Conversities 79-82)

Child (Infant): “the command grows loud” (NTSP 36); “Psalm (Traherne)” (NTSB 41-42); “Twining of Twinings” (NTSP 52-53); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)

Chorus: “∞ [II]” (Conversities 87-90); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Antique Foundation” (CA 11-12); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “Chorus” (CA 62); “Chorus & Hero” (CA 66-67); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “Posterity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74)

Circle: “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “Ahab, Or Considering the Doubloon” (Spell 97-100); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); Circle’s Apprentice; “clamor at ecstasy but ecstasy” (TNSP 46-47); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Etymology of: The Unabridged (Ishmael Mulls)” (Spell 27-29); “The eye is the first circle…” (NTSP 46); “hours blow heaven below these clouds” (NTSP 32); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (NTSP 44); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Lines” (CA 13); “a man sitting by a circle but the circle is” (ISPS 161-162); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “mortal June minds June wild” (NTSP 40); “My amber eye in this amber world” (NTSP 3); “Nine months now nesting in these pages…” (TNSP 42-43); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “none of the schoolchildren could explain” (ISPS 20-22); “[One Can Have None]” (Apology n. pag.); “Poem [I]” (CA 16-18); “Poem [III]” (CA 19-20); “Poem (Achilles’ Shield)” (CA 68-69); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Tomb Figurine [I]” (CA 77); “Tomb Figurine [V]” (CA 82-83); “Work / Poem” (CA 14-15); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Circumference: “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “The earth’s atmosphere makes the stars glitter” (NTSP 20); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “A. Moby Dick” (Spell 65); “Nightbook” (IANAP 8); “Poem [III]” (CA 19-20); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “When praying the Baal Shem Tov…” (NTSP 18)

Coil: “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “dawns on this road so late tonight” (Mulberry 52-54); “I find myself, when I leave my basement office…” (NTSP 39); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Minotaur’s Page” (CA 65); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “North/South Composition (NTSB 3-6); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “The Whale-Line (A Chronicle of How…)” (Spell 52-54); “years in coil” (Mulberry 7-8)

Compass: “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “ Falling into the earth but the earth embraced” (NTSP 36); “I Hold the Hand-Held God (Queequeg)” (Spell 14-16); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “That Definition is none—” (NTSP 26)

Compass (East): “Another time, in a lowering and sad evening…” (NTSP 26); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “but dangers might suddenly arise from the East” (NTSP 26); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “I suffered between seasons…”
(TNSP 25); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Tomb Figurine [I]” (CA 77)

**Compass (North):** “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Canto” (Conversations 51-76); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “I Hold the Hand-Held God (Queequeg)” (Spell 14-16); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “north no center” (TNSP 28); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); **North True South Bright:** “Northtrue. Southbright.” (NTSB 27); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Razo—A Whale is the Largest Living Creature” (Spell 79-80); “Razo—On a Line by Emerson…” (Spell 83-84); “Reading Lessons, Writing Lessons…” (Spell 34-36); “This past winter 75 percent…” (TNSP 4); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

**Compass (South):** “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); **North True South Bright:** “Northtrue. Southbright.” (NTSB 27); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Shield [V]” (SSSS 13)

**Compass (West):** “∞ [II]” (Conversations 87-90); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “Canto” (Conversations 51-76); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “earthiness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 18-20); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “a key turning in the fields turns” (TNSP 38); “The Pharmakos” (CA 25); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Song [III]” (SSSS 35); “Tomb Figurine [I]” (CA 77)

**Deer:** “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “dawns on this road so late tonight” (Mulberry 52-54); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-63); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “[On Happiness & Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “Pay No Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “Record no oiled tongue, diary…” (Mulberry 5-6); “[Second Objection: Defense]” (Apology n. pag.); “[Second objection: The Objectors]” (Apology n. pag.); “[Senses are Adequate]” (Apology n. pag.); “Shield [VI]” (SSSS 14); “Tomb Figurine [I]” (CA 77)

**Desk:** “Ahab, Or Considering the Doubloon” (Spell 97-100); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “father sits in my bed reading” (ISPS 81-82); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “Minotaur’s Page” (CA 65); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “none of the schoolchildren could explain” (ISPS 20-22); “Posterity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Starbuck, or the Cormorant’s Wings…” (Spell 93-96)

**Echo:** “∞” (Conversations 33-46); “Arcadian” (CA 57-58); “but dangers might suddenly arise from the East” (TNSP 26); “But he i retreats and, fleeing, shouts…” (TNSP 12); “But how find how” (TNSP 2); “Canto” (Conversations 51-76); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “Chorus” (CA 62); “Chorus & Hero” (CA 66-67); “Demonstrative Lullaby” (CA 5); “Dorothy in her journal” (TNSP 16); “Each one an Echo and Echo myself” (TNSP 12); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Echo & A” (NTSB 31-33); “Echo, I pine.” (TNSP 45-46); “Echo spoke her love in her love’s own words…” (TNSP 10); “Falling into the earth but by the earth embraced” (TNSP 36); “Fess-Charm” (NTSB 14-15); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “I hear faintly the caving of a crow…” (TNSP 49); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “The lake was most still…” (TNSP 5); “Lullaby [IV]” (CA 8); “My amber eye in this amber world” (TNSP 3); “my facts shall be falsehoods” (TNSP 44); “Narcissus, the flower, also called Paperwhite…” (TNSP 49-50); “night not the night / echoes / these words” (TNSP 50-51); “Nine months now nesting in these pages…” (TNSP 42-43); “Old Song” (CA 21); “Psalm (Philo-\lerna)” (NTSB 12-13); “to say you I must embrace” (TNSP 25); “Tomb Figurine [III]” (CA 78-79); “Tomb Figurine [IV]” (CA 82-83); “Twining of Twinnings” (TNSP 52-53); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21); “where is our pure” (TNSP 23-24); “the whomer was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31)

**Eye:** “∞” (Conversations 33-46); “∞ [II]” (Conversations 87-90); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Ahab, Or Considering the Doubloon” (Spell 97-100); “Ahab qua Starbuck, Starbuck qua Pip…” (Spell 37-38); “Anniversary” (CA 31); “ash in the eye not ruin” (TNSP 21-22); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “But how find how as it flew onward” (TNSP 2); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42);
Ghost: “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “I took my fence rail spider a handful of flies…” (TNSP 14-15); “Lullaby [I]” (CA 3); “Lullaby [II]” (CA 4); “Lullaby [IV]” (CA 8); “Meditation on a Broken Leg…” (Spell 30-33); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “A. Moby Dick” (Spell 65); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “Paperwhite” (gentleness 93); “Razo—On a Line by Emerson…” (Spell 83-84)

Insect: “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37)

Insect (Ant): “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63)

Insect (Bee): “azt” (Conversities 33-46); “a bee in the snapdragon” (TNSP 49); “Catalog (CA 44-46); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “Irregular, or cobweb” (TNSP 9); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “[No Better Than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Prologue” (Conversities 79-82); “Shard [III]” (SSSS 18); “Shield [I]” (SSSS 9); “Shield [II]” (SSSS 10); “Song [II]” (SSSS 34); “Stitch [II]” (SSSS 26); “Tomb Figurine [III]” (CA 78-79); “Tomb Figurine [III]” (CA 80)

Insect (Beetle): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “I said no prayers, but had milk” (Mulberry 26-27); “I record it here: veins dark and hot” (Mulberry 37-38); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “A stone presses downward…” (TNSP 40-41)

Insect (Blackfly): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26)

Insect (Butterfly): “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “This past winter 75 percent…” (TNSP 4); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Insect (Chrysalis): “Nightbook” (IANAP 8)

Insect (Cocoon): “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100)

Insect (Cricket): “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “[Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Insect (Damselfly): “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80)

Insect (Dung-beetle): “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (NTSB 28-30)

Insect (Elm-beetle): “Work Charm” (NTSB 37-38)

Insect (Firefly): “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “mortal June minds June wild” (TNSP 40); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)

Insect (Fly): “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “I took my fence rail spider a handful of flies…” (TNSP 14-15); “Is this thy play” (TNSP 10); “[No Better Than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “Poem [I]” (CA 16-18); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “Tomb Figurine [V]” (CA 82-83)

Insect (Gnat): “Anniversary” (CA 31); “[One Can Have None]” (Apology n. pag.); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Unless the humming of a gnat…” (TNSP 49)

Insect (Grasshopper): “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80)

Insect (Maggot): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26)

Insect (Mosquito): “[No Better Than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.)

Insect (Moth): “azt” (Conversities 33-46); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “father sits in my bed reading” (ISPS 81-82); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “morning through green ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Nightbook” (IANAP 8); “Poem (Achille’s Shield)” (CA 68-69); “Work Charm” (NTSB 37-38); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)

Insect (Wasp): “a bell-tone blown vibrant on breeze” (TNSP 45); “between a voice and an ear solid air” (TNSP 11); “Botany” (IANAP 9); “cloud ripples sky ripples flowers leaning out” (TNSP 11); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “Is this thy play” (TNSP 10); “The
spider in the center sits in the center” (TNSP 11)

**Leaf:** “zx” (Conversities 33-46); “Anniversary” (CA 35); “At Removes” (TNSB 21-26); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Daybook” (TNSB 45-63); “Dorothy writes of whom and what she loves...” (TNSP 6); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “Echo, I pine.” (TNSP 45-46); “First Stanza of the Poem for the Body’s Blank” (Spell 23); “Flag-Tree” (IANAP 10); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “I guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (TNSB 18-20); “I said no prayers, but had milk” (Mulberry 26-27); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “Irregular, or cobweb” (TNSP 9); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “North/South Composition” (TNSB 3-6); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Place-Names: The Name” (WFM 27-29); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “Said-Charm” (TNSB 16-17); “[Senses Are Inadequate]” (Apology n. pag.); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “The sparrows believe zero” (TNSP 7-8); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (TNSB 28); “Tomb Figurine [III]” (CA 78-79); “Unworn” (TNSB 9); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); “Work Charm” (TNSB 37-38)

**Leaf (Frond):** “zx” (Conversities 33-46); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “[Second Objection: The Objectors]” (Apology n. pag.)

**Leaf (Thorn):** “At Removes” (TNSB 21-26); “[Counterattac: the Vanity of Human Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “Fess-Charm” (TNSB 14-15); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “I record it here: veins dark and hot” (Mulberry 37-38); “my facts shall be falsehoods” (TNSP 44); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “Said-Charm” (TNSB 16-17)

**Leaf (Unleafing):** “Nortruth. Southbright.” (TNSB 27)

**Lion:** “Hariot’s Round [I]” (TNSB 18-20); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Lullaby [III]” (CA 6-7); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100)

**Mouth:** “zx” (Conversities 33-46); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Arcadian” (CA 57-58); “At Removes” (TNSB 21-26); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “[The Author and His Book]” (Apology n. pag.); “Botany” (IANAP 9); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Can’t” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “Combray (I)” (WFM 3-13); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “the command grows loud” (TNSP 36); “[Counterattac: The Vanity of Human Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80);”dawns on this road so late tonight” (Mulberry 52-54); “Daybook” (TNSB 45-63); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “Each one an Echo and Echo myself” (TNSP 12); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (TNSB 18-20); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (TNSB 34-36); “The Head of the Whale (An Epistemology...)” (Spell 43-46); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “Hypothesis / Hymn” (CA 38-39); “I find myself, when I leave my basement office...” (TNSP 39); “I Hold the Hand-Held God (Queequog)” (Spell 14-16); “I record it here: veins dark and hot” (Mulberry 37-38); “In a Station of the Metro” (gentleness 83-84); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Lines” (CA 13); “The Long Sentence (I)” (WFM 32-42); “a man sitting by a circle but the circle is” (ISPS 161-162); “Measure Altitudes on Ivory Parchment (Ahab)” (Spell, 8-10); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Nightbook” (IANAP 8); “Nine months now nesting in these pages...” (TNSP 42-43); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “none of the schoolchildren could explain” (ISPS 20-22); “north no center” (TNSP 28); “North/ South Composition” (TNSB 3-6); “[On Happiness & Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Pay No Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19); “Place-Names: The Name”
[WFM 27-29]; “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Portrait” (gentleness 94-96);
“Posterity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Psalm (Philemola)” (NTSB 12-13);
“Psalm (Traherne)” (NTSB 41-42); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45);
“Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92);
“Razo—On Jonah…” (Spell 81-82); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74);
“[Second Objection: The Objectors]” (Apology n. pag.); “[Senses are Inadequate]” (Apology n. pag.);
“Shard [V]” (SSSS 21); “Shield [V]” (SSSS 13); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Song [IV]” (SSSS 36);
“Song [V]” (SSSS 37); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (NTSB 28-30);
“Starbuck, or the Cormorant’s Wings…” (Spell 93-96); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “these bars of green wheat” (TNSP 37); “The thrush sang almost continually…” (TNSP 15); “Twinning of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “Unworn” (NTSB 9); “we are this still” (TNSP 47); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21); “what I have been doing is trying to listen” (TNSP 45); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “Will ye do one little favor for me?” (Pip) (Spell 11-15); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); “Work Charm” (TNSP 37-38); “years in coil” (Mulberry 7-8); “The Ziggurat” (CA 42-43)

