1. Poetries

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.
Shelley (1910, p. 359)

Poetry has been or postured in a process of diaspora at least since Plato, in The
Republic, decided (or gave voice to the sentiment) that poets were dangerous and
disrespectful and did not merit a place in the ideal state. Plato did though have his
Socrates suggest that the poets might reform and defend themselves and find a way in
later. Hence the Defences, most notably of Sidney and Shelley.

Platonic exile and the strangeness it brings in making strangers, need to be
considered as the product of a civilisation of city states, united by a language and certain
common customs (united in the fifth century by a pride in having defeated the Persian
empire) but divided by variation in political models. Exile and ostracism may be personal
tragedies but they are, in general, temporary states, and ones which, in effect, guarantee
the dispersion of powerful ideas throughout the Greek world. Importantly, exile as
conceived in Classical Greece is not necessarily from one's language² (though certainly it
would at least have been from one's dialect). Nor is the exile necessarily the friendless
and alienated figure we associate in our century with the refugee. For one thing the
stranger has the protection of the most powerful god:

For dear is an alien tongue
To Zeus who cares for the stranger
And governs the counsel of Kings

(in Aeschylus' The Suppliant Maidens, 1952, p. 9)

² Note though that in classical tragedy (as for instance in The Suppliant Maidens of Aeschylus and in
The Bacchante of Euripides), exile often means this. In The Bacchante of Euripides, consider the exile
which Cadmus imagines for himself, following the frenzied and unwitting slaughter of his grandson,
Pentheus (ruler of Thebes), by his daughter, Agave (Pentheus' mother), an exile from Hellas:

I, alas! in my old age must seek barbarian shores to sojourn there; but the oracle declares that I
shall yet lead an army, half-barbarian, half-Hellene, to Hellas; and in serpent's shape shall I carry
my wife Harmonia, the daughter of Ares, transformed like me to a savage snake, against the
altars and tombs of Hellas at the head of my troops; nor shall I ever cease from my woes, ah me!
nor ever cross the downward stream of Acheron and be at rest. (1952, p. 351)

Certainly the strangers of the tragedy, Asian devotees of Dionysus, in The Bacchante are non-natives of
Greek and their chorus finds itself having to "in foreign tongue express my joy " (1952, p 349).
The ambivalence with which Socratic and Aristotelian texts deal with foreigners yields a complicated legislative picture of their status, perhaps best represented by the *Laws* of Plato, in which strangers are to be treated with friendliness and honoured (1952, p. 790), but it is acknowledged that, as in the nature of exile, it is public offence which makes strangers (1952, p. 738). Nevertheless the *Laws* concludes with its protagonist, an Athenian stranger, requested to participate as instrumental (because of his foreign knowledge) in the foundation of the new state, a Cretan colony (1952, p. 799).

The Hellenistic cosmopolitanism expressed in Menander's dictum, *I am a man, and nothing human is foreign to me* 3, is prefigured in Zeno's lost *Republic*, which, from what is known of it, conflicted with the narrow insularity of the Republic proposed by Socrates. In Zeno's cynical (almost Swiftian) Republic, all humanity is ruled by a single law. Kristeva describes Zeno's Republic in *Strangers to Ourselves*, as one in which:

Love prevails over men and women who freely belong to one another, dressed in the same manner, having abolished marriage, schools, courts, money and even temples — only the inner god of the Spirit was revered. Cannibalism, incest, prostitution, pederasty, and of course the destruction of the family are also accepted among the features of that ideal State. 4 (1991, p. 60)

Those whom Plato branded a tribe of imitators (1952, p. 443) and whom he urged "must be compelled to declare that evil acts were not done by the gods" (1952, p. 327) are, if anything painted in a more contradictory light than the strangers who appear to be a necessary evil of the State he imagines. We should remember that the poets 5 are not expelled from the Republic merely because they are third hand imitators of the truth, but because they are enemies of reason, guilty of strengthening the feelings and "letting them rule... instead of drying them up" (1952, p. 433).

In the third book of the *Laws*, having praised the poets as a divine race who "often in their strains, by the aid of the Muses and the Graces... attain truth" (1952, p. 666), Plato elaborates through his Athenian stranger the subversive role of the poet in relation to the state. He describes a multitude once willing to observe good order and which "would never have dared to give judgement by noisy cries" (1952, p. 675). This multitude were in time corrupted by the poets who:

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3 In Allinson's translation: "For me none is a foreigner if so be he is good. One nature is in all. And it is character that makes a tie of kin" (Menander, 1930, p. 505).

4 Kristeva comments on what we are able to reconstruct of Zeno's cosmopolitanism, that it:

emerges from the core of a global movement that makes a clean sweep of laws, differences and prohibitions; and that by defying the polis and its jurisdiction one implicitly challenges the founding prohibitions of established society and perhaps of sociality itself; that by abolished state-controlled borders one assumes, logically and beforehand, an overstepping of the prohibitions that guarantee sexual, individual and family identity. A challenge to the very principle of human association is what is involved in cosmopolitan utopia: the rules governing exchanges with the other having been abolished (no more State, no more family, no more sexual difference) - is it possible to live without constraints - without limits, without borders - other than individual borders? (1991, p. 60)

5 The ego at stake here is the poet, self styled Prometheus, doomed darer of heaven - poietes, from the Greek, poiein - the one who makes. In Latin - vates - the seer, the prophet, the one who foretells. Makers and tellers of the world. Show how it is and what will be. Whatever they call themselves, we shall know them as wordworkers.
introduced the reign of vulgar and lawless innovation. They were men of genius, but they had no perception of what is just and lawful in music; raging like Bacchanals and possessed with inordinate delights – mingling lamentations with hymns, and paean with dithyrambs; imitating the sounds of the flute on the lyre, and making one general confusion; ignorantly affirming that music has no truth, and, whether good or bad, can only be judged by of rightly by the pleasure of the hearer... they have inspired the multitude with lawlessness and boldness and made them fancy that they can judge for themselves. (1952, p. 676)

Note the context of this outburst as a discussion of freedom and authority, examples of the indulgence of each furnished, respectively, by Athenian and Persian history. In the Republic it is the guardians who are "devoted wholly to the maintenance of freedom in the state" (1952, p 330). With no role for the feelings and with the guardians taking care of freedom, there would appear to be nothing for the poets, who are guilty of painting the gods as sinful, possessed of a sense of humour. Homer, for one, has them all laughing at Hephaestus, has Zeus forgetting his plans in moments of lust, ready to relieve himself anywhere.

Poets, in the Laws, are unable to tell the difference between good and evil (1952, p. 720), are always therefore in danger of composing things "contrary to the ideas of the lawful, or just, or beautiful or good" (1952, p. 720). In fact they are presented as the victims of an ambivalence which is in the nature of the inspiration upon which they depend:

the poet, according to the tradition which has ever prevailed among us, and is accepted of all men, when he sits down on the tripod of the muse, is not in his right mind; like a fountain he allows to flow out freely whatever comes in, and his art being imitative, he is often compelled to represent men of opposite dispositions, and thus to contradict himself; neither can he tell whether there is more truth in one thing that he has said than in another. (1952, p. 684)

Marked contrast is made here between the poet's position and that of the lawmaker: "But this is not the case in a law; the legislator must not give two rules about the same thing, but only one" (1952, p. 684). And yet we note in the last book of the Laws that only those who have known inspiration can be the guardians of the law (1952, p. 797).

We might say that the poets' expulsion is offered them to be worn as a badge of honour. They are exalted, if ironically, outside of the city gates. We might almost infer their presence outside as showing, and therefore necessary to, the gates. Socrates gives specific instructions for dealing with their appearance:

And therefore when any one of these pantomimic gentlemen, who are so clever that they can imitate anything, comes to us, and makes a proposal to exhibit himself and his poetry, we will fall down and worship him as a sweet and holy and wonderful being; but we must also inform him that in our State, such as he are not permitted to exist; the law will not allow them. And so when we have anointed him with myrrh, and set a garland of wool upon his head, we shall send him away to another city. (1952, p. 331)

More paradoxical than the friendly send-off Socrates offers, is the approach to placating the poets suggested by the Athenian stranger, in the Laws:

6 Further that this expulsion, unlike the biblical one from Eden, is generally taken by the re-writers of Plato's text, as a dare to find the place of poetry in the ideal state. More, for instance begins his Utopia, with a poem by a poet-laureate.
Best of strangers, we will say to them, we also according to our ability are tragic poets, and our tragedy is the best and noblest; for our whole state is an imitation of the best and noblest life, which we affirm to be indeed the very truth of tragedy. You are poets and we are poets, both makers of the same strains, rivals and antagonists in the noblest of dramas, which true law can alone perfect, as our hope is. (1952, p. 728)

In the stead of those poets who are dangerous strangers, the Republic retains the "rouglier and severer" storyteller who will "imitate the style of the virtuous only" for the benefit of the education of the soldiery. Two harmonies are to be employed: the Dorian and the Phrygian, a warlike and a peaceful. It should be pointed out that poetry is not the only thing to be banished from the Republic. There will likewise be no sweet sauces, no good cooking, no Corinthian girlfriends and no Athenian confectionery (1952, p. 335).

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If poetry cannot live outside of the pain of exclusion from its own potential, then in this it is not alone. The poet, as made stranger, is one of a long list of personae denied participation in States. The exiled artist, the refugee, indigene, the gypsy, the Jew, the novelist, philosopher, objector-of-conscience, republican, monarchist, communist, anarchist, humanist, feminist — all have claimed earth's homeless heart and seen themselves beloved of Zeus (or some equivalent deity) or the people, of justice or of virtue. All have been stood outside of their means of making sense of the world. All have gone on making sense of the States which cannot quite succeed in depriving them of a view. Now from earth's (and from history's) other end, we here in Australia, look forward to a republic, with what can only be described as prospective nostalgia.

Perhaps poetry's is only a conventional diaspora, one to which we have been habituated. And will it not always be convenient for split subjectivities to be able playfully to banish a personality from time to time? A made stranger (such as we here are descended from) is one who has no choice but to inhabit strange space. S/he makes it so in an in/voluntary act of presence. Equally s/he may be allowed (and again this is an act of presence) to unmake this and her/his own strangeness. Such an unmaking entails an act of supplication. It is not without consequences.

We know the land as borderless, a vastness celebrated for its single tongue. It is a great irony that those from whom the land was taken knew it more bordered than Europe, in more idioms, than that place the invading islanders came from. Ironic too, that in achieving the greatest possible distance, the invaders failed to escape the imagination they brought to and of the land, which, in the very act, they deny invading. A last irony for now, my voice, which their words and imagination have enabled and in which they persist, so that we (that conscience which denies its presence and that avowal of presence denying conscience) cannot truly be told apart.

Placing Poetries

Vico, Rousseau and Shelley all believed that the language of the first men was poetry: a fantasy never to be disproved and one which makes poetry the origin and nexus of human consciousness and meaning. Certainly we know that poetry comes to us from the time before writing. Claiming some originary role for poetry, does not however,
offer it any defining unity. Nor does it protect from Platonist zeal. It merely tars poetry as something essential, metaphysical; which its instances may not live up to.

The problem for poetry's diaspora has been and continues to be, to tell just who and what is exiled whence.

For or against, everyone wants to tell us what poetry is, how it is, why. Not least of all poets and poems themselves. Poetry, as realised desire, as floating signifier\(^7\), is ideally suited to this work of privileging one version of the truth over others. It offers itself as a best way with words and as a highest form of expression. It even has pretensions to stand in that gulf we recognise as being the beyond of words and worlds. It is little wonder that others competing for the high moral ground should resent the vantage which poetry claims as its right.