Mouth (Throat): “∞ [II]” (Conversities 87-90); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Bend down my head to look up” (TNSP 41-42); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “The Cricket and the Grassshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “hours blow heaven below these clouds” (TNSP 32); “I record it here: veins dark and hot” (Mulberry 37-38); “I said no prayers, but had milk” (Mulberry 26-27); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “let song double in some other throat” (TNSP 30); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “night not the night / echoes / these words” (TNSP 50-51); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Pay No Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19); “Song [I]” (SSSS 33); “1) Sperm-Profit 2) Blubber Profit…” (Spell 55-59); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “Twinning of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53)

Mouth (Tongue): “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Afterword” (Spell 107-108); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Each one an Echo and Echo myself” (TNSP 12); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Flag-Tree” (IANAP 10); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “looking up and both are true” (TNSP 30); “B. Moby Dick” (Spell 66); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “Northtrue. Southbright.” (NTSB 27); “[One Can Have None]” (Apology n. pag.); “Posterity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11); “Psalm (Philemola)” (NTSB 12-13); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Razo—On a Line by Emerson…” (Spell 83-84); “Razo—On Jonah…” (Spell 81-82); “Record no oiled tongue, diary—” (Mulberry 5-6); “Said-Charm” (NTSB 16-17); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “Tomb Figurine [V]” (CA 82-83); “Twinning of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “William cut wood a little…” (TNSP 6); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85); “years in coil” (Mulberry 7-8)

Mouth (Tooth): “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “[Counterattack: The Vanity of Human Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Each one an Echo and Echo myself” (TNSP 12); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “Fess-Charm” (NTSB 14-15); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “The Head of the Whale (An Epistemology…)” (Spell 43-46); “The Long Sentence (I)” (WFM 32-42); “Lullaby [III]” (CA 6-7); “Meditation on a Broken Leg…” (Spell 30-33); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “B. Moby Dick” (Spell 66); “[No Better Than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Poem (Achilles’ Shield)” (CA 68-69); “Posterity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Psalm (Traherne)” (NTSB 41-42); “[Second Objection: Defense]” (Apology n. pag.); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Song [III]” (SSSS 35); “Song [IV]” (SSSS 36); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18);
“Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53)

Nest: “ze” (Conversities 33-46); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “Bend down my head to look up” (TNSP 41-42); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Each one an Echo and Echo myself” (TNSP 12); “ear at the edge of words” (TNSP 13-14); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “Hariat’s Round I” (NTSB 18-20); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “My amber eye in this amber world” (TNSP 3); “my hand is vineyard vine, is vineyard” (TNSP 28-29); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “night not the night / echoes / these words” (TNSP 50-51); “Nightbook” (IAPAP 8); “Nine months now nesting in these pages…” (TNSP 42-43); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Portrait” (gentleness 94-96); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Some birds snatch cobwebs…” (TNSP 33); “the sparrows below zero” (TNSP 7-8); This Nest, Swift Passerine; “This past winter 75 percent…” (TNSP 4); “The thrush sang almost continually…” (TNSP 15); “Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)

Page: “ze” (Conversities 33-46); “Afterword” (Spell 107-108); “Ahab, Or Considering the Doublloon” (Spell 97-100); “Anniversary” (CA 31); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “[The Author and His Book]” (Apology n. pag.); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “clamor at ecstasy but ecstasy” (TNSP 46-47); “Combray (I)” (WFM 3-13); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “[Conclusion: Is Nothing Without]” (Apology n. pag.); “[Counterattack: The Vanity of Human Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “deep within I turned from reading” (TNSP 21); “Demonstrative Lullaby” (CA 5); “Dorothy writes of whom and what she loves…” (TNSP 6); “Dream-Portrait in Wartime” (CA 59-61); “Etymology of: The Unabridged (Ishmael Mulls)” (Spell 27-29); “Exegesis of the First Words Spoken (Ishmael)” (Spell 5-7); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “Gravity and light at equal speed also intertwine…” (TNSP 13); “Hariat’s Round I” (NTSB 18-20); “Hariat’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “The Head of the Whale (An Epistemology…)” (Spell 43-46); “hours blow heaven below these clouds!” (TNSP 32); “Hypothesis / Hymn” (CA 38-39); “I Hold the Hand-Held God (Queequeg)” (Spell 14-16); “I said no prayers, but had milk” (Mulberry 26-27); “I suffered between seasons…” (TNSP 25); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “[Knowledge Does No Good]” (Apology n. pag.); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “Law (Those Invisible Lines that Capture…”) (Spell 50-51); “a man sitting by a circle but the circle is” (ISPS 161-162); “Measure Altitudes on Ivory Parchment (Ahab)” (Spell 8-10); “Minotaur’s Page” (CA 65); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Narcissus, the flower, also called Paperwhite…” (TNSP 49-50); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “night not the night / echoes / these words” (TNSP 50-51); “The night star-filled…” (TNSP 46); “Nine months now nesting in these pages” (TNSP 42-43); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “none of the schoolchildren could explain” (ISPS 20-22); “[One Can Have None]” (Apology n. pag.); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Pay No Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19); “Poem [I]” (CA 16-18); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “Posterity, this me is Now —” (Mulberry 13-15); “Prologue” (Spell xv-xi); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Shell” (Spell 89-92); “Razo — A Whale is the Largest Living Creature” (Spell 79-80); “Razo — I too Easily Imagine Myself in the Whaling-Boat” (Spell 75-76); “Razo — On a Line by Emerson…” (Spell 83-84); “Razo — On Jonah…” (Spell 81-82); “Razo — On the Nature of the Book…” (Spell 77-78); “Reading Lessons, Writing Lessons…” (Spell 34-36); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “[Second Objection: The Objectors]” (Apology n. pag.); “Second Stanza of the Poem of the Body’s Blank” (Spell 39); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Skin of the Whale; Or, An Epidermal Inquiry…” (Spell 47-49); “The sparrows below zero” (TNSP 7-8); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (NTSB 28-30); “Starbuck, or the Cormorant’s Wings…” (Spell 93-96); “A stone presses downward…” (TNSP 40-41); “Third Stanza to the Poem for the Body’s Blank” (Spell 61); “Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “Vellum Charm” (NTSB 39-40); “Voyages Inside-the-Book that take Place Outside the Book…” (Spell 20-22); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21); “The Whale-Line (A Chronicle of How…)” (Spell 52-54); “what I have been doing is trying to listen” (TNSP 45); ““Will ye
do one little favor for me?... (Pip)” (Spell 11-13); “Work / Poem” (CA 14-15); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85); “The Ziggurat” (CA 42-43)

Silk: “w” (Conversities 33-46); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 18-20); “I said no prayers, but had milk” (Mulberry 26-27); “Irregular, or cobweb” (TNSP 9); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Posterity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Record no oiled tongue, diary —” (Mulberry 5-6); “so bind me to you” (TNSP 9-10); “Some birds snatch cobwebs…” (TNSP 33); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)

Song: “w” (Conversities 33-46); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Afterword” (Spell 107-108); “Anniversary” (CA 31); “Antique Foundation” (CA 11-12); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “a bell-tone blown vibrant on breeze” (TNSP 45); “Bend down my head to look up” (TNSP 41-42); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “ceased thinking / my sweete delight / and only listened” (TNSP 51); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Exegesis of the First Words Spoken (Ishmael)” (Spell 5-7); “Falling into the earth but by the earth embraced” (TNSP 36); “father sits in my bed reading” (ISPS 81-82); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “A friend of mine studied chaos...” (TNSP 31); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “I record it here: veins dark and hot” (Mulberry 37-38); “I suffered between seasons...” (TNSP 25); “In a Station of the Metro” (gentleness 83-84); “let song double in some other throat” (TNSP 30); “monadisms: a proem” (gentleness 1-6); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “a mortal blossom and a blossom untold” (TNSP 48-49); “my father alone in the top of a tree” (ISPS 213-214); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “night not the night / echoes / these words” (TNSP 50-51); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “north no center” (TNSP 28); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “Old Song” (CA 21); “[On Happiness & Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “The Pharmakos” (CA 25); “Poem [I]” (CA 16-18); “Poem [II]” (CA 19-20); “Poem (Achilles’ Shield)” (CA 68-69); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “[Preface]” (Apology n. pag.); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “[Second Objection: the Objectors]” (Apology n. pag.); “Shard [VII]” (SSSS 23); Shields & Shards & Stitches & Songs; “Shield [VII]” (SSSS 15); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Slowly the ivy” (TNSP 27); “Some birds snatch cobwebs...” (TNSP 33); “Song [I]” (SSSS 33); “Song [II]” (SSSS 34); “Song [III]” (SSSS 35); “Song [IV]” (SSSS 36); “Song [V]” (SSSS 37); “Song [VI]” (SSSS 38); “Song [VII]” (SSSS 39); “The sparrow below zero” (TNSP 7-8); “the sparrowes frantic in the pine” (TNSP 15); “spring the bright veil” (TNSP 23); “spring the morning I woke” (TNSP 29); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “the worlde was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Song (Dirge): “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74)

Song (Elegy): “Combray (I)” (WFM 3-13); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “The sparrowes below zero” (TNSP 7-8)

Song (Hymn): “Hypothesis / Hymn” (CA 38-39); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Psalm (Traheme)” (NTSB 41-42); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19)

Song (Lullaby): “Afterword” (Spell 107-108); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Demonstrative Lullaby” (CA 5); “Lullaby [I]” (CA 3); “Lullaby [II]” (CA 4); “Lullaby [III]” (CA 6-7); “Lullaby [IV]” (CA 8); “north no center” (TNSP 28); “where is our pure” (TNSP 23-24); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)

Song (Psalm): “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11); “Psalm (Philemela)” (NTSB 12-13);
Spider: “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Cant” (Conversations 3-10); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “hours blow heaven below these clouds” (NTSP 32); “I took my fence rail spider a handful of flies...” (NTSP 14-15); “Imagine the thus pond: a bell” (NTSP 44); “Irregular, or cobwebs” (NTSP 9); “looking up and both are true” (NTSP 30); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “my facts shall be falsehoods” (NTSP 46); “night star-filled...” (NTSP 46); “Nightbook” (IANAP 8); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “north no center” (NTSP 28); “Northtrue. Southbright.” (NTSB 27); “[One Can Have None]” (Apology n. pag.); “One quantum of lights unlinks one molecule...” (TSNP 19); “Orion winters home my eye” (TSNP 19); “Pay no Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19); “Poem [I]” (CA 16-18); “Poem [II]” (CA 19-20); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11); “Psalm (Traherne)” (NTSB 41-42); “Queequq, or the Coffin-Seed” (Spell 89-92); “Razo—On a Line by Emerson...” (Spell 83-84); “Reading Lessons, Writing Lessons...” (Spell 34-36); “Slowly the ivy” (TSNP 27); “Stellar Elements” (IANAP 11); “They tremble darkly in dark air” (TSNP 20-21); “Tomb Figure [V]” (CA 82-83); “Twining of Twinings” (TSNP 52-53); “When praying the Baal Shem Tov...” (TSNP 18); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); “Writing from Memory” (WMF 69-85); “The Zigzagurat” (CA 42-43)

Star: “∞” (Conversations 33-46); “Ahab, Or Considering the Doubloon” (Spell 97-100); “as in the eye not ruin” (TSNP 21-22); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “[The Author and His Book]” (Apology n. pag.); “Canto” (Conversations 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “ceased thinking / my sweete delight / and only listened” (TSNP 51); “clamor at ecstasy but ecstasy” (TSNP 46-47); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Demonstrative Lullaby” (CA 5); “The earth’s atmosphere makes the stars glitter...” (TSNP 20); “hours blow heaven below these cloud” (TSNP 32); “I find myself, when I leave my basement office...” (TSNP 39); “I Hold the Hand-Held God (Queequq)” (Spell 14-16); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TSNP 44); “The Long Sentence (I)” (WFM 32-42); “Meditation on a Broken Leg...” (Spell 30-33); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “mortal June minds June wild” (TSNP 40); “my facts shall be falsehoods” (TSNP 44); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “The night star-filled...” (TSNP 46); “Nightbook” (IANAP 8); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “north no center” (TSNP 28); “Northtrue. Southbright.” (NTSB 27); “[One Can Have None]” (Apology n. pag.); “One quantum of lights unlinks one molecule...” (TSNP 19); “Orion winters home my eye” (TSNP 19); “Pay no Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19); “Poem [I]” (CA 16-18); “Poem [II]” (CA 19-20); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11); “Psalm (Traherne)” (NTSB 41-42); “Queequq, or the Coffin-Seed” (Spell 89-92); “Razo—On a Line by Emerson...” (Spell 83-84); “Reading Lessons, Writing Lessons...” (Spell 34-36); “Slowly the ivy” (TSNP 27); “Stellar Elements” (IANAP 11); “They tremble darkly in dark air” (TSNP 20-21); “Tomb Figure [V]” (CA 82-83); “Twining of Twinings” (TSNP 52-53); “When praying the Baal Shem Tov...” (TSNP 18); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); “Writing from Memory” (WMF 69-85); “The Zigzagurat” (CA 42-43)

Star (Comet): “Northtrue. Southbright.” (NTSB 27); “Poem [II]” (CA 19-20); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11)

Star (Moon): “∞” (Conversations 33-46); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Cant” (Conversations 3-10); “Canto” (Conversations 51-76); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “dawns on this road so late tonight” (Mulberry 52-54); “Daybook” (NTSP 45-63); “Dorothy in her journal” (TSNP 16); “Dream-Portrait in Wartime” (CA 59-61); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “father sits in my bed reading” (ISPS 81-82); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “a key turning in the fields turns” (TSNP 38); “the knock on the door her lips, my wife” (TSNP 7); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversations 15-28); “D. Moby Dick” (Spell 69-70); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “night was come on & the moon was overcast...” (TSNP 14); “Nightbook” (IANAP 8); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Poem [II]” (CA 19-20); “Psalm (Traherne)” (NTSB 41-42); “Razo—A Whale is the Largest Living Creature” (Spell 79-80); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “Shard [IV]” (SSSS 20); “Shield [IV]” (SSSS 12); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Song [IV]” (SSSS 36); “Song [VIII]” (SSSS 39); “Stitch [IV]” (SSSS
28); “Tomb Figurine [II]” (CA 78-79); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85); “years in coil” (Mulberry 7-8); “The Ziggurat” (CA 42-43)

Star (Starlessness): “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “The Head of the Whale (An Epistemology...)” (Spell 43-46)

Star (Sun): “≈” (Conversities 33-46); “≈ [II]” (Conversities 87-90); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Afterword” (Spell 107-108); “Ahab, Or Considering the Doubloon” (Spell 97-100); “Antique Foundation” (CA 11-12); “Arcadian” (CA 57-58); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “[The Author and His Book]” (Apology n. pag.); “But what is greater for us...” (NTSB 3); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “Combray (I)” (WFM 3-13); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Dream-Portrait in Wartime” (CA 59-61); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Echo & A” (NTSB 31-33); “falling into the earth but by the earth embraced” (NTSB 36); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “[First Objection: Defense]” (Apology n. pag.); “heroesisms” (gentleness 21-33); “Hypothesis / Hymn” (CA 38-39); “I saw a snake by the roadside...” (NTSP 45); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “let song double in some other throat” (NTSP 30); “Lines” (CA 13); “Meditation on a Broken Leg...” (Spell 30-33); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “D. Moby Dick” (Spell 69-70); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “north no center” (NTSP 28); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “[On Happiness & Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “[One Can Have None]” (Apology n. pag.); “overatakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “A particle of light in the sun’s center...” (NTSP 2); “The Pharmakos” (CA 25); “Poem [II]” (CA 19-20); “Poem [III]” (CA 30); “Poem (Achilles’ Shield)” (CA 68-69); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Portrait” (gentleness 94-96); “Posterity, this me is Now...” (Mulberry 13-15); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11); “Psalm (Traherne)” (NTSB 41-42); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “[Senses are Inadequate]” (Apology n. pag.); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “so bind me to you” (NTSP 9-10); “Song [II]” (SSSS 33); “Song [IV]” (SSSS 36); “Song [V]” (SSSS 37); “Song [VI]” (SSSS 38); “Song [VII]” (SSSS 39); “the sparrows frantic in the pine” (NTSP 15); “The spider in the center sits in the center” (NTSP 11); “spring the bright veil” (NTSP 23); “Starbuck, or the Cormorant’s Wings...” (Spell 93-96); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “Tomb Figurine [I]” (CA 77); “Tomb Figurine [IV]” (CA 81); “Twining of Twinings” (NTSP 52-53); “Voyages Inside-the-Book that take Place Outside the Book...” (Spell 20-22); “Walking Through the Room” (CA 56); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21); “When praying the Baal Shem Tov...” (NTSP 18); “where is our pure” (NTSP 23-24); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); “Work / Poem” (CA 14-15); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85); “The Ziggurat” (CA 42-43);
Happiness & Knowledge] (Apology n. pag.); “Orion winters home my eye” (TNSB 18-20); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60)

Tree (Beech): “Hariot’s Round I] (TNSB 18-20); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60)

Tree (Elm): “guess the house from the angle” (Mulberry 9-12); “Hariot’s Round I] (TNSB 18-20); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Unworn” (NTSB 9); “Work Charm” (NTSB 37-38); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Tree (Hawthorn): “Combray (I)” (WFM 3-13)

Tree (Larch pine): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21)

Tree (Lime): “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21)

Tree (Mulberry): “Hariot’s Round I] (TNSB 18-20); Mulberry

Tree (Oak): “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “falling into the earth but by the earth embraced” (TNSP 36); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “Posternity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (NTSB 28-30); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51)

Tree (Pine): “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “clamor at ecstasy but ecstasy” (TNSP 46-47); “the command grows loud” (TNSP 36); “Echo, pine” (TNSP 45-46); “Exegesis of the First Words Spoken (Ishmael)” (Spell 5-7); “Hariot’s Round I] (TNSB 18-20); “hours blow heaven below these clouds” (TNSP 32); “I record it here: veins dark and hot” (Mulberry 37-38); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “the knock on the door—her lips, my wife” (TNSP 7); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “a mortal blossom and a blossom untold” (TNSP 48-49); “My amber eye in this amber world” (TNSP 3); “my facts shall be falsehoods” (TNSP 44); “Narcissus, the flower, also called Paperwhite...” (TNSP 49-50); “Nine months now nesting in these pages...” (TNSP 42-43); “[On Happiness & Knowledge] (Apology n. pag.); “Orion winters home my eye” (TNSP 19); “Poem (Achilles’ Shield)” (CA 68-69); “Posternity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “[Preface] (Apology n. pag.)”; “Record no oiled tongue, diary—” (Mulberry 5-6); “the sparrows frantic in the pine” (TNSP 15); “Tomb Figurine [IV]” (CA 81); “They tremble darkly in dark air” (TNSP 20-21); “Twining of Twinnings” (TNSP 52-53); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21); “where is our pure” (TNSP 23-24); “the whorled was mazed” (Mulberry 30-31); “Work Charm” (NTSB 37-38); “Work / Poem” (CA 14-15); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Tree (Root): “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “a bell-tone blown vibrant on breeze” (TNSP 45); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “Each one an Echo and Echo myself” (TNSP 12); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “The lake was still where these breezes were not...” (TNSP 8); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “looking up and both are true” (TNSP 30); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “a mortal blossom and a blossom untold” (TNSP 48-49); “Orion winters home my eye” (TNSP 19); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “The Pharmakos” (CA 25); “Prologue” (Conversities 79-82); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “[Second Objection: The Objectors]” (Apology n. pag.); “Shield [I]” (SSSS 9); “Song [VII]” (SSSS 39); “Tomb Figurine [V]” (CA 82-83); “where is our pure” (TNSP 23-24); “Writing
from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Tree (Sapling): “Mobius Crowns”  
(Conversities 15-28)

Tree (Seed): “∞” (Conversities 33-46);  
“Anniversary” (CA 31); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “Chorus” (CA 62); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “looking up and both are true” (TNSP 30); “Lullaby [III]” (CA 6-7); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “The Pharmakos” (CA 25); “Portrait (After Arcimbolto)” (gentleness 97-100); “Posternity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Record no oiled tongue, diary—” (Mulberry 5-6); “Shield [II]” (SSSS 10); “The sparrow below zero” (TNSP 7-8); “sparrow swift spring” (TNSP 33); “where is our pure” (TNSP 23-24); “Will ye do one little favor for me?...” (Pip) (Spell 11-13)

Tree (Walnut): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20)

Tree (Wood): “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “Arcadian” (CA 57-58); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “Attention in Ash to Ash” (TNSP 7); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “a bell-tone blown vibrant on breeze” (TNSP 45); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “dawns on this road so late tonight” (Mulberry 52-54); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Fess-Charm” (NTSB 14-15); “A fine wild innocence not ease” (TNSP 6); “floating on the water” (TNSP 3-4); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “I found that I had been staring” (TNSP 15); “I hear faintly the caving of a crow...” (TNSP 49); “I Hold the Hand-Held God (Queequeg)” (Spell 14-16); “Imagine thus the pond: a bell” (TNSP 44); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “The lake was most still...” (TNSP 5); “looking up and both are true” (TNSP 30); “Minotaur’s Page” (CA 65); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “[No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “none of the schoolchildren could explain” (ISPS 20-22); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6);

“Northtrue. Southbright.” (NTSB 27); “Place-Names: The Name” (WFM 27-29); “Portrait (After Arcimbolto)” (gentleness 97-100); “Posternity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “[Preface]” (Apology n. pag.); “Prologue” (Spell xv-xvi); “Queequeg, or the Coffin–Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Reading Lessons, Writing Lessons...” (Spell 34-36); “Record no oiled tongue, diary—” (Mulberry 5-6); “The sparrow below zero” (TNSP 7-8); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (NTSB 28-30); “Stellar Elements” (IANAP 11); “Tomb Figure” (III) (CA 78-79); “Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “When praying the Baal Shem Tov...” (TNSP 18); “William cut wood a little...” (TNSP 6); “without contraries is no” (Mulberry 47-51); ”Wm composing in the wood” (TNSP 14); “Work Charm” (NTSB 37-38)

Tree (Woodenness): “& co.” (CA 26-29); “Ahab, Or Considering the Doubloon” (Spell 97-100); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “I find myself, when I leave my basement office...” (TNSP 39); “I Hold the Hand-Held God (Queequeg)” (Spell 14-16); “A. Moby Dick” (Spell 65); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Posternity, this me is Now—” (Mulberry 13-15); “Prologue” (Spell xv-xvi); “1) Sperm-Professor 2) Blubber Profit...” (Spell 55-59); “Starbuck, or the Cormorant’s Wings...” (Spell 93-96); “Work Charm” (NTSB 37-38); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)

Tree (Yew): “Fess-Charm” (NTSB 14-15)