Many definitions of poetry are evasive, deciding its place, as in the Republic, by process of exclusion or by the attribution of symptoms. A.E. Housman writes:

I received from America a request that I would define poetry. I replied that I could no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat, but I though we both recognised the object by the symptoms it provokes in us. (1971, p. 369)

Equally the question has been frivolously dismissed, as for instance by Dylan Thomas:

What does it matter what poetry is, after all? If you want a definition of poetry say "Poetry is what makes me laugh or cry or yawn, what makes my toenails twinkle, what makes me want to do this or that or nothing", and let it go at that. All that matters about poetry is the enjoyment of it, however tragic that might be. (in Scully, 1966, p. 202)

F.R. Leavis defines poetry by its potential. Poetry is that which "can communicate the actual quality of experience with a subtlety and precision unapproachable by other means" (1963, pp. 19-20). Many definitions run the risk of defeating themselves in approaching the ineffable. Heidegger, who emphasises the Greek poiesis in claiming that poetry is "the primal form of building" (1971, p. 227), also claims that poetry as "the gauging of... strange measure, becomes ever more mysterious" (1971, p. 224). Shelley claims in his Defence that poetry "awakens and enlarges the mind by making it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought" (1910, p. 337). Some definitions are mystical or theological. For Shelley in his Defence, poetry is "something divine... because it participates in the eternal, the infinite and the one" (1910, p. 332).

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\(^7\) For Levi-Strauss:

There is always a lack of proportion between the two (signifier and signified) which can be absorbed only by divine understanding, and which results in the existence of an overabundance of signifier with respect to the signified it may settle on... this floating signifier enslaves all finite thought (but is also the guarantee of all art, poetry, mythic and esthetic invention); scientific knowledge may not be capable of damming it up, but at least it can partially control it. (in Kristeva, 1984, p. 74)

John Forbes claims:

The place of poetry is vacant necessarily and it is an illusion to imagine that writing is even at the service of its own subject matter; the reverse holds true, because writing is always its own end: it may be numbered among the "highest passions" but it is not a natural one. (in Botsman et al, 1981, p. 120)
Poetry has been vociferously defined as partaking in the language of everyday experience. Hence Wordsworth’s contention that:

A large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose... There neither is, nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. (1950, pp. 681-2)

Poetry, in this conception, so powerfully depends upon its continuities with everyday language and life, that we perhaps ought, in its name, to denounce prose as a myth altogether, the convenient fiction of those insufficiently attenuated to the rhythms (which inhere unconsciously) in speech and writing. We would thus deny equally the divide between metric and other composition and between made and spontaneous texts. But poetry has equally loudly been trumpeted, for instance by the Russian Formalists, as a practice which transcends the mundane reality of the everyday: Scheklovskii’s “speech that is braked, distorted” (cited in Bakhtin, 1994, p. 147). Likewise Velimir Khlebnikov, the “Futurian” wrote:

Isn’t the nature of a poem to be found in its withdrawal from itself, from its point of contact with everyday reality? Is a poem not a flight from the I? A poem is related to flight, in the shortest time possible its language must cover the greatest distance in images and thoughts. (1990, p. 153)

Valéry, in his lecture on Pure Poetry, expresses a position at variance with these last mentioned. He asserts that the word itself, in all instances, is inherently poetic: “every written work, every product of language, contains certain fragments or recognizable elements endowed with properties... which I will provisionally call poetic” (1960, p. 21). Denise Levertov perhaps approaches this position in her poem, “A Common Ground” (taking her epigraph from Pasternak’s “everything in the world must/excel itself to be itself”):

Not “common speech”
a dead level
but the uncommon speech of paradise,
tongue in which oracles
speak to beggars and pilgrims:

not illusion but what Whitman called
"the path
between reality and the soul",
a language
excelling itself to be itself,

speech akin to the light
with which at day’s end and day’s
renewal, mountains
sing to each other across the cold valleys.

(1967, p. 22)

8 Lyotard writes:

Maybe prose is impossible. It is tempted on one side by despotism and on the other by anarchy. It succumbs to the seduction of the former by turning itself into the genre of all genres (the prose of popular Empire) and to the seduction of the latter by trying to be no more than an unregulated assemblage of phrases (the vagabond’s prose, Gertrude Stein?). But the unity of genres is impossible, as is their degree zero. Prose can only be their multitude and the multitude of their differends. (1988, p. 158)
Whatever of poetry inheres in the word, there is no political position which has been unable to employ poetry. It has served revolutions and complacencies of all colour. In Book Eight of the Republic, Socrates declares that poets are the paid eulogists of tyranny. For Nietzsche the artists of all ages are "the glorifiers of the religious and philosophical errors of mankind" (1977, p. 129).

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Poetry has been defined, from the outside by its others and a principal opposition for poetry, of which many versions have been offered, (beginning with Plato’s) is that with philosophy, most generally based on the premise that philosophy presents a more or less denotive discourse, one which works, unlike poetry, at approaching the truth. We should note that Kristeva canvasses the contrary position: "this (formulating the problem of linguistic ethics) would establish poetic language as the object of linguistics’ attention in its pursuit of truth in language" (1980, p. 25).

Kristeva’s argument is that the poetic should be the speech practice which linguistics treats as its object of study because it “is defined within boundaries that can be shifted by the advent of a semiotic rhythm that no system of linguistic communication has yet been able to assimilate.” This would “deflect linguistics towards a consideration of language as articulation of a heterogeneous process, with the speaking subject leaving its imprint on the dialectic between the articulation and its process” (1980, p. 25).

The manner of indirectness we approach in poetry may indeed be the opposite of a movement away from truth, should that term be of use to us. Nevertheless the drive to place poetry frequently returns us to the dubious status which Plato had assigned it in asserting that "many are the lies of the poets"9, as second hand imitation akin to those offered by painters. (In the tenth book of the Republic it is suggested that poets and painters are less to be trusted than tradesmen because their pictures are imitations of the imitations which artisans have made of the ideal conception emanating from the mind of God.) Likewise for Ben Jonson poetry is "an art of imitation, a faining", a poet one who "writes things like the truth" (cited in Roberts, 1986, p. 60). Sidney hedges his bets on this very subject. In his Defence the poet "nothing affirmeth and therefore never lieth" (1910, p. 33).

Nietzsche draws the opposite and less kind conclusion with regard to the fence sitting propensities of poets. His Zarathustra says, including himself among the poets: "we lie beyond measure. Moreover we know too little and are bad scholars: therefore we are driven to lie." Nietzsche’s poet and poetry are inaccessible works for and from the higher man. We can treat them as a test in poetry of the radical heterogeneity implied more generally by his philosophies. The activities of the poets may be disparate but they are absolutely able to be generalised. In Zarathustra the poet is the one becoming an "intellectual penitent”. The poets are idealists "who preen and puff themselves before other mortals!” (1950, pp. 116-8).

Overturning the Platonic accusation, Nietzsche accuses them, not of disrespect for, but of inventing the gods: "And yet more above the heavens: for all gods are poets’ allegories, poets’ tricks.” Surely then this is a stronger motive for distrust than the Platonic: "Alas, I indeed cast my net in their seas and sought to catch good fish; but I ever drew up some old god’s head" (1950, p. 117).

9 Auden frames a defence in the following terms: "What makes it difficult for a poet not to tell lies is that in poetry, all facts and all beliefs cease to be true or false and become interesting possibilities." (1956, p. 28) He later argues that "verse is unsuited to controversy, to proving some truth or belief which is not universally accepted, because its formal nature cannot but convey a certain scepticism about its conclusions." (1956, p. 37)
Poetry, as a continuity in efforts to acknowledge the power of words in themselves, manages to short-circuit a wish to stand the world out of words. This metaphysical desire to reach or to recover truth, is inevitably motivated by and carried through by means of words undermined by the recognition that transcendence and immanence bring us past words to more of words. In Human, All too Human Nietzsche writes of a great lack of fantasy which restrains the empathy of everyday man and which makes him take himself to be more important than the world. Nietzsche writes that if this everyday man were to "grasp and feel mankind's overall consciousness... he would collapse with a curse against existence" (1994, p. 36). Considering the ultimate aimlessness of men would characterise his own activity as squandering. "But to feel squandered as mankind" Nietzsche writes "is a feeling above all others." It is for Nietzsche a feeling of which only poets are capable "and poets always know how to comfort themselves" (1994, p. 36).

However poets may comfort themselves with knowledges and feelings in common, it is the uniqueness of poems (perhaps a sign of their deception, their inaccuracy) which has been, at least since Romanticism, definitive of the quality of literariness: the poem goes where words have not yet been. Of most interest to this work, in approaching an idea of poetry in terms of the meaning (or truth) which lies between languages, is Coleridge's evasion of a definition. For Coleridge "[The poem is marked by its] untranslatableness in words of the same language without injury to the meaning" (1951, p. 350). The ambivalence with which we approach this remark, as readers of foreign and of translated poetries, presents as a first impossible with which poetry deals. Between languages lies that which cannot yet be put into words, that to which the work of poetry bears witness: a difference. The poem practices the freedom of speaking from a position which cannot until now have existed. It does not leave unaltered, in its wake, those words which first made it possible.

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Monolithic prescriptions for poetry, as elsewhere, necessarily conflict. Yet where could we find a field as heterogeneous in its themes and treatments, its strategies and instincts, as poetry has been and continues to be? This question is answered with a question. Where can we find another discourse as widespread in its history, in dispersion among cultures, and as insisted upon, as much assumed, both by practitioners and guardians of the bodies of work surviving as canons, as poetry is insisted upon, as a unified field of discourse? It is a writing most habituated to the anywhere and nowhere of inventing itself. It becomes such a place, doubt comes to inhabit it. Wherever you have caught it being other than it is, discover that you yourself are caught. Are other than you were. And elsewhere.

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10 He adds at this point: "Be it observed that I include in the meaning of a word not only its correspondent object but likewise all the associations which it recalls." Frost, Auden notes, made the more straightforward claim that poetry is the untranslatable element in language. Auden argues convincingly against this in his essay on writing. (1956, pp. 33-4)

11 We need seriously to doubt whether what we could consider to be the universal properties of "poetry" do not in fact constitute the imposition of a construct of our culture on others. This imperialism of the speaking self is a theme to which Merleau-Ponty returns. In "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence": "in the action of culture, I take up my dwelling in lives which are not mine" (1964, p. 75). In his unfinished work, The Prose of the World: "in foreign speech we look for what is so well expressed by our own" (1974, p 25). The fact of our finding poetry where we seek it is perhaps unsurprising. The question, as posed, "Where could we find as widespread a discourse?" may be answered in one word - prose. But this presents no great difficulty, as prose in this sense, is merely that text which is not poetry. The reverse position would be more difficult to argue. The presence of poetry remains curiously undiminished by the fact of finding its outside wherever we look.
For every poetry which knows its home or its mind there lurks another denying
that possibility. Poetry is perhaps somewhere in the gulf which Jacques Maritain alerts
us (1954, p. 169) exists between Rimbaud's "Je est un autre" and Lautréamont's "Si
j'existe, je ne suis pas un autre." Poetry travels in gaps and contradictions. Perhaps all
modern (and later) writing has followed that poetry which Coleridge called "harmonised
chaos" (in a lecture "On Poesy or Art", 1910, p. 263). The poet, as personification of
that contradiction may be as described in Ottó Orbán's poem:

Poets

They stand in the gateway of the century the haunters of the future
with their naïve intelligentsia ideas about beauty and society
in stiff collars walking stick in hand
carving original naturalness into fatal postures
their instincts undermining the postures
in a dying world where no more credit is given to academic death-tolls
to a tearful bluffing and enchanting elegisings about a fleeting mood
they are the credulous dancers at Time's carnival
the lions of this chandeliered ballroom where always
perfume mingled with gunsmoke
real sorrow with sham
and simple courage drowned in a flood of heroic appearances
they invented new notions ideals and points of reference
as well as new anxieties and disgraces
masters and dupes of the modern
they are the ones pathetic and admirable
who went to Spain China Russia Japan

to wink back at History's concubine and extend a hand to mankind
here where a lesser Orpheus wrote cheap verses on dizzying vistas
where a bearded madman sang the praises of violence in biblical tones
shadows and roses
where a Latin adventurer flashed like a bull's forehead
where the good and the bad both hugged the ground in terror of the sky
in the company of goatherds and farm labourers who didn't give a damn
about poetry
where they discovered love and exploitation
they are the witnesses that man was not meant for death
his ashes are consumed by grass
but his bones stick up from the earth like swords

(1993, p. 18)

Poetry's contingency (its haunting the future) and its ambivalences (as master and dupe,
derunning its own postures, their naturalness) represent a kind of survival, which to at
once strengthen and undermine its metaphysical pretensions, may be regarded as more
ubiquitous than human (of ashes, of sharp bones sticking out of the earth).

A principal ambivalence for the poetry of literates is between speech and writing.
Poetry has to be like speech because it has, like speech, to be made of, and at once to
make, sound and sense. It has, as all language has, to mean, without the prospect of any
completed consciousness of its meaning. And poetry has to be like writing because it
does consist of words caught, thought about, words which have meant for us, words
which mean in the light of words read before them. If poetry is the wordwork of
throwing routines then it is encumbent upon poetry to have routines to throw. Poetry, in
this aspect is a self-conscious process by which words are captured, tagged with a
particular style and then released again into the wild: the wild of the everyday, dialogic
world in which they will or will not make sense or truth or what they will. A good
example of these negotiations is in David Antin's performance piece "a private occasion in
a public place. Throughout the performance Antin reminds the audience that the work is being taped to be presented in print. He plays reflexively with the conflicting demands of these modes of composition and delivery. And he reflects on poetry’s status as ambivalent art more generally:

filled with excitement for something and it meant everything i’ve said you can possibly make a poem that isn’t complete improvisation say or something like that and then i figured as
soon as i said it a week later i made exactly the opposite kind of poem because as soon as you take a position very forcefully you’re immediately at the boundary of that position which lets you look directly over the boundary into the other side and wonder why you couldn’t do exactly the opposite of what you just had in mind which is something to do with what it is you mean when you have an intention

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 234)

Poetries, as writing, live more than other types of writing, in the spirit of the magic in naming that is with all words in primary oral culture. In a sense all of what a literate poetry does is in the service of an effort to recover for writing (for the word made still) the unfinishedness and unresolvedness of speech.

And so poetries-as-writing in the exercise of their ambivalence with speech, get too close to words. They want their cake and to eat it too. They are annoying the manner of the fluent non-native of a language, the one who is not obliged to follow the cultural rules which the native’s fluency entails. If poetry is a climbing aboard of words, a hoping to get into the driver’s seat, it can only ever be taken where words can go. It is intimate with truth in the manner of a mutual suspicion, of just the sort which Socrates expresses for Homer. These two regard each other with an ironic eye because truth is the absolute relative which makes language work, which makes it worthwhile by guaranteeing to fall apart as soon as hands are laid upon it. Truth happens somewhere. It is always between people. It is only ever said.

* The question of how many poetries there are or can be needs to be tackled as similar questions are in sciences, in philosophy. Nobody baulks at the idea that these are at once multiple and dialectical and unified entities. This is because in both cases these alternatives present as a disciplinary hierarchy. In poetry, our counting presents as a first undecidable. Bachelard writes against the esemplastic doctrine of Romanticism: “Poetry is not born from within a unity; oneness has no poetic property” (1971, p. 32).

In the way of any true multiplicity in poetry stand arboREAL bifurcation and the habit of dialectic. The most classic and perhaps the original of such divisions is the Platonic one: poetry is banished from the Republic because it does not respect the gods, it plays by its imagination of their rules. But there is another poetry, opposed to the banished one, which sings the hymns and praises of the gods and of the heroes, and which therefore is allowed. In our century we can see such a tendency to dualise in the

12 An influential example would be Kant’s definition, in The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement, of poetry and rhetoric in terms of each other:

Rhetoric is the art of transacting a serious business of the understanding as if it were a free play of the imagination; poetry that of conducting a free play of the imagination as if were a serious business of the understanding. (1952, p. 332)
 distinction Barthes draws between myth and modern poetry; or Bakhtin, between the monologic epic and the dialogic, the novelistic.

For all those who wish to name poetry as the most highly wrought (the most conscious of language uses), there will be as many who see at the heart of poetry (and the conception of the word which it entails) a spontaneity and absence of consciousness of which other uses of language are incapable. An ambivalence is claimed for poetry such as allows it simultaneously to occupy these exclusive and contradictory positions. This will make sense if only we permit poetry to consist in a movement of consciousness (and if we concede that its simultaneities therefore do not point only in the one direction).

That ambivalent position demanded and derided for poetry in *The Laws* is further discredited in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. Here, the mistaken man who would hold at once contradictory opinions, in fact succeeds in saying nothing and as such is no better than a vegetable (1952, p. 525). The logical consequence of this kind of mistakenness will be an immobilising simultaneity of relations:

those who say that things at the same time are and are not, should in consequence say that all things are at rest rather than that they are in movement; for there is nothing into which they can change, since all attributes belong already to all subjects. (1952, p. 530)

Of interest here is the mistakenness implied in ambivalence and what appears to be the necessity of this kind of error for poetry. For Bloom, in *The Anxiety of Influence*, for whom "to imagine is to misinterpret" mistakenness is definitive: "Poetry is the anxiety of influence, is misprision, is a disciplined perverseness. Poetry is misunderstanding, misinterpretation, misalliance" (1974, pp. 93-5). It is a world as error, rather than as thing in itself, which Nietzsche describes, in *Human, All too Human*, as "so rich in meaning, deep, wonderful, pregnant with happiness and unhappiness" (1994, p. 34).

Ironically, given the proximity of their ideas, Bakhtin and Kristeva present, in terms of the respective places they define for poetry, a polar opposition: for Kristeva poetry is the ambivalent (we could call it an anti-science of undeciding), for Bakhtin it is the frozen forever, the already decided.

Efforts have been made to get beyond this dualism. For Lacan poetic meaning escapes the specificity of the speaking subject by being (according to John Lechte (1990, p. 35)) "a condensation of meaning, that is, a potential plurality of meanings\(^ {13}\)." The Kristevan position in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, not unlike that proposed by Keats' negative capability, is that poetries participate in an ambivalent logic. She cites Bataille: "the meaning of poetry ends in its opposite, in a feeling of hatred for poetry" (1984, p. 83). Marianne Moore’s poem, "Poetry," deals with this reflexive dilemma: "I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle. / Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it" (Allison et al, 1983, p. 986).

For Kristeva, the force of poetic language as revolutionary practice is through the "semioticization of the symbolic" (1984 passim). Her point is that poetry is what subverts the symbolic order, the law of the father, precisely through its ambivalence, its antagonism to the yes/no bivalent logic, dominating the context in which it is practised. Such a theory runs the risks of, on the one hand, supplanting the monolith of bivalency and its single crack with the monolith of ambivalence, which fractures in every direction;

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\(^{13}\) This is the position which for Barthes likewise applies to the writer in general as one always caught up in the war of fictions and in being always out-of-place (atopic): "The writer is always on the blind spot of systems, adrift... necessary to the meaning (the battle), but himself deprived of fixed meaning" (1975, pp. 34-5).
on the other hand of locking that other logic, ambivalence, into a permanently oppositional and therefore marginal position.

In the case of Kristeva's theory, we need to ask how anything can be proved or even asserted about poetry when it places itself before as well as after the thetic moment\(^\text{14}\), when it is in words, but prior to words as well.

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Poetry/ies is/are single and double and multiple, real and fictional at once, undecided among these as among all choices. The ultimate contradiction which they embody is that it is only by fostering an ambivalence which refuses to be tied to any past current in definition – and which therefore accepts all – that we are able to mean anything by the singular term *poetry*.

*Poetry as unitary entity tends towards the expression of a particular subjectivity, one which generally remains unanalysed and assumes a superiority, ethical or otherwise over its somehow insufficient neighbours. It is nothing special about poetry that in this manner it promotes and disparages, that it arranges worlds, without the need of any such intention. Who can avoid unanalysed or unconscious activity? Which theory or method is capable of this? For Jameson, in *The Political Unconscious* "the working theoretical framework or presuppositions of a given method are in general the ideology which that method seeks to perpetuate" (1981, p. 58). Yet all monolithic poieties need to be saddled with a transcendent subjectivity, or it is criticism which so saddles them by way of their canonic inclusion, so that a work like Lowell's *Life Studies* which depends on a manner of wallowing -- poetry in the grit of the real -- actually discovers its poetryness in the defeat of that fact. It is poetry because it transcends what it wallows in and because it is poetry it is a transcendence. It is at the behest of this subject that we are haunted by the desire to speak of these fictional unities: poet, poem, poetry. We wish to reserve the singular use of "poetry" for where there is no judgement or assumption (beyond that poems mean, are made of words). There is no such neutral place. Even where we are told what poetry is not (for Plato the other of philosophy), specific order and judgement are brought into play.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{14}\) For Kristeva:

All enunciation, whether of a word or a sentence, is thetic. It requires an identification; in other words, the subject must separate from and through his image, from and through his objects. This image and objects must first be positions, recording them or redistributing them in an open combinatory system.

Working from Husserl's concept of *free spontaneity* in which "every thesis begins with a point of insertion with a point at which the positing has its origin" Kristeva contends "there exists only one signification, that of the thetic phase, which contains the object as well as the proposition, and the complicity between them." (1984, pp. 43-5)

\(^{15}\) We should speak only of the instances of poetry. If we generalise, if we are to define any tendency then this practice should stay with events apprehended in process. The terms and ideas of a past metalanguage are of interest to us only in this sense; that they too are words in thought unfolding, in all the moments which repeat them. We may say the same of literature. To be truly anti-canonic we would say that our interest in those words is as with others: that all words interest us equally. It is the becoming of words which interests us. We would privilege the reality of becoming text: performance, publication, the unfolding of dialogue. The moment would have all of our attention. But the trap is revealed before the first sentence is finished. Something belongs to poetry. It acts in a certain way and if we cannot say that this is prior to its instances, nor can we say it is after these.
Poetry is, as language is, becoming. And becoming is only ever a tending toward the multiple, that amorphous quantity which is really about the impossible and life threatening prospect of allowing otherness.

Between Disciplines

Today the legislative faculty of poetry remains unacknowledged. Poetry, which credits itself as being the oldest of discourses, as being older than any discipline, the vehicle of all; poetry which credits itself as heuristic, finds itself in the ironic position of having to struggle for a position in the Academy. The only place allowed it is profoundly and permanently interdisciplinary. Today the writing of poetry as a discipline needs to be considered an almost invented point of intersection. We need to acknowledge poetry as the act of such an invention, one which we may think of as eclectic, one which actually depends on theft. In terms of what Michel de Certeau calls a *perruque* – a tactic by which order is tricked by art, the theft of time and resources from official consciousness (1988, pp. 26-8, a fuller discussion in chapter 8 of this work) – we can say that poetry, both in the process of its composition and for its status among disciplines, depends on such a permanent theft among them, so as to maintain itself as an art of remaining between.

To make itself viable as interdisciplinary (the writing of) poetry/ies need to discover what they are at the centre of. A brief list would include the language sciences, psychoanalysis, literary criticism, the canon of literature (i.e. specifically, poetry's retrievable past), social semiotic approaches, popular culture, feminism and philosophy more generally.