Thought: “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “Afterword” (Spell 107-108); “All I can say is that I live...” (TNSP 47); “Anniversary” (CA 31); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “augury of in” (Mulberry 22-25); “Botany” (IANAP 9); “A candle alight in the window” (TNSP 27); “Cave Beneath Volcano” (CA 70-74); “Chorus & Hero” (CA 66-67); “Combray (I)” (WFM 3-13); “Combray (II)” (WFM 15-25); “[Counterattack: the Vanity of Human Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “dawns on this road so late tonight” (Mulberry 52-54); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Dorothy writes of whom and what she loves...” (TNSP 6); “earthliness is my book multi” (Mulberry 1-4); “east east the great lake” (Mulberry 32-36); “Final Stanza to the Poem for the Body’s Blank” (Spell 85); “Fourth Stanza to the Poem for the Body’s Blank” (Spell 71); “Fragile
Elegy” (CA 49-55); “A friend of mine studied chaos…” (TNSP 31); “The Head of the Whale (An Epistemology…)” (Spell 43-46);
“heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “Hypothesis / Hymn” (CA 38-39); “I found that I had been staring” (TNSP 15); “I said no prayers, but had milk” (Mulberry 26-27); “I saw a snake by the roadside…” (TNSP 45); “a key turning in the fields turns” (TNSP 38); “Law (Those Invisible Lines that Capture…” (Spell 50-51);
“The Long Sentence (I)” (WFM 32-42); “Lullaby [III]” (CA 6-7); “Lullaby IV” (CA 8); “Lying on his back, he gazed up…” (TNSP 51); “Measure Altitudes on Ivory Parchment (Ahab)” (Spell 8-10); “Meditation on a Broken Leg…” (Spell 30-33); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “B. Moby Dick” (Spell 66); “D. Moby Dick” (Spell 69-70); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “The night star-filled…” (TNSP 46); “[No Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “No Man’s Land” (gentleness 85-87); “[On Happiness & Knowledge]” (Apology n. pag.); “One Can Have None” (Apology n. pag.);
“overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Pay No Witness, Open Eye: I Must (Starbuck)” (Spell 17-19); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Posterity, this me is Now —” (Mulberry 13-15); “Prologue” (Conversities 79-82); “Psalm (Galileo)” (NTSB 10-11);
“puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Razo—I too Easily Imagine Myself in the Whaling-Boat” (Spell 75-76); “Razo—A Whale is the Largest Living Creature” (Spell 79-80); “resolved nothing but not” (TNSP 42);
“romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “Shield [III]” (SSSS 11); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Song [II]” (SSSS 34); “1) Sperm-Profit 2) Blubber Profit…” (Spell 55-59); “The spider in the center sits in the center” (TNSP 11); “Stanzas (Disclosed in Time)” (NTSB 28-30);
“Starbuck, or the Cormorant’s Wings…” (Spell 93-96); “Stellar Elements” (IANAP 11); “that yellow silk not Chinese” (Mulberry 16-18); “Third Stanza to the Poem for the Body’s Blank” (Spell 61); “Tomb Figurine [II]” (CA 78-79); “Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53);
“[A Warning]” (Apology n. pag.); “We’ll walk toward the thought” (Mulberry 19-21); “The Whale-Line (A Chronicle of How…)” (Spell 52-54); “Work / Poem” (CA 14-15); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85); “years in coil” (Mulberry 7-8); “The Zigzagrat” (CA 42-43)

Weed: “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “& co.” (CA 26-29); “at the window when the wind blows” (Mulberry 43-46); “The Cricket and the Grasshopper” (gentleness 75-80); “Dream Portrait in War-Time” (CA 59-61); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “looking up and both are true” (TNSP 30); “Nine months now nesting in these pages…” (TNSP 42-43); “Posterity, this me is Now —” (Mulberry 13-15);
“romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74)

Weed (Dandelion): “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “& co. (CA 26-29); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “heroisms” (gentleness 21-33); “looking up and both are true” (TNSP 30); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74)

Weed (Nettle): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74)

Weed (Thistle): “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45);
“romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74)

Whale: “∞” (Conversities 33-46); “Lullaby [II]” (CA 4); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “none of the schoolchildren could explain” (ISPS 20-22); Spell

Work: “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Catalog” (CA 44-46); “clamor at ecstasy but ecstasy” (TNSP 46-47); “[Conclusion: Is Nothing Without]” (Apology n. pag.); “Each dumb alone, but” (Mulberry 28-29); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “I find myself, when I leave my basement office…” (TNSP 39); “my hand is vineyard is vine, is vineyard” (TNSP 28-29); “The New World” (gentleness 88-92); “[No Better than the Animals]” (Apology n. pag.);
“overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Queequeg, or the Coffin-Seal” (Spell 89-92); “Poem [III]” (CA 30); “Poem; or, The Artifacts” (CA 40-41); “Portrait (After Arcimboldo)” (gentleness 97-100);
“Prologue” (Conversities 79-82); “Reading Lessons, Writing Lessons…” (Spell 34-36); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “1) Sperm-Profit 2) Blubber Profit…” (Spell 55-59); “Spring the morning I woke” (TNSP 29); “Tomb Figurine [I]” (CA 77); “Tomb Figurine [V]” (CA 82-83); “Twining of Twinings” (TNSP 52-53); “Walking Through the Room” (CA 49-55);
“When he awoke and stepped out of the house…” (TNSP 24); “William cut wood a little…” (TNSP 6); “Work Charm” (NTSB 37-38); “Work / Poem” (CA 14-15); “Writing from Memory” (WFM 69-85)
**Wound:** “Antique Foundation” (CA 11-12); “At Removes” (NTSB 21-26); “calm the sentence the lake” (Mulberry 39-42); “Daybook” (NTSB 45-63); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “Late Pastoral” (CA 36-37); “The Long Sentence (I)” (WFM 32-42); “Measure Altitudes on Ivory Parchment (Ahab)” (Spell 8-10); “Mobius Crowns” (Conversities 15-28); “morning green through ivy” (Mulberry 55-60); “North/South Composition” (NTSB 3-6); “overtakelessness” (gentleness 47-63); “Portrait” (gentleness 94-96); “puritanisms” (gentleness 35-45); “romanticisms” (gentleness 65-74); “a short treatise on the nature of the gods” (gentleness 7-19); “Song [I]” (SSSS 33); “The Whale-Line (A Chronicle of How…)” (Spell 52-54)

**Zero:** “Cant” (Conversities 3-10); “Canto” (Conversities 51-76); “Fragile Elegy” (CA 49-55); “Hariot’s Round [I]” (NTSB 18-20); “Hariot’s Round [II]” (NTSB 34-36); “Ishmael, or the Orphan” (Spell 101-104); “The sparrows below zero” (TNSP 7-8)
Echoes and Polyphonies: Works Cited


Corey, Joshua “A Long Foreground: Exploring the Postmodern Pastoral.”
  Accessed 31 May 2016.


http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=eta.


Harvey, Matthea. *If the Tabloids are True What Are You?* Graywolf Press, 2014.

---. *Of Lamb*. McSweeney’s, 2011.


Henrichs, Albert. “‘Why Should I Dance?’: Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Tragedy.”


Oswald, Alice. *Memorial*. Faber and Faber, 2011.

Perloff, Marjorie. “From Image to Action: The Return of Story in Postmodern Poetry”.


Rowlandson, Mary. *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, who was Taken Prisoner by the Indians; With several others… Written by Her Own Hand*. Kindle File, Nisyros Publishers, 2014.


Walcott, Derek. *Omeros*. Faber and Faber, 2002.


Part Two: 
Passage: New Poems 

Kate Middleton


## Contents

### Past

- Untrod .......................................................... 253
- Haw Count .................................................... 254
- The Queen’s Ocean ......................................... 256
- Verisimilitude ................................................. 258
- Lighthouse, Cape Otway ..................................... 259
- On Bury Art .................................................... 261
- Utopia / After Oz ............................................. 263
- Study of a Lion ............................................... 264
- Recollection ................................................... 265
- Peat Lea ........................................................ 266
- Watching Science Fiction ................................. 267
- Gynandromorph (Wunderkammer) ....................... 268
- Jonah ............................................................ 269
- Aged ............................................................. 270
- Daybreak ........................................................ 271
- Borderland ...................................................... 272
- Watching Science Fiction ................................. 273
- Long Distance ............................................... 274
- Or / All .......................................................... 275
- Assay ............................................................. 276
- Wolf .............................................................. 277
- Medea ............................................................ 278
- Empire ........................................................... 279
- Pequod ........................................................... 280
- Ash and Rough ................................................ 281
- Chimera ........................................................ 282
- Knothole ........................................................ 283
- Elegance ........................................................ 284
- Nor Borrow ..................................................... 285
- Prayer for Any Morning ................................. 286
- Charm to Cover New Ground ............................ 287
- Of Ash .......................................................... 288
- Watching Science Fiction ................................. 289
- Decline and Fall ............................................... 290

### Present

- Daytrip on a Visit Home .................................... 292

### Future

- Dispatches from Earth ..................................... 295
- Charm for Heart’s Protection ............................ 297
Arch, ebb, order ........................................ 298
Intercontinental ........................................ 300
Berg ....................................................... 301
Affair ...................................................... 302
Laboratory .............................................. 303
Record .................................................... 304
Watching Science Fiction ............................... 305
After Romulus, Remus ................................. 306
At Salamis .............................................. 307
Or: Fell / Dale .......................................... 308
Simulation ............................................... 310
Watching Science Fiction ............................... 311
Wayfaring ............................................... 312
(Do.) (Try.) ............................................... 313
Still Life .................................................. 314

Future ..................................................... 315

Passage .................................................... 316
Domestic ............................................... 319
New Observance ....................................... 320
Card and Cast ......................................... 321
Eulogy ..................................................... 323
A Record ............................................... 324
There is the light ...................................... 325
Ennui ...................................................... 326
Nor Angle In ............................................ 327
Mouse (Wunderkammer) ............................... 328
Draft of Days .......................................... 329
A Monday ............................................... 330
Watching Science Fiction ............................... 331
Future-Perfect ........................................... 332
Route ..................................................... 333
Run ......................................................... 334
Then Lie .................................................. 335
Fable ....................................................... 336

Notes on Passage ...................................... 337

Works Cited ............................................. 343
Past
Untrod

— cento after Tacita Dean

The riddle of untrodden land
    has risen out of the ocean
    as dawn has risen to the upper ether

The riddle: loading sand
    onto a delirium
    tarnished like dirty metal

And untrodden land: an artefact
    left to rot

Modern white
windmills produce
prehistoric
weather and the
speeding
up of time
the sound
the wild
sound of sea
and shingle
beaches, of
a motorbike
passing
at dusk this is
the fake voyage off
the polder

This is a fiction. A fiction of sound, a fiction of votive meaning, a fiction all about swollen feet stamped with doubt.

Sleep and death meet off the Isles. Sleep and death – not even rare, places of disrepair, where no man ever trod – produce a salty taste. Heal all ailments.
Haw Count
—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

Have you ever played a hillsman away from bleak, brooding freedom?
I think we are absences, lost in the climb to meet reality,
groundless.

Sky of palest Yorkshire, clogs
on the cobbles
a black irregular scar
— paleolithic monster —
twilight.

On one side, a winding
shining
street
— gate — foursquare house.

Descend from the rectory.

Flat tombstones flickering and clogs on the causeways
on titanic crags.

•   •    •

The open moor: some dismantled machinery in uncertain light.
Heather and bracken and bilberry and slag-heaps

like polished granite.

Scree left look up and across all the world.

The wildest was
, as usual ,
right:

the hill recalls masked faces, faëry ballad.

It ain’t a-goin’ to rain no mo’!
I’m goin’ to coom sweep out
Cross to the main door. Fumble out an eerie ‘Sst! Sst!’

(Why find t’oother door?)

Pass through the eaves, the window-panes, the black stone walls and shining tombstones. The tans and reservoirs. The hillside too.

(Loose stone walls pen
the moor itself. Ruin,
like a bent witch walking
into cotton-grass.)

Hilltops stand under the beam of keen clear light.

Wildness a muddy brown beck in a narrow ravine
a hamlet of moors
its real name stubbed with nails like the packhorse bridge

The whole moor wrapped in forbidding day.
The strange crabbed writing where haunting has least rubbed off; is scarcely striking.
The Queen’s Ocean

*Aqua*—*aquamarine*—*sea green*—
colour names she heard applied
to the waters she had never seen,

would never see. The world was stripped
from her upon stepping into France, then
recreated in her hands. A garden and

its still canals curled through her own *hameau*.
Opulent, then simple, then become
the Widow Capet, in strange enclosure

her imagination roved beyond
the cell, beyond the *Conciergerie*, tiptoed
slipshod up to the waves

she could not quite picture—at Calais,
at Le Havre, at Brest, at Point-de-Grave—
and finally beyond. She never saw the ocean.

Remember the day the news arrived at Court?
Cook, the voyager, gone. The sudden salt tears
her appropriate brine, shed for hours

spent pondering the globe a mere queen
could not traverse. Grief
lagged, nipped at his far-off corpse

a full year later, when the report came through,
and lingered later still as she pulled the volume
of his explorations closer in her tower.