The language sciences have been able to describe, where they have shown an interest, what happens in poetry on the same footing as they describe what happens in any type of discourse. This offers the hope of accounting for the relationship which exists between poetry and other uses of language. It offers poetry a model for the process of bringing the workings of language to consciousness, workings which may otherwise remain buried in the routine of communication.

Scientific approaches to language are useful in their determination to see the material basis of communication as rule governed and capable of analysis in the same sense that other phenomena, including other forms of human behaviours, have come to be seen.

Psychoanalytic approaches have the advantage of grounding language in the social reality of individual consciousness, exactly the point from which (at least in the immediate sense) the composition of poetry, indeed any act of *énonciation*, begins.

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16 Poetry, if we may associate it, as Kristeva does, with the semiotic chora, is both before and after the law, it lives in the thetic moment which spans that gulf. Of Shelley's claim Auden writes: "The unacknowledged legislators of the world' describes the secret police, not the poets." (1956, p. 37)

17 We begin here following Auden who argues: "A poet has to woo, not only his own Muse, but also Dame Philology, and, for the beginner, the latter is the more important." (1956, p. 31)
Social semiotic approaches have the advantage of recognising the contingency of what seem individual beginnings, of regarding poetry as something which goes on in a context, as all communication does. An interest in the exercise of awareness as arrived at in the realisation of its limits, places social semiotic and systemic linguistic approaches in proximity to the reflexive turn of post-structuralist philosophy.

It is the fact that language is at once site and stake of power and struggle, and not merely a vehicle for these, which gives effect to poetry and which more generally gives meaning to utterance. This is what is important about meaning: it makes things happen (as well as constituting itself, most obviously in the case of performative, as happening). To observe this is not to suggest that there is or ought to be anything obvious in the way language works or in our engagement with literary or other cultural forms. Nor need we desubitize the processes by which language fails to arrive at its causes, rather we should recognise that despite the apparent limitlessness of the effects of language, we are provided (in English anyway and in many other languages) with a word adequate to the potential of all words: meaning. We should recognise the need to bring to bear on language and on power all the delicacy of analysis which these offer each other.

Feminist conceptions of language – as principal site of power in patriarchy (a social order the outside of which we do not even know if we are able to imagine) – begin with an affinity for poetic methods. Hoping to understand and confront patriarchy, feminism needs to unearth the workings of power relations which are buried in the day to day functioning of language. The need to turn the world on its head, and to turn language – as that makes and is made of the world – on its head, to question what we take for unchallenged essences; indeed, the position in which feminists find themselves, of having to challenge the most elementary of propositions, as the foundations upon which injustice perpetuates itself in language: none of these needs is far from the perennial situation of a poetry.

The pre-eminence of philosophy (or what is more loosely thought of today as theory), among those disciplines which seek the kind of inter-disciplinary centre which poetry lacks, is difficult to dislodge. Merleau-Ponty writes "philosophy's centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere" (1964, p. 128). Poetry has long shared the sense of potential with which Marx sought to endow philosophy in his famous dictum about the world, in the eleventh of the Feuerbach theses: "the point however is to change it!"

However poetry interacts with its others we need note as fundamental the opposition between the epic (or mythic) and modern discourses which have proclaimed themselves poetry. Myth is the backwards construction of being, necessarily unified by the unspoken present which shares in its voice and its hearing. And yet we need to acknowledge here that it is precisely for their capacity to make myth, i.e. to generate the real cultural conditions of their audience, for what we might think of as their legislative faculty, that the poets are expelled from the republic. Neither subversion nor a susceptibility to such accusations will serve to divide the mythic from the modern. And neither will reflexivity, being a necessary characteristic, in greater or lesser degree, of all poetics. These themes are taken up in subsequent chapters.

As an unmodified term, poetry from here on in this work refers to a necessarily modern (or later) literary entity which metabusiness and those practices with which it is concerned, wish into being.

18 This was the status which Rabelias attributed to dreams in Pantagruel's advice to Panurge concerning the relationship of divination to marriage (1951, p. 311).

19 The point is not that all poetry written in modern times is wholly experimental but rather that it is modern more or less to the extent that it is experimental, we might say self-consciously transgressive of
Poetry is a place of violated boundaries just as language is, always and necessarily, a borrowed home, a borderzone which moves while we move (whether we are watching or not, wherever our attention is) though not necessarily together with us. Legion are the efforts of its apologists to make poetry otherwise. Archibald MacLeish' "Ars Poetica":

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown–

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds

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A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind–

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs.

*

A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf;

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea–

A poem should not mean
But be.

(Allison et al, 1983, pp. 1029-30)
This conception plays with our credulity, finally emphasising the stillness of énoncé: the poem as artefact at rest. What is prescribed here is the process of transcending process in favour of death, that is, of becoming canonie. It entails the impossible necessity of getting beyond words ("A poem should be wordless/ as the flight of birds"), of coming to stillness in the passage of flows ("A poem should be motionless in time/ As the moon climbs"). No more or less impossible than the converse: the process which never has its still moment, which escapes our apprehension. The poem ends as a celebration of equivalence, of the work of one trope: metaphor. ("A poem should be equal to/ ... A poem should not mean/ But be.") This is the manner of telling us how and what the world is but never where we find it. It is thus in daily life that Nietzsche's worlds as error are established and abide in joy.

Such prescription has a tendency to dress up as description. Metaphor is its means. It wears away the signs of becoming in order to reveal a naturalised world of norms. Norms, for Baudrillard, in Simulation and Simulacra replace the "old arsenal of laws and violence", they purge a universe of all threat of meaning (1994, pp. 33-4). Prescriptivism is a violence which rages everywhere a conception of metalanguage emerges. Wherever it is possible to speak of speech, error and correction become possible. They become an industry. This fact, and its widespread acceptance, is the basis of the Saussurean division between langue and parole, it is in turn the basis of Chomsky's more virulent scheme of competence and performance.

For Paolo Freire in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed one of the basic elements of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is prescription (1972, p. 23). Prescriptivism is the teacher's disease: telling children how their parents ought to speak. It entails pretending the world has arrived, is able to be apprehended, explained and reduplicated as stasis. Since the Renaissance it has been encumbered on the work of art to engineer its survival by means of such an illusion of stasis: the work survives because it demonstrates its moment, the moment in which it was the one work that mattered, in which we could forget the rest and the next and feel we had arrived. Art as object, which thus evades (or claims the evasion of) the contingencies of context and meaning, relies for the metaphysical presence it claims, on an obsession with where it is from and what it is to be a part of. Aside from these, its facts, it cannot continue to be. And thus it contributes, to the extent of its canonie status, in the prescription of the terms of the canon, these being the terms of inclusion and exclusion. Prescription does not lend fully armed in the art world from nowhere. The prescriptivist fallacy is one imbibed very generally by the populace in measuring themselves and their language against an imagined model of correctness; in finding themselves and their families, their friends, their place all failed against a standard, which nevertheless is known and attainable. A parent's don't say that to a child is the iceberg tip of prescription. It is a voice from elsewhere which struggles to become my voice, which somehow overrides my voice's capacities. Can it be mine? Am I outside of it? Prescriptivism is akin to racism; worse because it is buried in sermons which never finish, because its morality gets into thought from under words and therefore we can have no distance from it. It is the forever frustrated act of keeping words still and in a certain alignment. The prescriptivist does not want to know that the spelling has changed or a word once meant something else, or that the language now spoken, once did not exist. The prescriptivist, with dictionary at the ready, wants its words on ahistorical terms, much as the teller of genealogies in a primary oral culture, denies in the face of the evidence, by means of what Ong calls homeostasis (1982, pp. 46-9), that those genealogies have changed to suit present conditions. Prescriptivism is worse than racism because it offers a cure: you can, like Margaret Thatcher, mobilise your voice to best advantage. You can lose yourself in an act of faith, which while appearing to require no words, cannot be found outside of them.

Against the prescriptivist is thrown the conception of language as only sensible when apprehended in a context in which it is possible to mean; in use, most commonly and most fundamentally, among participants in speech. In his discussion "The Spectre of a Pure Language", Merleau-Ponty declares:
Language is there like an all-purpose tool, with its vocabulary, its turns of phrase and form which have been so useful, and it always responds to our call, ready to express anything, because language is the treasury of everything one may wish to say - because language has all our future experience already written into it, just as the destiny of men is written in the stars. (1974, p. 6)

And later he contends "we make language depend upon an awareness of truth when it is actually the vehicle of truth" (1974, p. 14).

What gives prescriptivism the lie is that mistakenness is in the manner of language and its means: is the nature of language (whether from the point of view of the failure of representation or from that of a self-creating and containing circle). Poetry's role is, in that nature, to understand and make of it. The generally futile role of telling language what to do, has little to do, either with understanding or with making anything new in language. It has everything to do, however, with control, with inclusion and exclusion, with the exercise of power and the concealment of such exercise: all of these being of great potential interest to poetry.

Macleish's celebration of the poem as mute artefact ignores the facts of meaning which allow the illusion by which the poem is allowed merely to be. But then poems perhaps have a duty to ignore those facts which would undermine the presences and absences for which they stand. It would be mere prescriptivism to tell poems to do otherwise.

Yet language, in that it means, is the measure and model of all of our knowing and unknowing, of all of the guesswork which drives that endless critique which in all directions ultimately resolves as language having a look at itself, at us, at all of our co-productions.20 What we mean and do cannot be separated from our means. Cixous describes language as "our unlimited territory which always precedes us" (1994, p. xix).

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Abstraction is basic to language because language symbolises in order to evolve system. It insists, most fundamentally, that sounds represent the demands and offers, indeed the bulk of the transactional make-up of being human and all of the participants and processes (in the Hallidayan schema) which go along with that. The domestication of the world through the process of signification depends on the abstraction from an infinity of percipients and affects, of a finite system, the operation of which will in turn generate an infinity of possible combinations, these being the combinations of signs. The facts of abstraction and representation ensure that there is something arbitrary in every repetition, because it is not things or acts which are the same but rather it is signs which make the

20 Thus Wittgenstein writes:

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words. - Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in "seeing connections". Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases.

The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (Is this a Weltanschauung?) (122) 1976, p. 49 e)

We should perhaps temper the effects of this observation that we do not command a clear view, with Wittgenstein's exhortation, earlier in the Philosophical Investigations: "I must not saw off the branch on which I am sitting." (55) (1976, p 27e)
same. Abstraction is unavoidable in metabusiness as in the general business of 
signification. Say "poem" and you have abstracted a totality from all those instances 
which may in their making dispute as much as they descend from that totality. The 
problem with metabusiness is that, depending as it does on the arbitrary aspect of 
repetition which goes to make the world of signs, it cannot help but blur the description of 
the world as-is with the making of that world, and it blurs these with the model or 
instructions for future worlds. Prescriptivism, in other words, begins to lurk in 
metabusiness as a trap which cannot be avoided. However, the particular abstraction 
which interests us here, the poem, is one which is not compelled towards any conclusion 
about this business.

Poetry and metabusiness can be like two dogs which sniff each other over, 
asserting their territories perhaps, but without the need of a result. If the dictionary is a 
sort of brake on language (the identification, as a list, of its repetitions) then so is writing 
in general. Both writing and the dictionary constitute a pretending to have stopped the 
world and to have set its pattern. Poetry demands for itself (for so we prescribe) in the 
terms of its self-recognition and the recognition of the primordiality of voice, the 
opportunity to ignore the brakes of writing and to be on the side of speech against them.