Now known only by number,
Prisoner 250 let the familiar words once more
swim before her eyes—

*In the PM*
*hoisted out the Pinnace*
*and Yawl in order*
to attempt a landing
but the Pinnace
took in water so fast…

All that water! So much that,
unlike that pooling at Versaille,
at last it appeared to be sea green.

All that water.
Another world, an Oceania. All
that water, and her fate, risen above a tower.
A film director buys rats.

He buys 10,000 rats. He buys them to release in a pristine, old-world town. He buys them to recreate a moment past, except of course this time the camera will capture it all. He will film the 10,000 rats pulsing through the streets, acrobatically leap-frogging each other to find a way beyond the main drag. All other streets are blocked.

When the rats arrive their colour is inauthentic. Lab-coat white. Impossible to record a plague of 10,000 white rats. With vats and cages and a vast bank of hairdryers (lest he lose his investment to pneumonia) the director transforms them. Now grey, they can race backward through the centuries. Now grey, it will be like real.
Lighthouse, Cape Otway

Sandstone cone stacked
    on limestone cliff, here
the gash made by human
    loss sealed
with scar of lighthouse:
    until 1994

its Fresnel lens sliced
    the waters uninterrupted
at the tending of successive keepers;
    spliced a safe path
through the shipwreck coast,
    a line through

slur of water, jag of rock
    and stitched each new rudder
to its beacon
    now obsolete,
replaced by the solar light
    that wakens the night

with its three short white flashes
    soaring over waves
every eighteen seconds.

    •    •    •

A kilometre from the clifftop
    cone, a forgotten place:
the lighthouse keepers’ graveyard,
    half-covered with shifting
sand, cooled by fern and blown
    with seed-heads

of dandelions. Here
    the lightmens’ families
lie miles from any other
    place, and one stone reads
“Sacred to the memory
    of…” The remembered name
now sunk beneath weed
    and ground. The childrens’
black wrought-iron fences
    resemble cribs in mourning—
and in this dusk I see
    the keeper’s hand digs

its signal from the light
    so as never again to become
undertaker.
On Bury Art

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

You know Camelot
   know that the only true Camelot is a green knoll of midsummer

But you needn’t thread every moment with a clock of Arimathea
   with the sacred cup under the Tor
   buried between architecture and archaeology.

Be shepherded into fact and fancy. Harbour both—

• • •

In the Pilgrim’s Inn, a loft room is haunted by the panoply of green rapidity
   a palimpsest set on a green hill

   white-washed, white
   -limed, white smocks and
   smocks not so white.

Then another change:

   the flat brown road, hedgeless at flood level.

Withies upright at the junction.

• • •

To reach the orchards: pull against the door-post of the Great Flood
   the monument: flatten between the obelisk and the bridge over the Tone
   the withy-bed: sell the unstable canoe, half-full of water.

After landing be content with the remnants of a blue silk flag.

(The monument is a severity of pardon and vigilance, a
   black piled heap of black shawls, blotted out by grey rain, orientated by the Dog
Star. A cinema. A strange obliquity of grandeur.)

Utopia / After Oz

The storm blows you back
  its funnel ardent
  its wide hungry eye
Its tongue croons you
onto flatline of prairie

When poppies drowsed you
red breath drew
gravity into your limbs:
you yearned for tall grass
a narrow tunnel
of consciousness brain
heart sharp, nerve

Migrant loess skims west
You root back into plain
  —Call this home
  —Call this no place
Ground glows like ruby
dense and knotted
as blood
Study of a lion

In black chalk the beast
brusques forward  Silence  Rubens
has stopped his mouth
with a single line  He is already
awed by the den
he will find himself in even now
as his mane curls into wisp
of emptiness  A study on paper

But there in white chalk the grim
pose brightens
into recognition smudged nose
bent toward the scent
of viewer  Eyes steadily lighting
toward the years one swift textured paw
lifted ever so slightly
Patient as an avalanche
Recollection

—cento after Jorge Luis Borges

I would like now to recall the future and not the past. This amalgamation of dream and the real. Sometimes a balm.

—The future:
  a triumphal chariot drawn
  by a griffin—

—The future:
  a bird, say,
  made up of
  many birds—

Recall: early mornings; nights; arguments weighted with delicate, physical facts, with the erosions of hate. Sky stained and darkened by aeroplanes.

—The future:
  a pyramid slowly worn down by
  a bird’s wing—

—The future:
  two days and two nights older than we—

And to the receding of the sun and the oncoming darkness we say, “arrest the course of the river”.
Peat Lea

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

Think of home. The home of your ancestors. Of sun
and a child’s alphabet. A Lilliput of words and meadows.
Blast it with dynamite.

Quarry the veneer of candour, misleading not in size
but symmetry. Say ‘starving’. Mean ‘cold’. Our ancestors
—blue, vast—have been lost.

But underfoot the telegraph wires can be revived
if they keep to the open moor.

... ...

And limestone country (a philologist; a bibliophile) pumps
day and night throughout the house, church, orchard.
Transports ore of honeycomb

in a prehistoric barrow.

(—In 1665 a box of cloth arrived.
From that box, the plague.
Spirits cross under an ancient yew.
The graves all one calamity.
Heroism gone down this mine—)

Put on a cap. Bend down. Descend
through solid, wet rock; distant light. A black hole above.
An odd smell everywhere. Surface.

(—This business of separation is
a lantern guaranteed not to fail.)
Watching Science Fiction

Before memory takes the graft, the stasis of the past

the real past—if there is real anymore—plays like the engine

of a fear whose source is lost, limb and confusion ripped

from the brink of laundered cotton shirts.

—When the memory
takes she does not know it, trigger finger quicker in eidetic erasure,
safe haven remapped but the fit of uneasy synthetic, the fit
of swagger unnatural to body’s contour, her face so familiar. Familiar
and lost. The faces around her so normal, watchful and careful
flooded. Flooded with false harmony.
Gynandromorph (Wunderkammer)

Born both, the butterfly
wears the jewel of she
and the soot-like shroud of he:

the brilliant eye of red
not met with symmetry
on the creature’s other blackened
wing. Mismatched, chimerical
she traces the quiet breeze
he beats the air staccato

and, one mind,
it alights on twig or leaf
sucks nectar in the heat.
Jonah

The ‘greate fyshe’, terrible
colossus, dark cathedral of days
and nights, arrests
lost Jonah in his flight. Three
days and nights spent
in wet earnest prayer, dread
dowse of whale’s
appetite, drowse of oceanic
will. It is a liturgy
of krill. A pinwheel spun
in blur of hope, despair.
The shroud of stomach’s wall,
grave chamber, draped
in sacred bile. Three days lost.
Three nights. Till their
cadence, *amen*, resolves.
Aged

Here he is in the web magazine. His shell swelled to full size more than a hundred years past, a roving hillock on an island almost no one remembers.

Come from the other side of Africa, ashore. Evidence over a century old: bearing the sepia tint of the Boer war. Colonial soldiers standing formal for a portrait with the patriarch. And now a journalist from the national broadcaster come to pay respect on her knees. She greets the blind old lump with fruit. His neck expressive, skin sagging with authority.

He has earned a probable superlative: he is, most likely, ______-est. And so it is already planned. Protocols codified, site pre-consecrated, obit already on file in the newspaper office. Some kind of emperor, his subjects may not live to see his last sea-fall. But they have been its architects. The future will execute their vision.
Daybreak

The dawn is only a thought.

The fulcrum on which we rest our newsprint, our toothless fingerprints, our balmy Paxil days.

Only a thought of the windy, dwindling kind.

Wake to urgent messages, to the waltz of hours crisp and fragile as thin pastry. To roulette of lightning yes. Of arid no.
Borderland

—cento after Siri Hustvedt

In that borderland between the icon and the human face
there is a map of the landscape, the ruins, the city, the sky, the lightning—

a map more durable than other kinds of memory.

That borderland between the icon and the human face:
a stream runs between them, covered by thick glass. The ground augurs

reverie with the blurriness of an out-of-focus snapshot

and the stream augurs a future bridge. In that borderland between
icon and human face, feathered and naked birds wear

the heads of men. There’s a monkey. There’s a monocle.

Now ankles revert to hooves. Again, we see shoe soles.
The weather is bad, but nobody seems to notice.
And a man in a fur coat looks

like an owlish black cat, himself his own figment.
Watching Science Fiction

The one wanders in the woods searching for a beacon while the other succumbs to quantum events entanglement to memory. A different self a taloned gulf between self and self between self and votive lover paved over by the letting go.

The question asks itself. Who am I? We perfume ourselves with a hint of rot in order to bear unbearable sweetness. We overwrite this life with life unlead with what if with our stumbles. We recall perfectly the unlived version. We just accept like plumed Novalis that memory is what is present. Now who are we? Now the other asks in these streetcar woods who are we?
Long Distance

The letters I send are so pale, polite—so, yes, 
distant. Trinkets 
instead of fever dreams, composed 
on gentle mornings, never kaleidoscopic nights.

Which is to say their earthen tidings 
belie the seethe, the matchless heat 
run through my blood—
back then.

And is there any wonder? Spread out 
the map; see blue. Passion cools 
to steady murmur as these pages 
guddle across that open ocean.
I came to the early saints over hillsides.

Limit desire  Sit still
during incidents of life

Commemorate it. Reread the riotous colour of grace.

I climbed once—900 feet above sea level.

Hear the tormented ghost
A limpet-shell chased by Eternity

I know black peat, whistling on the horizon, to be bottomless.

Return to singing  Defy midnight
Listen  or look  A solitary curlew
and a solitary snipe in full bloom
their way the safest  Also the best

(Follow them all the way down; refuse maps.)

Without compasses  without watches
day could scramble about on kistvaens
A sob or a gasp of peridot or dusk

And I scarred the wind and the tamarisks and a chough.

Gathering the edge of the island in its
chimney-pot  This sea walk jingles

Walked in a trance through combes, zigzagging like an elephant’s trunk.

Like paradise  Like the tide-line empty
of ships  Waiting for two brothers  One
weak  The other wizened  Both drown

The last wolf was killed. A carrion-crow muffled the island with time.
A funicular travelled an inch into slate. Grey. Green.

I said  I left unsaid  Colours split want
Assay

Darling, against the night
stand hours
of day

[Dickinson, 135: Water—*is taught by thirst*]

: be conscious. That is all
I learned, standing at the northern tip
of empire.

[Land—*by the Oceans passed*]

Your words arrive on air.

*I have missed you*. Past tense, perfective—
reality shaped by what is now true. I / you.

Our dirt
inscribed with hope
worked through with aspiration.
Wolf

His garish hunger was prayer
His naked leap for the throat more ardent prayer still
His teeth jewels precious and painful as gift of cut diamond

And revenge merely human
Split apart by amateur surgeon patched together rough
  Hands lacking antiseptic finesse

What hunger could remain?
Innards fine-tuned and filtered through weight of guilt
Until the stones in his belly were nothing but grief
Medea

We can only see it from the other side: we can only see the horror, see the victims’ small broken bodies. Our sympathies must lie with the lifeless, with those who mourn for them, with those who condemn the witch. Extreme grief turned to extreme wrath.

**wrath:** \( \text{Ira} \theta \text{I n.} \)

From the Old Norse, dragged through mongrel Anglo-Saxon. Once it meant *Turning point*. That twist of the heart when the spite in the blood turns to bloodlust, turns to dark alchemy of vengeance. In wrath, mercy is a foreign concept. There is no *pity*, no *thanks*.

What is it, then, moving in her blood that makes it all make sense? How can we tell her story? Try this: First rename the children Hansel and Gretel. Then lead them to the woods and leave them. Their hunger is pure, their innocence an abomination. They ask too many questions about their father. They eat time like they eat bread like they eat love: with no compunction. Riddance is self-preservation.

When Jason takes a new wife—not so worldly, not so learned—is there any other choice? No, really. *You* are Medea. You have the maniac world alive in your powerful bullish heart. You are rash, and pain has made you selfish. And so you do it. Survive it.
Empire

Five winters
stone has kept my fingers
agile

Reaching into coat’s
warm pocket
hand navigates ancient Plovdiv

in a piece
of gravel—weather’s shrapnel—
as my old

cloth’s wool weaves heat
into my skin
All this

stone’s patient indifference
observes in
press

of passing seasons
All this discarded time
reflected

in petroglyph’s striation
as now
the oil of human

hands laid on
as now their second
hand

fever warms
a fragment of lost Thrace
lost empire
Pequod

—cento after Dan Beachy-Quick

Charged electrically but darkly:
the whale by the whale’s own light
swallows illumination, finds again
the finite pull of song

The body bears the text
of distances covered
of uncharted regions of the globe
—Pursuit is what he knows

And light exasperates the world
—a terrible storm and terrible calm—
until the keystone sun
nails the coin to the mast
Ash and Rough

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

A tour through instinct
needs a day of smoothest
virtue. (It is very little visited.)

e.g.] Wednesday morning the wind portended
sadness, and the morning paper
described sleep, white bull in repose.