If there is no outside of the generality we designate by the abstraction, language, 
there is however an outside of its real instances, and this is in the instances of other 
language/s, which exist (as we do) in degrees of un/intelligibility with regard to each 
other, and for which we may employ Merleau-Ponty's phrase, therefore, that they retreat in the measure that we approach. So that, sensibly enough, the closer we are to (any) 
language (the more familiar we are), the less we see. It is this fact of contradiction 
between the authenticity of signification and a consciousness of it which centres aesthetic 
practice in another contradiction: between community and the body of foreigners which 
composes it and, from another point of view, provides it with an outside. Where 
something cannot yet be put into words those words which do service perform the 
function of a different; thus they show what is beyond the community in which a certain phrase was possible. That beyond has a personal (immanent) as well as a social 
manifestation.

To say, as Lacan (1980, p. 147), that the Unconscious is structured as a language 
is to say no more than that our knowledge of it and therefore of ourselves is unfinalisable 
and will never be fully retrieved. Foucault tells us that "it is not possible for us to describe 
our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak." (1970, 
p. 130) Our observer's paradox takes the form that the object and the material of what we 
perceive and all the means by which we make efforts to perceive these, are inescapably 
the same. All verbal art is, to this extent, apart from other aesthetic expression, and 
necessarily more grounded in (perhaps therefore less able to apprehend) its own 
materiality, which is ineluctably of the everyday, at once profoundly known and 
unknown to its apprentice. Valéry writes that "the poet's problem must be to derive from this practical instrument (language)21 the means of creating a work essentially not 
practical " (in Block, 1960, p. 25).

All words, and without regard to the manner or likelihood of their being lost or 
saved, participate in a system, which we have no choice but to abstract as a totality in 
itself, because we have no method of approaching them but in words. Aesthetic 
questions about poetry ultimately resolve as questions about language; questions about 
the power/authority which separates our language from the language of others. These are 
the questions Lyotard pursues by means of the differend. Need such a pursuit be meta-

21 For Auden "It is the glory and shame of poetry that its medium is not its private property, that a 
poet cannot invent his words and that words are products, not of nature, but of a human society which 
uses them for a thousand different purposes" (1956, p. 33).
discursive? Is it necessary for a discourse to attempt awareness of its framing, in order to have some view of itself or its others? Might this not be a sleight of hand which poetries depend on: to be read as if cognisant of their effects when they cannot be? Might it not be in this sense that poetry haunts the future even though it is duped in the here-and-now?

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Until the last century, what we in the west knew of language was, from our present perspective, largely superstition. This is the light in which science always regards its infantile past. In a sense we can see all subsequent contributions to a knowledge of language as weighing on one side or other of our oldest dialogues: the debate over whether language is natural or conventional: the subject matter of the Socratic debate, the Cratylus, as reported by Plato; and the debate over the status and nature of artistic work: a subject dealt with by Plato in the Ion, the Republic and the Laws and especially by Aristotle in the Poetics.

The great traditional and contemporary pre-occupations of poetry are themselves independently and intimately concerned with these issues: how social or political or changeable the world is, the relation of cultural to social re/production, the scope of creative processes, the nature and meaning of origins, of transformation, of combination. The history of philosophies of language, as they have been to any extent useful to the interests of poetry, has always returned to these problems.

The point of intersection of poetry and the language sciences has been a reflexive awareness of the prospects for making with words, for making the imaginary, for making the real out of these. Poetry's potential for a practice of intervention has been at the point where language and the world find their nexus: that is, with us, always.

Out of that isolationist Eurocentrism which the Enlightenment trumpeted as the inheritance of the Greeks and which we now know as western cultural imperialism, begins William Jones' much abetted discovery of the common evolution and relatedness of what had seemed utterly disparate languages (Hindi and Gaelic to name two). As at one stroke of awareness – moment of the Panopticon, of Botany Bay, Revolutions in France and America – we (who are descended from this genealogy of scholarship, generally as if there were no other) arrive at the inter-dependence of a large number of languages (and therefore potentially of the systems of thought which they bear): classical, vernacular, savage, imperial, living and dead (to be reconstructed). With this discovery comes the intuition that change, minute and unremembered, yet brings us to the present. With hindsight we see that the revolution in consciousness which began with Europe's coming to see its speech (and all speech) as an object of scientific scrutiny, prefigures the social/ideological effects which will be attributed to Darwinian evolution. What was learnt almost immediately the scientific study of language began, was that the assumed stasis and eternity of rights with which divine and temporal orders had modelled each in the other's image, could find no refuge in the facticity of words, however they were canonically preserved.

The grail-like obsession of the last century with the connections between languages has allowed the advent of our linguistics, and the revelations of structuralism on which it is based: the idea that language is a social fact, capable of study alongside other systems of communication (semiotics), the idea that language as it exists in the here and now (synchronic linguistics) ought to be as scientific and useful a study as the evolution of languages (diachronic linguistics), the idea that in a number of crucial respects language partakes of a dual nature: that its instances in speech (parole) may be apprehended separately from an underlying and enabling system (langue), that the linguistic sign itself may be considered to consist of two parts, signer and signified, the relationship between which is at least partly arbitrary, that language considered as a spoken chain is in various respects arbitrary and motivated, mutable and immutable, able
to be regarded as a process of selection (along an imagined paradigmatic axis) and at once of combination (a syntagmatic axis) and above all the idea of language as a system of differences lacking positive terms. All of these monumental influences on twentieth century thought as it relates to language are able to be traced back to the work, to the spoken word, of Ferdinand de Saussure. They are the symptoms and result of the myopic binarising positivism which obsessed all those in the west interested in language in the nineteenth century.

The structured study of language as a set of related disciplines (in which poetry is generally disinterested) has resulted from the application of methods, all of which are in one way or another descended via Saussure from the nineteenth century comparative and historical projects in philology. With little pause to doubt the veracity of its own broad methodological assumptions, the most widely known and best funded of linguistic theories (which have been pejoratively referred to as NATO linguistics\(^22\)), have demonstrated, in line with a generally espoused denial of ideology (in particular of the participation of language in the exercise of relations of power), an unhealthy obsession with on the one hand, the individual; and on the other, an algebraic narcissism, both at the expense of any broad view of social conditions and reality.\(^23\) The *mainstream* of language science, as represented by the universalising rhetoric of, for instance *deep structure*, in transformational generative grammar, has determinedly avoided any reflexive awareness of the social consequences of its own acts and judgements.

Whatever the state of their own affairs, language sciences (along, as we have seen, with everyone else) have not hesitated to assign a place or principle to poetry. For the Romantics this was the place of origin. Saussure hypothesised the true rules of poetic production as being in the *words under words*, the anagrams and hypograms he noticed from Homeric and Vedic to late Latin verse (Starobinski, 1979, passim). Roman Jakobson makes the poetic one of his six functions of language. Jakobson borrows Saussure's axes of selection (the paradigmatic and combination (the syntagmatic) to develop his (1958) formula that "The poetic function projects the principal of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (1975, p. 27). And so he

\(^{22}\) Raymond Williams, in his (posthumously published volume) *The Politics of Modernism*, writes very broadly of the changes which an imperialist conception of language underwent coming into the period we now know as modernism:

The old hegemony of capital over its provinces was extended over a new range of disparate, often wholly alien and exotic, cultures and languages. The evolutionary and family versions of language which were the basis of language studies in the period of formation of nation-states and confederacies were then replaced by studies of universal systems within which specificities were either, as in much literary practice, either exotica, or were the local momentary and superficial features of more fundamental structures. (1989, p. 78)

Lacan's scathing references to "the psychology of free enterprise" and his general critique of ego psychology (throughout *Ecrits*) present a striking parallel between post-war linguistics and psychoanalysis (cf. Grosz [1990, p. 26] for a more detailed account).

\(^{23}\) Kristeva offers the following account of a most famous example, in her essay 'The Ethics of Linguistics':

Should a linguist, today, ever happen to pause and query the ethics of his own discourse, he might well respond by doing something else, eg., engaging in political activity; or else, he might accommodate ethics to the ingenuousness of his good conscience - seeking socio-historical motives for the categories and relations involved in his model. One could thus account for the Janus-like behaviour of a prominent modern grammarian; in his linguistic theories he sets forth a logical, normative basis for the speaking subject, while in politics he claims to be an anarchist. (1980, p. 23)
establishes a method for disrespecting borders: an accusation with which Plato would have been happy.

Our interest, as already stated, is however, not in what the sciences of language should like to make of poetry, but rather in what uses poetry can make of knowledge about language.

Poetry, Criticism, Theory

Oscar Wilde tells us "all bad poetry springs from genuine feeling" (1963, p. 893). This, no doubt, is why an industry exists to prevent it from being heard without hermeneutic accompaniment. Matthew Arnold in conceiving a high destiny for poetry, suggested that along with this "we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence." He went on "We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and a strict judgement" (1949, p. 300). The scale and esteem of the industry which now exists all over the English speaking world, for the purpose, if not solely at least largely, of such judgements, is impressive.

The privileging of a discourse about literature over the productions of literature itself, the acceptance of its ultimately superior value as judgement, is another nineteenth century legacy with which we have had to live.

Yet we need to consider that without the study of literature, without the existence of a canon of works retained from the past, poetry would be in danger of losing one of its greatest inspirations, perhaps its most important single enabling one; this being what does remain of the world's past literature, however it is that we come to have it. What would be less perfect than the canon we have would be its absence.

Criticism is in literature the most likely site of Nietzschean resentment. However we problematise the issue of judgement it remains the case that the best works leave us with nothing to say and with no reason to speak because the best words go beyond the ends for which they were previously combined24; they go beyond, that is, the differer with which we were left by previous works. There is, ipso facto, something unsatisfactory in the explanation of this. Yet the discourse above literature is not just a story among others but the key, the story by which other stories are able to be understood. This on the one hand represents a difficult pretension to live up to, on the other is a kind of bluff likely to be accepted by anyone who feels uncomfortable without such guidance. It is a strategy which often succeeds in depending on the credulity which cynicism and pragmatism both allow in the act of accepting the real. Like all things ideological, we might add, it is a strategy especially likely to be successful where it first succeeds in denying its existence; where it succeeds that is, in effecting some sort of reification or the simulation of a natural order, wherein the critical academic judgement of literary works is to be expected.25

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24 Bloom writes: "Criticism is the discourse of the deep tautology -- of the solipsist who knows that what he means is right, and yet that what he says is wrong." (1973, p. 96)

25 An example of such a "natural order" would be in the assertion that judgement and canonisation are natural to poetry, its having arisen, as we know it, from lyric competitions. The object of our scrutiny we must acknowledge is, in this case, defined by our means of apprehending it. We know of the Greek world's poetry, not as the Greeks did, but precisely as it survives the processes of judgement which lie between them and us. In this case we need to be particularly suspicious of a knowledge of orality had through writing.
Where various critical strategies compete over the territory they claim to explain, the result is rarely, as one might expect, to undermine the generic pretension of getting above the literary text.

The argument is often made today, by way of defending the practices of the academy which sees itself either as descended in some way from literary criticism or as open to the accusation of such a lineage, that cultural studies now are not canonical, but rather contextual or studies of genre. The canon thus narrowly defined constitutes a patriarchal, eurocentric order of reading, outside of which all are equally empowered. The problem with this utopic expulsion of the canon (and generally also of the poetry in it) from the academy is not that it ignores the nature but rather the fact of power relations residing there. In so doing it is apt to establish in place of the nineteenth century version, something which we might yet regard as a canon of texts: for instance, the ones we think of as theory (cf. Guillory, 1993, pp. 260-1). In this case today we are dealing with a canon most generally of French authors translated into English. Through this new canon we arrive at the aestheticization of the everyday: cultural studies does not overcome aesthetics, rather it appropriates and redeploy the latter in a view over the processes and artefacts of life which can neither be discarded nor made eternally present on the basis of a division between high and low art. The textual focus of literary studies shifts to what was a hidden curriculum, that of applying and testing the great survivors of written observation against the world.

There is nothing wrong with any of this. What does and should attract us to theory is its possibility of getting at pictures of the real and guesses at a future, without resorting to the forms of indirection inherent in the genres we think of as fiction. What does and should attract us to fiction is conversely its not being burdened with any need to make direct claims in relation to the truth. In the case of poetry the attraction is an ambivalence towards these limits. A problem would be to delude oneself that because one was applying critical methods to literary as other text types one had managed to opt out of a system of judgements. Particular canons shift and fade but the system of inclusion and exclusion survives. At this point I should add that I am interested in generalising canonicity in such a way as to borrow back from its original religious context the presupposition of an exegetic function: the canon is the body of texts which deserves and requires understanding. Faith in its making and its definitiveness delivers its contents as a synchronic reality, the origin and unfolding of which need not necessarily concern those performing its exegesis. In their here-and-now context and canon make sense of each other. This needs to be as true for the child watching cartoons as for the audience of oral epic as for the literary scholar exploring a corner of a particular oeuvre. In each case a text in question is reached by means of its others (which, as the reader, come from and go somewhere). The process of getting words to the reader or listener may provide its student with a dialectical puzzle or a labyrinth of power relations or spectral presences. It furnishes, in its here-and-nowness, an official consciousness, a normative and common sense locating text.

While one acknowledges a co-existent plurality of canons, as the arrangement in each case of a corpus of texts in any field, it remains the case that canons are territorial: where they co-incide it is because a territory is in dispute. Where they are side by side they keep up the impression of being irrelevant to each other. The need to separate canonic exegesis from criticism of what a canon ought to contain is continually frustrated by the diachronic reality in which such abstractions as canon, exegesis and criticism unfold.

It is from the diachronic point of view we see that the canon, however well reasoned and scientific it may seem in its justification, is really an instrumental set such as those Lévi-Strauss imagines as available to the bricoleur: the one who makes do. A canon for a writer for instance, is a collection of all those bits and pieces from elsewhere and another time which one has no choice, in the act of writing, but to employ. Poetry's
canon is to the corpus of poetry a method of choosing what suits a particular purpose and one which cannot be known at the moment of choosing.

We can tie the regulation of particular discourses to specific canonic practices. For instance in the case of Australian poetry now, we can say that canonisation for particular works and oeuvres has to do with university and school reading lists, publisher’s lists, publication in newspapers and magazines, reviews in journals and newspapers, serious criticism, Australia Council grants, awards, prizes, readings and audience response, sales, overseas reception and so on. Each of these notionally independent canons (e.g. the stable of poets published by a particular magazine) interacts with its others to form a larger canonical entity (contemporary Australian poetry), itself part of a larger one (Australian poetry, Australian literature, world poetry). The personae involved: poets, poetasters, reviewers, critics, theorists, publishers, editors, judges, even readers; by and large turn out to be the same people.

This I would argue is a picture in little of how discourse is in general: a shuffling of genres and personae among themselves. Such a shuffling depends, not on the consciousness but on the fact, of there being an outside; roles which are not adopted, genres not employed. The wise saws to which a family returns for its store of wisdom are like the texts to which a particular doxa attaches itself: say The Tempest for postcolonial studies. The words which come back and which make themselves at home with us, do so as the result of continuous negotiation, always threatened by other words, with becoming such; always threatened with forgetting.

Canons maintain their reign by becoming other than they were to begin with. This is not so difficult as it sounds and presents less of a break than might be imagined, because canons do not really begin; they are always related (rhizomatically, arboreally, as you like) to prior canons, their progress is probably more like that metonymic slippage which Lacan describes as glissement. The canon appears to contain literature, to show the inside and out of literature (what gets the official stamp and what does not), but, in order that it not fall into disrepute or disuse, a canon is continuously invaded and eluded by its contents, which are at constant risk of losing their official status or of falling into the hands of those texts which till recently subsisted in the frosty outside. Because canonicity is in an important sense the process of drawing the line between the official and the unofficial of a certain kind of textuality, we can say that canons maintain themselves by means of an outside of their methods; they have to allow what they might next contain. They do not have to admit this.

If poetry is between disciplines then it is necessarily between the canons of those disciplines. As knowledges proliferate this position becomes more dangerous and more necessary. It having long since ceased to be possible to read all of any particular literature, a question arises as to how, among for instance scholars of culture, there can be enough read in common for them to be able to speak the one language. The Chaucer specialist needs to be able to understand the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval French specialist. Specialists in Modern philosophy may need to talk to specialists in Early Greek philosophy. The interesting stuff is not only in but also between specialisations. The further apart these are the harder to make and more valuable connections will be.

We can make as many canons as we like, as many new disciplinary corners. It will remain the case that plans to discard an overall order will be subverted by our need to speak of what we have read in common.26 The fact of academic, indeed any type of planned reading, is as Harold Bloom has expressed it: Who reads must choose (1994,

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26 Hence the difficulty in reading French theorists for those who have read no French literature: canons refer to each other but are either invisible or opaque to those with no exposure to them.
p. 16). And the fact of such choice, regardless of its purpose or scope, necessarily
depends on the judgements of others: we cannot yet know the relative value of what we
have not read. Who reads must have had their reading chosen for them might be the more
apositive aphorism.

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So we ask of the canon then, what kind of abstraction is this which, as a unity
seems inadequate to the heterogeneous range it implies; which as multiplicity, however
desirable, yet remains unconvincing; which as process demands an arrested view; which
as stasis must depend on an outside: the before and after of its every instance. Less a law
than a body subject to the exigencies of one, the canon better resembles web than list. It
requires the illusion of its disillusion in the next of all works, for the anticipation of which it
exists. Walt Whitman offers an apt metaphor:

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever reeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.


The canon is an imperial logic, a centring, which, however it tends, the academy cannot
live without. It is always in the process of, as in Lewis Carroll's figure of Fortunatus'
purse\(^{27}\), turning inside out; turning its outside and other, its opposition, into its own flesh
and blood.

The text which perhaps best embodies these problematics is that quintessentially
postmodern (but before its time), unreadable (still selling well), untranslatable (yet
translated), not-a-poem: *Finnegan's Wake*. Seamus Deane in his introduction to a 1992
edition writes that although the book proceeds other than by, in Joyce's words,
"cutanddry grammar and goahead plot" (p xi), although it subverts "authorial modes and
daylight canons" (xii), it remains an example of the way in which "works of art ... rejoin
the canon they took so much trouble to subvert" (xviii).

\(^{27}\) Language in all its uses, literary or otherwise, can be seen in the light of such an all-subsuming
logic. Heidegger writes in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking":

It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language's own
nature. In the meantime, to be sure, there rages round the earth an unbridled yet clever talking,
writing and broadcasting of spoken words. Man acts as though he were the shaper and master
of language, while in fact language remains the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else
man's subversion of this relation of dominance that drives his nature into alienation. (1971,
p. 146)

We may wish to claim that these relations are reversible but at the same time to acknowledge that we
constitute a community as the victims, as it were, of language — as those made by language, by a
consciousness which is certain always to exceed those only in which it is exercised and which to this
extent must contain that greater consciousness.
The process of the canon is to this extent homologous with that which Marx admitted for capitalism: one for which its limits constitute the source of its power, a system, which however it appears in the here and now, is only made viable in the fact of surpassing itself, its own limits.

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Poetry cannot be set aside from the canon which looms behind and before it, which demands of its next inclusion the conformity of knowing how not to conform in order to be included.

The great contradiction which faces poetry today, should we credit it this far as unity, is that of having something to say and at the same time of having someone to say it to. Let us call this the contradiction between audience and message, the inverse proportion which has come to subsist in the capacity of creative acts to sustain these. To the extent that it takes up the work of judgement which entails the concealing of the process of judgement, it iterates the law in which it is allowed. To the extent that it transgresses that law and remakes its (and potentially all) conditions, it subsists in a barbaric place and beyond acknowledgement. It is out of this contradiction that poetry’s crisis in subjectivity is constituted.

To frame a poetics is to return not to one purpose but to some unified assumption of potential – in order to come, not to knowledge but to a practice – from which to make sense (and not sense/nonsense) and from which to have sense/nonsense made of us and only for the sake of those logical relations of purpose which entitle the good, the bettering, the world making work which words never avoid but in which poetry cannot decide because it is, like the rest of us, in media res. We have no access to stillness except through this movement. There is no getting off this loop I shall call the Möbius track. Rilke, in Sonnets to Orpheus, writes:

Oh you god that has vanished! You infinite track!
Only because dismembering hatred dispersed you
are we hearers today and a mouth which else nature would lack.

(1949, p. 85)

Transcendence of the self in community with others is the central fact of language and which language allows. We should perhaps, not insisting on the unity of the subject, declare transcendence of selves or of splits in the subject to be this fact. Such a move would match an immanence with a transcendence: a loop (neither side of which may be assigned a priority) wherein selves arise out of participation in a community with others, and selves likewise constitute that community.

The other side of any transcendence involves the fracturing of whatever it is that is got beyond. Obsessive getting beyond ourselves is as well the threat we constitute both to ourselves in community and to all of the milieu we inhabit.

In his discussion of "The Pathology of Language" in Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language, Merleau-Ponty canvasses the depersonalisation of "the subject

28 Exploring the implications of this fact for poetry, the Russian futurist, Velimir Khlebnikov asks:

Isn’t the nature of a poem to be found in its withdrawal from itself, from its point of contact with everyday reality? Is a poem not a flight from the I? A poem is related to flight, in the shortest time possible its language must cover the greatest distance in images and thought.

(1990, p. 153)
who no longer has the impression that he coincides with his own speech." He writes that "this is the germ of the illusion of a speech which is foreign to him" (1979, p. 67). That which Merleau-Ponty wishes to insist upon as an illusion however, may be equally if not more valid a version of the facts of speech than that which we have never agreed, yet assume. The pathology Merleau-Ponty describes is a case of the loss of that faith (one which is everywhere at risk, within and beyond selves), between the self and others, on which language depends and which language makes possible: "Other people are what deliver me from my own ambivalence: We are both, he and I, two variables of the same system\(^29\)" (1979, p. 67). The faith between subjects on which our assumptions depend is demonstrated by the paradox that:

the normal subject would be the one who would not really consent to becoming himself except in contact with other people, who would recognise the enrichment that comes from discussion. The abnormal subject would be the one who would refuse this dialectic of the self. He would persist in considering language only as a kind of abstract logic. While nevertheless remaining conscious of this duality, he would feel restrained from placing one of the terms of the contradiction on an imaginary other. (1979, p. 69)

From a communicative point of view becoming foreign involves acknowledging loss of subtlety and fluency; it is a type of attaining clumsiness, where the resources which were at our disposal in our original community (assuming we had one) are vanished, and we are forced to make do with the arrangement Levi-Strauss refers to as bricolage. Becoming foreign entails getting by with what we share, with what cannot be helped between us. Bricolage and foreignness themselves, I will argue, constitute the normative condition, if such there is, of human community (cf. Victor Cruz' contention that "the earth is migration" [in Hoover, 1994, p.672]). Which is as much as to say that we are clumsy together and hardly a unison. The normative condition of an anti-mythic poetry is likewise a disorder of world becoming.