My object was to copy the wildness of snow
climb the steepest way up into a deposit
of soft light, eventually piercing the loose
black shale of words. My consciousness:
the postman delivering a blizzard.

(Withstand the strange
pot-holes descending into
subterranean antiquity,
its stirrup.)

Q.] Whose memorials are to be seen in the horse-shoe,
in the Ordnance Map?

A.] The walkers walking where no one else walks.
In outlawry. In shriek of austerity.
Chimera

Cupped by dirt then buried learning in earth blindness to feel history passing the chimera reads the tracery of the city erupting overhead as Arezzo inhales, sighs

Hands reach into trenches dug to lay the city’s new walls and grapple a monster’s body of bronze into air, his three treacherous faces alert

The fortress looms, and the piazza thick with human fears Chimera watches as stones are laid into new streets

Awakening to brilliance and overwhelmed with light he witnesses some new faith arising on the floodplain

Claws splay at the boundlessness of air
Knothole

—cento after Hans Zinsser

The themes of the minister’s eulogy travel on the wings of the tsetse fly. They stalk us in the bodies of rats—waylay us in spoilt air—(the air spoilt by mice). There is a heavy feeling in the limbs. Fear of eulogy’s administrative logic.

The minister’s eulogy is a temple already looted by soldiers, the minister himself the keeper of a leprosarium founded in the root tubercles of clover, in rotting wood and refuse. The eulogy, the leprosarium, just knotholes into the minor details of intimate life.
Elegance

—cento for Luke Carman

A thorn in your throat beats a leathery rhythm:
   West, endless west—

Sun like a blood clot. Mud just beneath
the grass of unassuming front yards.
All those yards like something glanced

in the rear view mirror. And old buildings
just take up space. Yawning windows face the concrete
blocks of a new carpark. Barred shopfronts flicker
phantasmic blue.

I guess you’re like a minor Aussie character
in movies, knife concealed in your shoe,
loud in your little apartment.
The ordinary answers orbit like atonal sadness

And you always keep chance in your coat pocket
   —so you write cover letters to nowhere.
You always remember you can fall and fall again.
Nor Borrow

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

In cathedral cities, factory chimneys.

A gabled inn bearing the inscription
Common Lands
is full.

Flemish weavers pass blue and green respects
to the verger.

In his study, the Abbot gushes along the winding maze of the church.

(I could hear a much
freer and lovelier
heart striking the end
of day.)

A beacon plays odd pranks in the marshes.

Shallow water edges over the landscape.

Trawlers populate the tiny attic of a Spanish admiral.

(I saw the actual scalp
of Agincourt.)

(I saw the grave of
the silk mercer’s son:
a small plot of grass
carved out of May.)
Prayer for Any Morning

If I believe in prayer it’s all a prayer—
    tatty hours (cherish / the broken) made up
    of praise and plea

A drill chitters outside the window
    Stutter out of sleep’s wax, sleep’s
    gauzy orison

into a holy reverie
    breakfast and wakeful loneliness—
    for what is loneliness but

awareness I am human? ( / cherish
    the broken) What is that awareness
    but an act of praise?

And in the seamless ordinary
    bills unpaid, plants unwatered, library
    books still unreturned, a sweater yet

half unknit, and unslippered feet
    (cherish the / broken) They curl with the chill
    in which they woke

Say it / again—

    cherish the broken
    monuments / days
Charm to Cover New Ground

Mark the starting place
     trace in stone the origin
of want’s propulsion—

cairn-step. Leaf tattle.
     Startle undergrowth, ground,
with ire’s expulsion.

Walk straight, walk bent (no matter)
     enter quick thicket
of mind’s dwelling.

Stone-borne, clay-borne.
     tell all progress to Echo.
Record Echo’s retelling.
Of Ash

—cento after Peter Steele

Is this not running wild?
   Silk-white ashes of dream and film
nerve into drama—
   into darkness and its minotaur

In fact, we are a pack of jokers
   cloaked but cold
taking to change as salamanders
   were once thought to take to fire

Yes, such silk-white ashes
   —their yield, their plenitude—
may as well be rained together
Love’s cost in a seared world
Watching Science Fiction

Stood at a grave the whole story up till now unravelled—
our son not our son our son instead something necessitating
the word instead. A father’s grief retrieved him from a different
world that grief a ferryman poling between worlds. What coin
pays the fare besides the one with the non-president’s head
the history that also comes instead?

The son not even aware
of his loneliness the loneliness a landfill filled in with the
hand-me-down memories that come from before come from
the first one. Instead he recalls each time remembering
nothing of childhood nothing except his father gone worldless
gone mad with guilt traversed vibration’s rattling grief.
Decline and Fall
—cento after Eliot Weinberger

Retreated to a barren island—
Retreated through their narrow tunnels—
Retreated into mouse-holes and crevices—

(Forgotten kingdoms lie there in the mud
Where the only food is dirt
Where “dirt” stands in for “wrath”)

Present
Day Trip on a Visit Home

In the two years since I’d seen her last
she’d gotten married—
they’d even, she told me, tried for kids

and settled into suburban bliss, half dreaming
of new lives.
With embarrassment, or guilt, or both,

she told me of her honeymoon in Thailand,
that week of tourist-
brochure pleasure, chosen over

a trek through small towns in middle America,
looking up distant friends.
She told me all this as we drove

along Highway #1 together. Then across
a laminex table
as we sat in a café two hours out of Melbourne

she confessed “I don’t know why we’re friends,”
as though she felt the life
she’d chosen was too small, as though

the hours and days they spent driving across the Nullabor,
just the two of them,
were not a vast enough vision of the world—

as though my own succession of modest, rented rooms
in differently-accented cities
was not also a reduction of a keen ambition.

As though the intimacy of our ten years
of shared conversation
were just a prelude to the words voiced

at last—too little, too distant, too — — . Until
I reached out
and touched her hand, reminding her
of the long roads we’d driven before, journeys made
to see a stretch of water,
or a monolithic rock I’d come across

in some book and hatched a plan to see. I reminded her of
her willingness each time
to be astonished giving me permission

to plan the next excursion. Slipping once again
into the car
we followed the curved road

those last ten minutes to the lookout,
and saw the vast
volcanic plain, a world rolled out

beyond mere sight, and looked to either side—
est and west we saw the shrunken lakes,
the ones that usually bore the description

“largest,” contracted beneath the cloudless sky.
Dispatches from Earth

—cento after Sir John Mandeville

I.

I shall tell of all the towns and cities
I shall tell of all the castles
I shall tell of the hand, a round apple of gold

I, John Mandeville, saw this well

Some embark at the city of Geen
Some want to travel to Tartary
and others live under the planet called Saturn

Say that the ox is the holiest animal
Say that on earth rats may be as big as dogs
Say there is neither correct faith, nor a perfect law

I, John Mandeville, saw this well

II.

Let’s load the ships with salt
instead of balm

Let’s load the ships with calamus
and not the oil of mercy

The cedar does not rot
The hawthorn has many virtues

and hemlock and nettles flow out
of the Terrestrial Paradise—

III.

Each city is a hill
of salt and
heaven
falls on the
herbage

Paradise is a loch — and it has no bottom
Charm for Heart’s Protection

Take to bed a rodent’s whisker
Remember: artful love’s a trickster

love’s a clown—
        eat its sweetness, wash it down

Take to bed the jaded moon
        and breathe into its little lung

then exhale the empty scent
        of crater’s darkness, lava spent

Take to bed a river stone
        dream yourself a salmon—roam

counter-current, flick and leap
        free and hard ahead in sleep
Arch, ebb, order

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

‘Happiness’ is the first word ruined.
‘Happiness’ is the first word of unrest.

[the white rime
on the vicar-
age magpie-
coloured the will-
o’-the-wisp mist
lemon-yellow
or invisible]

—We eat this quarried stone.

• • •

Outline the Welsh mountain in the fish lying in glass cases,
  a courtesy of perish weight
And the river, white-faced, wearing a black hat of Bridge
  cut off from the other side of night
Valley fog—so wide that it looks like the moor itself—
  ran down the windows
A medley of bulrushes rose to the grey-shingled roof

• • •

So whose ghost is happy at last?

   The bride of the deep ruts
   The Bishop of that grim border
   A farmer of Kerry sheep out East, who sleeps between peaks

• • •

Filled with yearnings
Turn to the falls a-foaming
Look, my fellow, see.

• • •

ivy-clad ruins
flow through the woods full
of memories of
the earliest days

so the jackdaw lies

in the print of
green

Where fire had been
Intercontinental

Now sunlight gores the day
invites
autopsy of shadows
makes unlikely myth
of night:

nocturnals may never emerge
—on this side

I think of you, bitten
by sharp-mawed
dark

Instances of shining hang
bas-reliefs
mounted on your thick hours

What traversal?

Words
guddle in the twilight
of intercontinental flight

Words
that needle absence
across the mind
Yet

we walk a common metre
weigh a common kilogram

make of day and night (my
day, your night)
an Esperanto
Berg

A fin of ice arising out of sky, frigid sea A single turret above belies the monolith beneath The berg advances at the speed of a pilgrim travelling on foot

Calved from huger sheets and carved, desolate its drapery, its skirts submerged

The berg at a palmer’s pace dissects the waters

And you: First anatomise the cryosphere Breathe out ever-condensing vowels Capture its face then explode the berg bring the wreckage to light
Affair

—cento after W. G. Sebald

No one at the ticket desk.
No one at the lock-keeper’s cottage.

He moves like his own ghost
on a brittle strip of celluloid:
nothing visible but the sky.

Events cut like a film

—the silver bracelet, the ageing skin,
the jumble of curios arranged
on the shelves (plates,
porcelain cups, plaster busts…), an extra
in evening dress, the rubble
in time—

decked out with a love story.

Ghosts do not vanish until cockcrow.
Ghosts do penance in the dark.
Laboratory

Little monks clothed in white
they take their petty tasks
in stride, no mind for risk just
turn the slender wheel
of their mortality

— Little monks. Set a-quiver
in communal prayer of fever
injected with some human
cancer, soon perfected
into specimen.

Little hearts: their atria
hold wonders. Little lungs
expand, exhale. Little
cells—peal of matins, vespers.
Knell of self. Of selflessness.
Record

—cento after Ali Smith

This is the story of my tattoo. Look at my lip. Look at my hip bone. Like an ancient baked tablet. Like the face of a clock—but a clock with a thin layer of dust on its face. A clock with the heart of an apple tree. This is the story of my tattoo. Look at my hip bone. Crystalline like the egg of a bird. Hollow and full. Stately and weighty through to the platelet level. My hip bone. Like the bare trunks of the trees. Shines green. A jolly engraving of the old Roman road in the wood. So much for my Artful Dodger pockets. This is the story of my tattoo. It hurts like irony.
Watching Science Fiction

Reminds us of a story. The one about cheap hotels changed identities brief encounters. The one that offers no solace. Reminds us of a story that leaves him hiding in the shabby wardrobe singing Row Row Row in gravelled madness. Reminds us that he always arrives somehow asks the simplest question

The rest of it the cellular mitosis the tramp through all those tawdry off-road places a last image imprinted on the retina the recaptured body electric… We imagine ourselves into that place of horror. Reminds us when he asks avuncular were you safe of that voice in the exhausted corner singing…Life…dream…
After Romulus, Remus

Why not found a new heart, new city, new empire? Mother forced to chastity, pushed into convent’s sorority and children cast aside at hands of family. Fear, loss—turned at last into prosperity through world’s conspiring. Wolf more mother than a witch.

What paths lead to survival? River, wolf, woodpecker, shepherd. Sluice. Dog milk. Bird meal. Garlic—ah, the hard guts of the reapers! An embrace, a handover. The maze of wildness solved for them. There is plenty in these safe pockets of pastoral community.