To say, though, that foreignness resides in those subjectivities which occupy specific positions between cultures is to mistake the symptom for the substance. Language is the borderzone. All that is outside of the self, whatever prospect of interanimation it offers, insists continuously that the self is foreign. It is against this predicament that efforts such as home and community are building. The difference between the practice of making the body foreign, proposed here, and the making it strange of the Russian Formalists is that theirs was an elitist conception premised on the viability of aesthetic practice rising above what was lost – automatised – in everyday communication. Their process of defamiliarisation was focused on a deficiency of quotidian language (which we may contrast with Wittgenstein's emphasis on the primacy of the ordinary language ), was interested in bringing to consciousness that which was buried in the routine. My interest is in the dynamism of such routines, in coming to words through eyes, ears, tongue unaccustomed, in the change-making slips and errors and failing to mean which are shared by a practice of poetry and a practice of language development.

In this light the trick of an art with words is to show difference from the world we know with the words we know; showing us by these means who we are and who we may become. In Brecht's last poem this is expressed as follows:

And I always thought: the very simplest words
Must be enough. When I say what things are like

\(^29\) In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari claim that language is fundamentally *between those who do not speak the same tongue*, that it is essentially for translation rather than communication (1987, p. 430 ).
Everyone's heart must be torn to shreds.
That you'll go down if you don't stand up for yourself
Surely you see that.

(1976, p. 452)

Poetry is a kind of rubbing our noses in things and it works, it lives, by being unpredictable. If you can see shit coming you will get your nose out of the way. Poetry cannot allow the reader this luxury. Thus, transgression of expectation and indirection are necessary to the work of throwing open the questions of identity, those questions begged by the circularity of our participation with others in words. And poetry would seem to have a role in keeping such questions open, in unresolving, in (to reverse Kant's aude sapere maxim) daring not to know. Nietzsche exhorts "we must not pester a poet with subtle interpretations, but should take pleasure in the uncertainty of his horizon, as if the road to various other thoughts were still open" (1994, p. 125).

Becoming foreign – borrowing betweenness from beyond the self – is a clumsiness in which we are forced to make do with what we share.

It is the failure of phenomenology to acknowledge the reality of splits in and between subjects (the sort of splits of which dreaming never ceases to remind us), which finally delivers it into the category of wishful thinking, and which disallows, as fanciful or pathological, the self's perception of itself as foreign.

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Just as language is between subjects but does not become a subject, we can say that poetry is between disciplines but never becomes one. As floating signifier poetry has not been interested enough to be able to maintain a place for itself anywhere. Subjectivity in poetry is that of becoming a multiplicity. Out of one object are made many personae. It could be argued at this point that the manner of poetry's/ies' becoming multiplicity is as a form of indirectness (whether or not the possibility of direct experience is allowed).

In coming to name these operations (of indirectness, becoming foreign, becoming multiplicity) and their resonance in each other, we cannot help but emphasise the importance of boundaries, of indeterminate sites, or sites of contradiction, of places between: between waking and dreaming, between consciousness and unconsciousness; to emphasise, as Bachelard insists, that the law of ambivalence is a basic law of the imagination (1971, p. 83).

In Wolf Bierrmann's "Kunststück/Piece a cake":

When I get pissed son,
When I get pissed son
I nip down to see the devil
and buy old Stalin a beer.

Poor old bugger.
Nebbish.

When I am dead, son
When I am dead, son
I'll be keeping an eye on the border
the border of heaven and hell.

Passports ready! Piece a cake.
There is no place beyond haunting and poetry may engage our passage into anonymity, into what Cixous calls our "border nature" (1993, p. 145), into dreaming or death: these places of reversibility, real or wished-for, where meaning piles up, where bounds are lost. These are our first models for interruption in the flow of days. These are lacunae in the journey in which we are made.

Then how can a text like this not fall into all of the chasms that are between, into the betweenness which words entail? Between for instance what Homi Bhabha describes as the langue of the law and the parole of the people (1990, p. 2)? The answer is that there is nowhere else but this falling which defeats the entropy of thought. And so texts break and mend on each other and never stand by themselves.

Poetry is not the only practice which lives in words and on a border between disciplines. Those most obviously sharing this place include language development, the learning and teaching of first and second or foreign languages, the study of language learners' language (protolanguage and interlanguage), the study of all sorts of lectal variation and for instance diglossia, the study of pidgins and creoles: the study, in short, of any manner of coming into or between languages. The most obvious instance of such a study is that of translation.

In After Babel George Steiner contends that the processes of translation and of language itself30, are ultimately identical: "the interpretation of verbal signs in one language by means of verbal signs in another, is a special, heightened case of the process of communication and reception in any act of human speech" (1992, p. 436).

A similar argument might be made for the proximity and homology of poetic processes and those of the language learner, both unending practices, the voluntary nature of both of which is open to question. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Far from being limited to the first years, language acquisition is co-extensive with the very exercise of language" (1979, p. 53). Language, only ours to the extent that it is shared, is the ultimate riddle of the self and alterity. For Rilke:

when at last you think that it is yours.
Things thus snatched from you are most your own.
(1949, p. 133)

The teaching of language shares with poetry an interest in coming to sentence, coming to meaning: an interest that is in a knowledge which becomes with a sense of its limits, and of a way beyond them. Interlanguage (after Selinker, 1972, the evolving grammatical system of the second or foreign language learner) and protolanguage (that of the child learner of a native tongue) are abstractions devised to demonstrate, and to work with, the extent of these limits.

The child and the adult learner of a foreign language, each serve to highlight the conditions of entry into language which are least visible in the other case:

The child uses certain words before he fully understands their signification, in the way that the adult, when learning a foreign language, uses certain locutions of which he does not know the meaning but which he knows how to apply in the appropriate situation. (Merleau-Ponty, 1979, pp. 76-7)

30 In a similar vein Auden writes "to read is to translate" (1956, p 9)
In recognising itself in the unfinalisability of these processes of entering semiosis, poetry too acknowledges as inevitable this condition, of *flying blind* with words, the fact that meaning is never fully understood or controlled, and never subject to the control of any single agency. Words are the community in which is achieved and shared all coming to consciousness.

The learner of language and the maker of poetry, may travel the same track but they do so in opposite directions: one towards, one away from what we think of as adult native proficiency. Nevertheless, in never arriving their positions remain similar, as perhaps do the kinds of knowledge required in achieving the sort of progress desired. They may be in the process of passing, invisible to each other, because perhaps each seems to be on the other side of the other's track.

Whereas the teacher and student of language has to make do with interdisciplinary assistance (let us liken this to bricolage), the practitioner of poetry, is not only between disciplines but engages the discipline of remaining between. In other words it is her/his work to approximate something in the nature of a protolanguage or interlanguage. It is her/his work not to accept that language has arrived. This is achieved in the process of making the body foreign: a deliberate act. "Choose to be changed." Rilke writes (1949, p. 111).

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We may envisage at the intersection of these disciplines and practices a poetry as practice akin to the heuristic which Paulo Freire proposed in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, one of "critical intervention in reality" (1972, passim).

If we begin our journey carrying with us what Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy* calls "a great passport of poetry" that without which "neither philosopher nor historiographer could at the first have entered in at the gates of popular judgement" (1910, p. 7). we should remember that the only use of this passport is that it entitles us to be without the gates of the city: to be in an impossible place, nowhere. Worshipped briefly perhaps and annointed with myrrh, with a wool garland set upon our heads and setting off again, as always, for the city which will have us, will recognise that passport (as other than a scar to expel) — sign of our disability and consolation — which must spur us to the practice of unsettling cities.

Poetry, as exercise of consciousness in the practice of betweenness, is in a position to make a critical intervention in reality, which itself becomes of what we share. The question we formulate in these terms here is then not about what poetry is but rather about what we make it to be; how, that is, we make it mean, how we make meaning with it.

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31 This unfinalisability we may regard as being in the nature of the circularity of the process of semiosis. Eco writes in his essay on Peirce: "Semiosis explains itself by itself: this continual circularity is the normal process of signification." (1984, p 198)

32 "Everything occurs in language as if the mind [esprit] were constantly taking chances. Therefore, it is a question of a kind of blind mind [esprit] whose nature we will have to render more precise." (Merleau-Ponty, 1979, p 90)
painting the bridge

unedit me
unscript my sense

and with what suddenness achieved

    in lidless blue
    likeness of eye
my luck
to be kept in giant's writing
    hurling beasts
    at the sayso of reason

thus to see
what miracles expect of me

*

bewilderness

dream
of the rooms yet to build

lost unaccountable in conscience
scaring wits from out their sullen hollow

*
for every sentiment
some retribution

falls foul of its folds

ah - heady smell of selves beside
aversions of the day and listing
all of the past in what's to be said
live for the love of not knowing what comes

as one might ache into a stone
so many moves ahead

*

there is a war out there in here
perfecting skin first act of decay

which treaties threaten
good will and best wishes
are chafing away

there is a war
which the just know for rights

which God has enlisted
first among ghosts
big pot of flesh stirring
dares earth open
pants down at the foe

our dinner comes
and wash it down

song of ourselves
in their pain
singing mud

then there is
yet there is
war's decorum
stood under gentlemen
words would dispel
my story and I'm sticking

*

a wilderness
we live it here

breathes between us
breeds in us

in words which are
for sense to make common

perfect in accidents
and in delay

an orphan heart packed with fears

temple of lost lines

as if in a daze
of nights are come
elsewhere by nowhere
skirting by nod

at last to the sunstruck
ruins still stand
and in their lamps
come labour
reaches of the deep
empyrean re-risen

know now
as you always have
bush tall with voices
fallen out of the wind to tame
bluffing empty armed they come
we unannoint ourselves
take stillness in the rush of paths

vagrant coaxings
full of flesh
and come to worship

here are the sherds
of knowing disordered
pillars extant

within
– the idyll of all script
wherever I am cast of shade
to mouth what others can’t
– my way

*

five minutes in apostasy

in a fictional landscape
all telling is truth

shirts out, ties off
in rhythm together
reconstructed pagans

they're clearing a spot
to look on for the nubiles
they're trying to show
the why and the how
of they ought to be favoured

it's we who climb out of the self to say
if ever there was ink in those veins

grammar breaks over
does the salt snouting
shines in our weed
the given sea
and over thick with trowel
sky set

between of barricades, footnotes

    for vagueness of plying
    the terror of vagueness

    leads away
    in not quite a knot

    - impossible figure,
    solid and infinite

out of and in
other and me

*

for each of us in all directions

    the law diminishes, returns
relaxes to its tune of fate

    - a well and truly milking

    o truth you do the hollow ring
herding out of instincts

how can thought not regress

to know itself

    eyes everywhere and of suspicion
authentic to some kind of faith

characters fed on thin air

    need attention
everything does never one at a time
resolves us to a disposition

sleep to dream
and wake to play

that's my wearying
chase of tale
my temple
lines
and loss

splash here
for the harbour
these pylons for staves
bare bones of the day
a singing between

dead as pelt
cords are rusting

we're slapping it on
or we're touching it up
   mistbright
you start anywhere
in worn out bolts, washed out stars

a street thrown over the water
blue as Celts we come home
in our owing forever
likewise in our always have had

    sick with wanting
    sick with too much

   from the city grey
green of the shore
lightening to air above
or the bobbing deep
a bottletop green
unswimmable

an ending off in mid-air

we innocents of exile

the bridge is painting us
light singing over
2. Waking and Dreaming in the body desiring

Thus the composers of lyrical poetry create those admired songs of theirs in a state of divine insanity, like the Corybantes, who lose all control over their reason in the enthusiasm of the sacred dance; and, during this supernatural possession, are excited to the rhythm and harmony which they communicate to men. Like the Bacchantes, who, when possessed by the God, draw honey and milk from the rivers, in which, when they come to their senses, they find nothing but simple water. For the souls of the poets, as the poets tell us, have this peculiar ministration in the world. They tell us that these souls, flying like bees from flower to flower, and wandering over the gardens and the meadows, and the honey flowing fountains of the Muses, return to us laden with the sweetness of melody; and arrayed as they are in the plumes of rapid imagination, they speak truth. For a poet is indeed a thing ethereally light, winged and sacred, nor can he compose anything worth calling poetry until he becomes inspired, and, as it were, mad, or whilst any reason remains in him.