But they grow beyond abandonment. Grow beyond survival. The two inspire groups of followers, and schools of thought, of urban design. Two movements no longer reconcilable. (Hansel, Gretel: the two sides of the coin. Flip to see which lands facing the future.)

New Alpinists, they choose opposing hills for new CBD. At last ordeal survived means nothing: each survival is at bottom independent. Lonely. Twinned exposure and long traversal reduced to footnote as they turn at last on each other. The only remnant of that past left to them to turn upon.
At Salamis

—cento after Ryszard Kapuscinski

So it was at Salamis. Already bathed in blinding sunlight, crazed cats leaping into the fire, trying to ignore the night time

—crazed cats, insect brigades and a doctor. A small man immerging himself in smallness. A small man cunning, fast, elusive as a hare.

At Salamis Xerxes commanded that donkeys be tethered. Amidst the lunar lifelessness of the road to the bazaar the donkeys jeered
demon-scarred, seized by their throats. So it was. Tired soldiers fell of mountain cliffs. A tyrant delivered cups. Specialists brewed tea. The doctor ran his little private hospital. And avid, methodical, motionless black birds awaited their signal. At Salamis.
Or: Fell / Dale

— erasure after S. P. B. Mais

Taken over the unknown
hills to these grass
fells we crossed and
recrossed

the broadest dales — a raid
on the roofless
memory of a woman

in this manner wooed
in this manner won

her sadness

— not associated with memory (it
doesn’t stand on rock; its
vaulted room like
a hedgeless road)

— a lovely mountain. Her strata
flow through the heart:
ideal gills and becks
down the fell-

side of the smooth summit. Suddenly,
changes, ruins.
The great keep

Here I
Here is

reflected in the

one-o’clock-to-three quake

are wild and fair
of the thunderous dark.
A lady is
da toll-bridge
dignified by her cup of milk.
Muttering

Let those
Lest those
turning away

shed thy light
spoil to-night

pull the curtain aside and

thy blaze, O
the feet of

rush
to the white waste
of strange black a road
to the wound, to
the trace

of the lover — the afternoon
a double S
 zigzag across
 and across the hills.
Simulation

Scientists run simulated voyages into space.

Whenever real rockets take off, a shadow crew sequesters itself in a warehouse. In tandem with updates sent from out there the astronauts complete the mundane tasks of passage. Safety check. Safety check. Safety check.

When an emergency message comes through, the crew throw themselves against walls in empathy, snap their necks left and right with force and actual terror. When the reports are confirmed—the shuttle has burned up—they play dead. Hours later, they are still afraid to let anyone know they are awake. All this time, one has been tapping Morse code into the palm of his crewmate. Every minute or so a silent wail: I-A-M-B-U-R-N-I-N-G.
Watching Science Fiction

The bodies turned gelatinous the bodies as if in aspic and the feds called in is it disease or is this assault. Liaison’s glance a razor drawn across the airplane’s aisle across the hospital corridor across the oceans till the son throws it back at gamble’s coda. *We all love someone who’s dying.*

The gelid body some deep sea wonder retrieved to air its raucous frailty under the finger tips its appearance its own X-ray. Liaison at the keyboard finding answers, finding revelation. Love. We love. We all love someone. Who’s dying.
Wayfaring

—cento after Rebecca Solnit

“Lost” is a puzzle-patchwork—brown
coffee and yellow eggs,
rivers, stores, jails, ferries—
a map of all the places a criminal
is wanted. Wanted like a lost umbrella,
lost keys, lost toys and baby
teeth. (Such tokens are possessed
by their own appetites:
they are saddled with desires like
experimental films;
like fiddles and the twang of colour.
Of copper rattles. Coral beads.)

Lost is—and is not—a contagious
panic. A compass
arguing with the map. Distant blue
sheep, blue shepherd.

The blank space between saints
and patrons. It is us in blue houses. Where
we piss blue for days. Honey turns to dust.
We go to hell. —Keep moving.
(Do.) (Try.)

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

Not exactly unknown
but known to be : no light, no bottom, no breakwater
                   no parapet

Wonder is neither accident nor red cloak, is

   a very strange stranger

   dignified and absurd,
   a crown rimmed by shod soldiers full of beauty…

A miracle the only haven in charred gorse
   a rabbit with eyes fantastically in bloom

Two cliffs, orange cliffs, sweep along the alter, and on, on

Earthworks dug up : the heart under the ancient yew
                   the skull leading down the wooded walk
   a shallow blush from a restless world, brooding
                   in sympathy with winter

Nobody knows
   beyond human conjecture

   deepest blue a lofty room
       furtive love

   a risk worth taking
Still Life

—cento after Siri Hustvedt

I know where yonder is.

Yonder is how the brain works in the borderland of dream and memory in the empty space of light between maps of possible pleasure. Between scuffles of desire. Reach out to take a grape. Take two, alike and interchangeable as two yonder pears. It’s hard to see in the yonder bad light.

In the dim twilight. Real bread goes stale,
real sausage decays. We didn’t see the same event.

Words conceal. But as long as we can detect the strings we see.

Yonder: a cork, a boot, a sole, and a bottle.
Future
Passage

Melt has brought about
reunion
Bowheads from both sides

—Pacific, Atlantic—meet in
the middle
press together century-old grazes

from their brushes with
the whalers
(Soon enough we’ll find

the jade, the slate, the ivory
sharps
lodged in blubber: we’ll retrieve

short-circuited trail-
blazers
that could not ply through

a full half-metre of chub)
They’ve found
the northwest passage again

the whales, and they idly chase
swimmerets
race into waters once attempted

by Erebus, by Terror Yes
they find
themselves where Franklin’s men

were lost—where two ships’
worth
of eager nerve were taken out:

starvation; hypothermia; lead
poisoning; scurvy; dread consumption—

for them the passage never found
What they did find, could find

just an endless chill of loss preserved
for the coming centuries

It’s here the bowheads spyhop
noses up, eyes at waters’ level

it’s here they exchange probing
stares, and then stare beyond

—down a lonely newly-open highway
empty but for whales

Did any of them witness Franklin’s final terror, the grisly hour when

the document was written? Alongside the crews’ last remnants the simple

lines Whoever finds this paper
...Quinconque trouve ce papier...

Finderen af dette Papiir...Their testimony drives the new adventurers

Even now they go in search of the lost wrecks, in search of the tatters of some “heroic” age But Terror is a history
of land; *Erebus* a paean

to a chaos of white nights
    on ice
Now Bowheads rise from the sea

drive thick skulls against
    the sheet
as they come to find

each other, heads full of
    baleen, ice
howl and magnetic pull of *north*

plumb the solitaire deep
    keep time
by the minute-hand of floe’s

advance and pass each other
    in a season’s
song, allegro, warming into future tense
Domestic

The story begins in the home. A modest cottage. Sometimes I imagine it as almost a single room. The children creep from behind the curtain that brings them night to hear their parents confer by a fireplace, or over strong, bitter tea. Other times the house expands, grows a second story. The boy lingers on the stairs just out of view. Hears the future fate. Sometimes it is his mother’s voice. Sometimes his stepmother’s. As long as the father acquiesces it scarcely matters. There is only betrayal.

Memory is bound to the wooden house. The wood that once was warm—“like rain gone wooden”—has turned cold as desperation came on. Life has ceased to circulate in the veins of the walls. The four people who choreograph their movements around each other have become walls themselves, making and remaking their space. Only when Hansel and Gretel huddle together before sleep do they become human again.

Frozen in this pattern. If it were a palace or a plantation or a grand estate the story would be epic. The story would take place in the centre. But its modesty is an embarrassment. Epic stories don’t take place in kitchens. Let alone kitchens with empty cupboards. Their fate is never operatic. Their story is godless. The house dwells at the edge of vision. When they push into the woods, into darkness, into fear, they leave the frame. Enter only lore.
New Observance

Quick, the end of worn day

stammering into leaf-bare treetop
crow-sharp, ear
to trunk

    sap’s glacial ooze
clawing into this thing we call a body

    —I recount a ritual descent by ladder

    —You, encounter with long oil slick of eel

    this elemental radiance
by necessity an instance of terror

    Now, in muted room
cusp of night flares onto a screen
as if cued by tilt of

    darkling mind
Card and Cast

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

Driven there by rivers I expected
stags and a bright tunnel of green
expected byroads crowned with gypsy
caravans

Through a window a glimpse
white lambs in the byre, lonely
in the kingdom of rats

Indeed, a lonelier cover, sand like slate
sand a blizzard swept up, up
over blinding rain
in an ordinary upland

Four bishops and the word
'slain'
tomb and brass
canon and rain

A stream running through a storm
a border kept alive (gates
all painted red, the soil red, red
as churches) by flood

A ruin built on sand, a four-masted wreck
a road-mender on a cart-
horse, a terrace on which foxes used to stand

The eight mile stretch of sands
The wheels made sand
The long yellow marram-grass an ideal
of sand
Sand drawing a map of mind

The mullioned windows
worn away by possession, by
silhouetted sky
Broken stairways and battlements
   Cove and Coracle
   Two by two
Eulogy
—cento after Krzysztof Kieslowski

Why invent laws if they exist?

Half an hour’s wait for luggage
and the law kills the boy.

The boy holds on to 380 volts
then appears four more times

as a ghost. The law is a knife
and a set of compasses. Anyway
he’s dead, like most of them.

A strange vacuum forming
around him, the kettle boils

over. There are his damn teeth
in the mud beneath some absurd
two-storeyed tower. Some law.
A Record

—cento after Isabelle Eberhardt

One day this notebook of mine
   (the notebook
    that barks all night long
    with its grocery
    bills and tailor’s invoices)
will end in the total silence of the desert
   (the first
    thing we do in life
    is sleep, transparent on
    the white sand)
and at last I will carry in my bundle
   (when the notebook no
    longer crows like a
    rooster, beats
    its tambourine)
only a silent ocean’s pure white waves
There is the light

bending
toward chill of empty shadows

(that place defined
by your going)

the artist, his light
striving

toward the purity of unbroken
white

(as if there were no ruin)

(or
only ruin)

in eradication of cold
Ennui

—cento after Mark Strand

With all that elegiac grace you clear a space for yourself.

It’s so big, so empty.

It is the place we shall leave our own bones.

But for now its floor is slippery, and you are blind.

I try to extricate myself. I drink some coffee.

All the hills—like crumbs and place cards
littered on the floor—are actually the same hill.

And we are like hopeless utopians, living for the end.
Nor Angle In

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

When in confidence they risk assertion it is as light-hearted as hot milk. Perhaps the same eyes trace antiquity in the spray of waves, the black trail of smoke. An island rock. A red suspension bridge. These lay, saint-haunted, remote—where poetry flourished.

Poetry, a firm sand blowing over reed-covered, black-headed gulls and above water—or is it the world? A fleece, full of oil and yellow light. A soft Arcadia.

And ancient, the strangest hue. A song of precipitous ruin

“records a sigh, a murder or a groan”

Past four o’clock. Their home after death a cathedral bell.

In the hills and slate-quarries they loom. An odd ghost tracks the clouds, lambs in the pasture. Too much wildness bewilders distance, direction. Pass an age. Think it a day.

( Without… without… without… )
Mouse (Wunderkammer)

Cut out a sixth of the heart.
At a day old—furless,
close-eyed, resembling nothing
so much as an infant’s thumb—
he can survive it.
The mouse can regrow that missing part
in three short weeks.

Aesop knew it:
to be mouse-hearted
is as good as wearing
the swagger of lion.

His heart
perhaps the size of a Lilliputian walnut.
Barely a mouse, already
ripped apart.
He does not wait
for a Godhand to put him back together.
Alone he blindly furrows toward wholeness.
Draft of Days

Once again talk of loss tallest
of fanged torquere shame
of stasis— as is

I/ erase the border
we elide the edge in which ‘you’
break off from ‘me’

Shining out in the dimming shine dim
room their new invention glides e’en hell
onscreen a robot jelly-
fish fuelled on hydrogen— again

I/ and only yesterday
we the robot cheetah’s new
landspeed record
for our kind
A Monday

—cento after Roland Barthes and James Schuyler

The metallic racket of airports
a localised deafness

a flat condition
subject to the edge of a torn look

—experience this as a gust of life.
A radical gesture.

And Voila. Home now.
Starting to write a letter
made out of phrases too fine
to be called a skin

and the view shivers with the reticence
of intimacy.

A situation with no offer of lightness.

Line up and face the sun.
Watching Science Fiction

This is grief. The absent son never stands before you but always
at periphery. Never offers CPR just stops the heart in each
reflective surface. So you turn every mirror to the wall sheathe every
silvered face of plate of cup of distorting spoon. Every convex
face is shaped like anguish. Voice splinters the laboratory and
its familiar frequency busts up the silence fractures your attempts
at solace.

When you turn to your science to explain it nothing pierces
the mystery of loss. The loss was years ago the loss never happened
the loss is there at your side just behind you. Take grief take
hauntedness take the amoral wail of three a.m. Forget the skin. Self
is fenceless. In some unwritten future there’s a law of physics to explain it.
Future-Perfect

—cento after Eliot Weinberger

You throw ink on a piece of silk
in echo of a grief that is hardly human.

—Grief for that which is already burnt,
like bones collected and preserved in the throat

—Grief: the plant that is always surrounded
by darkness. The past is always in front of you.

A vision of paradise washed of soot everyday.
A vision of paradise never recuperated.
Route

Monument to crossing

Monument to first sight

Follow highways once part of the Main Way. When a roadside pyramid appears pull over. Read diary phrases on mounted aluminium. One history’s footprint on the route.

Monument to rest places

Monument to movement

We follow the highways and when a sign beckons down a side road we spiral to the hilltop. At Pretty Sally: tower built from jail stone. Ladder to triangulation. Horizon strewn beneath.

And, in names, monuments to failure—

The place the crossing didn’t happen. The moment sightline failed. The name the only badge. Not levelled, graded with a road-bed. Not bit with bitumen.
Run

Start at the edges and work inward—

*The rest of the ground run very scrubby*

find a stream, a runlet, and follow

*The country runs very open; good black soil*

Meditate in your natural element

*In the course of this day
we found
a great deal of salt*

and consider the question
Can I really separate water from earth, from air?

*The ground run very rocky and brushy
so that we could scarce pass*

A rippling body of water
Would it loosen our idea of the *possible?*
Reality pulls taut

*The ground runs much the same*

A trick to learn with the mind
transform the sky

*The country still rocky and scrubby*

until sky runs clear and slick
in your hand
Then Lie

—erasure after S. P. B. Mais

The journey north is treeless
  a world of grass and houses
  a pastoral of ascent
  of black hills, white unknown mountains
and stags, feeding on the snowline
  on perpetual memory

Retrace the grey crags, the end of everything
Talk about the gash of rock cut
  by cascades, by a small
  upland loch
and reach the haunt of a hut-circle

Repeat the word: “impossible”

  as if forever
  as if you see, north, the border
Think of the troubadours. Think of Gatsby.

Think of a small pink man and his pink ox.

Of hands in a gooseberry bush. An orange lying in the refrigerator box. Which has become a home. To think like this is to master a dimming past.

Dig and you shall find your own body alive

in its shallow arc, acting the part of a solemn mourner.

Witness the chattering play-by-play: the ball changes hands. Or a note with the words *Je t’aime. Je t’aime*: the beaded orange heart of an open daisy—

It’s not clock time necessarily

when Odysseus finally comes home.

You can’t pay your electric bill. You’re stuck. It is bitter to hear birds dull and interchangeable as postcards. A guillotine hangs over your perfect marble house.
**Notes on Passage**

Many poems in this collection are created through collage or a process of “gleaning” by which I moved through texts and selected individual words or small phrases from within larger texts, piecing together my selections new works. The centos in this collection are created from phrases taken from prose works, primarily non-fiction, from a variety of periods. Words and phrases are stitched together in any order. The “erasures” based on S. P. B. Mais’s *This Unknown Island* all present the selected words in the order in which they appeared in Mais’s original travel essays, but here I have rearranged the text on the page as I saw fit, rather than retaining the original position of the words as they would appear after all unused text was eliminated. My challenge with each of these citational works was to find and express my own poetic sensibility through snatches of language used by others, but pieced together in new ways.

“Untrod”:

Text is drawn from the extended interviews in *Tacita Dean: The Conversation Series 28* and from the artist’s own writings in the monograph *Tacita Dean*.

“Haw Count”:

All text is gleaned from the essay “Haworth: Brontë Country”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“The Queen’s Ocean”:

I first encountered the story of Marie Antoinette’s interest in the “discovery” of Australia in Antonia Fraser’s *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* which I “read” in audio. The italicised text in is drawn from the journals of Captain James Cook.

“Verisimilitude”:

The story recounted here is inspired by Werner Herzog’s account of the filming of *Stroszek* in 1977.

“On Bury Art”:

All text is gleaned from the essay “Glastonbury: King Alfred and King Arthur”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“Study of a Lion”:

Rubens’s “Lion” (1612-1613) is a chalk study in the collection of the National Gallery in Washington DC, which also displays the painting “Daniel in the Lions’ Den” (1614/1616).

“Recollection”:

Text is drawn from the *Selected Non-Fictions* of Jorge Luis Borges. (Borges, Jorge Luis. *Selected Non-
“Peat Lea”: All text is gleaned from the essay “The Peak District: Grouse-Moors and Lead Mines”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“Watching Science Fiction”: This poem refers to the episode “Olivia” (Season 3, Episode 1) of the television show *Fringe*.

“Gynandromorph”: On 12 July 2011 the Jennifer Carpenter reported for BBC Nature news that a gynandromorph had been born at London’s Natural History Museum. A rare half-male, half-female (it is estimated that 0.01% of hatching butterflies are “sexual chimeras”) this butterfly was especially unusual: it was perfectly bisected, so that each wing displayed the characteristics of one sex.

“Jonah”: Referring to the well-known biblical tale, the description “greate fyshe” comes from William Tyndale’s 1534 translation of the book in Jonah 2:1, the literal rendering of the original Hebrew text. A complete edition of Tyndale’s translations from the Old Testament are available in a modern spelling edition edited by David Daniell.

“Aged”: The subject of this poem is the Seychelles tortoise “Jonathan”, the long-term resident of the island of St Helena, believed to be the oldest living land animal. Sally Kettle reported on Jonathan BBC Magazine in the article, “Meet Jonathan, St Helena’s 182-Year-Old Giant Tortoise.”

“Daybreak”: The italicised text consist of collaged text from Barry Lopez’s *Desert Notes & River Notes* and Louise Glück’s *Proofs & Theories*.

“Borderland”: Text is drawn from Siri Hustvedt’s essay collection *Mysteries of the Rectangle*.

“Watching Science Fiction”: This poem refers to the episode “The Arrival” (Season 1, Episode 4) of the television show *Fringe*. 
“Or / All”: All text is gleaned from the essay “Cornwall: Bodmin Moor and the Tintagel”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“Assay”: Italicised lines appearing in square brackets both come from Emily Dickinson’s poem 135.

“Pequod”: Text is drawn from Dan Beachy-Quick’s *A Whaler’s Dictionary*.

“Ash and Rough”: All text is gleaned from the essay “Lancashire: Pendle and the Trough of Bowland”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“Chimera”: This poem refers specifically to the Estruscan bronze sculpture “Chimera of Arezzo”; the chimera is now held in the collection of the Archaeological Museum in Florence, Italy.

“Knothole”: Text is drawn from Hans Zinsser’s *Rats, Lice and History*.

“Elegance”: Text is drawn from Luke Carman’s *An Elegant Young Man*.

“Nor Borrow”: All text is gleaned from the essay “Norfolk: The Borrow Country and the Broads”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“Watching Science Fiction”: This poem refers to the episode “There’s More than One of Everything” (Season 1, Episode 20) of the television show *Fringe*.

“Decline and Fall”: Text is drawn from Eliot Weinberger’s essay collection *Wildlife*.

“Dispatches from Earth”: Text is drawn from *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* as rendered in the translation by C. Moseley.

“Arch, ebb, order”: All text is gleaned from the essay “The Welsh Arches: The Mary Webb Country and Border Castles”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*. 
“Affair”: Text is drawn from W. G. Sebald’s collection *Campo Santo*.

“Record”: Text is drawn from Ali Smith’s work *Artful*.

“Watching Science Fiction”: This poem refers to the episode “The Same Old Story” (Season 1, Episode 2) of the television show *Fringe*.

“After Romulus, Remus”: The italicised phrase comes from my own unpublished translation of Horace’s Epode 3.

“At Salamis”: Text is drawn from Ryszard Kapuscinski’s memoir *Travels with Herodotus*.


“Simulation”: This poem takes as its inspiration the news reports on the “Mars 500 Mission” during which six “astronauts” lived for 520 days in a “spaceship” housed in the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Biomedical Problems in order to simulate the conditions a crew would undertake on a manned mission to Mars. The mission included a “Mars walk” and “return to earth”, and “landed” without incident. My imagination of the “shadow crew” also draws on the Challenger crash in 1986 for its imagined scenario. The “landing” was reported on by Jonathan Amos in the article “Simulated Mars Mission ‘Lands’ Back on Earth.”

“Watching Science Fiction”: This poem refers to the episode “Pilot” (Season 1, Episode 1) of the television show *Fringe*.

“Wayfaring”: Text is drawn from Rebecca Solnit’s *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*.

“(Do.) (Try.)”: All text is gleaned from the essay “Dorset: The Hardy Country”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“Still Life”: Text is drawn from Siri Hustvedt’s essay collection *Yonder*. 
“Passage”: This poem draws on the story reported by Richard Black for the BBC that with the advent of ice-melt in the Arctic the northwest passage has opened up in recent summers for the first time in a century, and bowhead whales have been passing through it. Research into bowhead whales indicated that their estimated lifespan is 150 years and that when dying bowheads are discovered some still have 19th century whaling implements embedded in their bodies. The italicised text is drawn from the letter left behind by the last members of McKinnon expedition, sent to search for the lost Franklin expedition, before their death. Their explanation of their fate was written in seven languages.

“Card and Cast”: All text is gleaned from the essay “South Wales: The Cardigan Coast and Pembrokeshire Castles”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book This Unknown Island.

“Eulogy”: Text is drawn from the work Kieslowski on Kieslowski.

“A Record”: Text is drawn from Isabelle Eberhardt’s writings, published as The Nomad: the diaries of Isabelle Eberhardt.

“There is the Light”: This poem is partially inspired by the career trajectory of Canadian “Automatiste” painter Paul-Émile Borduas, whose canvases were increasingly rendered in white towards to end of his career.

“Ennui”: Text is drawn from Mark Strand’s essays in The Weather of Words.

“Nor Angle In”: All text is gleaned from the essay “North Wales: Anglesey and the Mountains”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book This Unknown Island.

“Mouse”: This poem is inspired by scientific studies reported on by Neil Bowdler for BBC Health News; scientists stated that this research might lead to a greater understanding of the regenerative abilities of the human heart and, more generally, of the newborn body.
“Draft of Days”: This poem is inspired by the BBC science news, particularly the articles “Robotic Cheetah ‘breaks speed record for legged robots.’” and “Robot jellyfish powered by Hydrogen”. I have been taking note of the many animalistic robots being produced since view Errol Morris’s documentary *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control* which took as one of its subjects the roboticist Rodney Brooks, former director of the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory.

“A Monday”: Text is drawn from Roland Barthes’s *Mourning Diary* and James Schuyler’s *Diaries*.

“Watching Science Fiction”: This poem refers to the episode “Neither Here Nor There” (Season 4, Episode 1) of the television show *Fringe*.

“Future Perfect”: Text is drawn from Eliot Weinberger’s *Oranges & Peanuts for Sale*.

“Then Lie”: All text is gleaned from the essay “The Northern Highlands: Prince Charlie’s Country”, from S. P. B. Mais’s book *This Unknown Island*.

“Run”: Italicised text comes from the journal of John Price’s exploration journey in 1798. Price was the servant of Governor John Hunter, and accompanied an expedition of Irish convicts to explore the land around Sydney. The Irish convicts left the expedition, and were accompanied by guards back to Sydney while Price continued with two men, travelling 160 kilometres to the confluence of the Wingecarribee and Wollondilly Rivers.

“Fable”: Text is drawn from Siri Hustvedt’s *Living, Thinking, Looking*.
Passage: Works Cited


“Neither Here Nor There.” Fringe, directed by Joe Chappelle, Fox, 23 Sep. 2011.


“Pilot.” Fringe, directed by Alex Graves, Fox, 9 Sep. 2008.