Socrates in the *Ion* (1910, pp. 6-7)

... anyone who looks at the basic drives of mankind to see to what extent they may in precisely this connection have come into play as inspirational spirits (or demons and kobolds) will discover that they have all at some time or other practised philosophy - and that each one of them would be only too glad to present itself as the ultimate goal of existence and as the legitimate master of all the other drives. For every drive is tyrannical: and it is as such that it tries to philosophise.

Nietzsche (1977, p. 39)

Where does poetry come from? Questions as to the sources of poetry are resolved as questions asked of the ethics in which writing is possible; questions, that is, of where we are and of how we come to be here.

It is easy to brush aside "outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value", as Walter Benjamin does in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (in frascina and harris, 1992, p. 297). It is easy to dismiss all the absurd paraphernalia of inspiration, to discredit as nonsense the contradiction between genius and inspiration to which Homer draws our attention when Odysseus gets home and is

In a similar vein in *Works and Days* (649-660) Hesiod offers an anecdote about his winning a tripod in a poetic contest at Chalcis, in Amphidamas' games, this being the only time he ever crossed the sea. His point is to explain why, despite his lack of nautical experience, he feels qualified to give seafarers advice on how and when to sail:

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I can
Tell you the will of aegis bearing Zeus,
For I have inspiration in my songs,
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making short work of the suitors (Book 22, 330; 1946, p. 337). At this point that pragmatic bard, Phemius, who had entertained them through the years of his master's absence, pops out of his hiding place trying to save his skin with the claim that:

You will be sorry afterwards if you kill a bard who can sing for both gods and men as I can. I make all my lays myself, and heaven visits me with every kind of inspiration. I would sing to you as though you were a god, do not therefore be in such a hurry to cut my head off.

The traces of religious (or superstitious) assumption which remain in aesthetics, suppose that the sources of creativity are inaccessible or at least beyond the privilege of mortal knowledge. Yet it is in our day-to-day bodies that we dream and wake (and cry to dream again). In fact we have no other bodies but these. Poetry then does not come from an ineffable and unapproachable beyond of the body but from that beyond of selves which lies between and is the sense of selves, where all words are. Poetry is not from an ineffable core, abstracted heart or soul, but from the corporeal facticity (and illusion) of speech. Poetry is from where all words are from. It is from bodies. Its difference is in being proclaimed different, whether by being not-prose or not-fact, whether by wringing of sense from words beyond their common sense. Poetry, as I write it, comes from the here and now of where I am and how I have come.

This here-and-now, how we have come and what is between us touch on questions of inspiration, creativity, on questions of genius and judgement and on whatever faith must sustain the assumptions which lead us to ask such questions.

The jolly singalong of national culture, in which we pass the billy round and drink our own health, is a process in which we manage to miss all those absences which are the signs of our enabling, the means by which we have come. It is easy to see the desirability of forgetting that which makes us culpable. In his essay "Holocaust" Baudrillard writes: "Forgetting extermination is part of extermination, because it is also the extermination of memory, of history, of the social, etc. This forgetting is as essential to the event, in any case unlocatable by us, inaccessible to us in its truth" (1994, p. 49). Once we ask the question as to sources we have opened a Pandora's box: the same one which Rousseau opened in his Essay on the Origin of Languages and which Derrida re-opened, in following Rousseau, in On Grammatology.

The question of origins sets us off in a circle to reach where we are, to see where we see from, to reach ourselves. Acts of causation, no less those by which we apprehend God, as Sartre writes, entail a reflexivity (1989, pp. 80-1). And they are in Nietzsche's view necessarily ironic (1994, p. 155). It is for obvious reasons a self-defeating track we travel in quest of our beginnings. In that circle, which leads us everywhere home, and which has for the white man made everywhere home, we go through the motions of asking ourselves what it is we believe. In those motions, we might argue, lie both the fulfilment and the frustration which is characteristic of religious and aesthetic effort. We, who even disavow belief must get to ourselves through the ways of our making, our coming. What we pick up on this circular track is doubt, healthy and life threatening. Vertiginous doubt to know how fragile all certainties were, knowing that doubt too, dissolves itself.

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Because the muses taught me how to sing.
(1979, p 80)

34 Renan, in his 1882 lecture "What is a Nation" claims: "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation." (in Bhabha, 1990, p. 11)
Establishing that universe of which poetry may be argued to be the centre in no way resolves the mystery of origin. It is the same universe we all stand in and, as ourselves, just as lacking a centre. We cannot separate ourselves and our everyday reality from the stories in which that reality, its causes and potentials, are constituted. The question of how we come to be here is the same as the question of how we write here, how we speak ourselves here.

The search for the sources of poetry is frustrated in like manner as the search for other such sources. The fact that we seek, that we hope to bring to consciousness something unknown, is a first symptom of desire. We doubt all of those prospects which claim to connect us — establishing, universe, argument, origin. The fact that we doubt begins our practice:

heart who lets all thinking rise
Tongue to say again all heart's thoughts

that's how every god was grown

... justice rewards them who act for love
injustice awarded those whose acts gain hate
life for the peaceful
an axe in the head meaning death
for those who break the peace

this is the way all work and art
were spoken into life ...

(Doria, 1976, p. 4)

The writing on the Shabaka Stone (cited above) dates to 2,700 BC, connects several of the themes developed here: a bedrock of ethics articulated as law, an ontological battle — tongue, heart, god, all tussling for priority, the undecided centrality of art and of process — "spoken into", "grown", an interest in making, in origins tempered with a sense of return — "tongue to say again". All in a poem. Not to say one of the first written but certainly one of the earliest we have.

However we seek to assign the source or cause of poetry, of any words, of our being in them and by them, we end with an ambivalent presence. "Work and art are spoken into life." Yet gods were grown and what tongue says has its origin in the heart. Beginnings elude us but the word is never far off. Words for the Socrates of the Phaedrus "are able to help themselves and him who planted them" (1952, p. 139).

An interest in the tangling of the origins of everything in writing is not merely an acknowledgment of the extent or the method of memory, it reveals the pre-eminence of one style of consciousness: that which is co-extensive with history.

Governor Davies' proclamation of 1816 shows the Aborigines of Tasmania the universal, aliterate symmetry of the law: amity rewards itself, murder is punished in

35 Paul Carter, in The Road to Botany Bay, describes a history, the naming in which "symbolises the imperial project of permanent possession through dispossession... where travelling is a process of continually beginning, continually ending, where discovery and settlement belong to the same exploratory process." (cited in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 377)

36 And is this not precisely the commonwealth which Gonzalo, the honest old counsellor of The Tempest, would institute? One in which:
kind. You steal our babies, we take yours. Spear or a gun will get you the same rope. Life for the peaceful. 37 This message is conveyed through a kind of writing which is not yet a writing, its message is meant both for those who have not yet been included and for those who have already expelled from the written world. The first thing which justice establishes in the context motivating us is the crime of murder on which our position is predicated (as we may argue, if we wish a weak defence, is everyone else’s).

We now imagine Van Dieman’s Land as a place of the past, a zoo where history parades the great asymmetries, biblical spite: Pearce, the escaped convict with the last limb of his travelling victims cum meal still in his pocket. He takes this out to flag down the ship that saves him. For a hanging he only receives after having worked at the business of letting them know the nature of his transgression. He tells them how good man tastes and so on. To kill a man for the purpose of eating him and to do this out of hunger: beginnings are full of these haunting terrors, crimes expiated in law, from which we are eager to declare ourselves fully recovered. But the hunger for which most of the white invaders kill is less immediate than Pearce’s: it is a desire for land, for sovereignty, for sustenance from these. How is that desire remembered?

If there is no separating the ethics of how-we-are-here from those of how-we-write-ourselves-here then it is our own myths we must study in order to make sense of ourselves from the manner of our telling or not-telling of those crimes which enable us, which we have survived or from which we survive. The question of origins may be unresolvable but it is in the nature of the game which poetry establishes by the manner and fact of its survival. That survival and its lack depend on endless judgement, judgement which though justified on the ground that poetry cannot apprehend its place by its own means, yet, as we shall see, suffers an identical reflexive lack. Judgement seeks to close the circle poetry means to apprehend. It dares to know where poetry must dare not to. Poetry casts back into words in order to cast words forwards. That casting forward is only ever haunted by the unknowable totality in which words are constituted. That casting back is dispelled by a laughter in which, by virtue of our speech which cannot apprehend its haunting, we needs must be mistaken.

Creativity / Desire

Letters would not be known: riches, poverty,
And use of service, none: contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tithe, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all;
And women too, - but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty

At which point Sebastian interrupts to say: "Yet he would be king on't.", which quip Antonio follows up with: "The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning" (1983, p. 1546).

37 When we resort to the journals of settlers or accounts of survivors, a different version of justice emerges, one which is not at all symmetrical, and which yet originates in those same biblical directives – to subdue and to have dominion over (Genesis 1). Consulting the record is always likely to show the absence of an account from the objects of genocide. But genocide is rarely complete. Hence there is burying "the babies in the ground with only their heads above the ground. All in a row they were. Then they had a test to see who could kick the babies heads off the furthest." This is a story an old Mr Birt was told by his mother, of the Ya-idhma-dihang tribe. (Jan Roberts, 1981, p.19)
The siting of inspiration is a problem homologous and ultimately co-extensive with that of siting desire. These are anywhere in the body but only insofar as the body makes meaning with others. These are everywhere the body goes and in this way they are with the body. However reworked, inspiration arises from and returns to bodies. It is only outside of bodies insofar as it is between them: shared or lost or yet to be found. Inspiration is beyond corporeal limits and beyond the limits of authority. Beyond limits is an impossible place where jouissance is only ever the illusion of consciousness lost in a final transcendence from which we are doomed to return; without which return nothing is said. Yet we only return to ourselves as we are, to a knowledge shaped in the between of selves, never reaching the origin of our becoming. Desire for this origin is then by definition a desire for the irretrievable deficit of knowledge. The Lovedu of South Africa have a saying: "The ideal is to return home, for "The only place one never returns to is the womb"" (Krige, 1943, p. 343).

A landscape presents as a series of hollows, of gaps, of boundaries never quite meeting, in which practices fail and form. Practices fall into such gaps and especially that hiatus which is between us and what we are with; between, that is, us and our making. The mystery by which we participate in context reveals inspiration in meta-awareness of metabolism (the becoming of organism/machine), an awareness of (the immanence which enables) becoming human. By this Spinozan monism we arrive at a privileging of corporeal process and practice in which we name inspiration.

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What makes the body foreign is one with the source of desire – in alterity, in that owning otherness which defines the unconscious. If it is desire which drives us then we are entitled to ask how it moves, where it comes from and goes. Of particular interest is the relationship between inner and outer aspects of alterity. The series which Lacan proposes as need/demand/desire, serves as a convenient framework, but not the only one available.

D.W. Winnicott's theory of object relations explains the ontogenesis of creative activity in terms of transitional phenomena and especially the transitional object, of which Winnicott writes:

Its fate is to be gradually allowed to be decathedeted, so that in the course of years it becomes not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo… It loses meaning and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread out over the whole intermediate territory between "inner psychic reality" and "the external world as perceived by two persons in common", that is to say, over the whole cultural field. (1971, p. 5)

It is from this decathecting of the particular object Winnicott claims his subject is able to extend into the fields "of play, and of artistic appreciation, and of religious feeling, and of dreaming." Note that "fetishism, lying and stealing, the origin and loss of affectionate feeling, drug addiction, the talisman of obsessional rituals, etc." are added to this list (1971, p. 5).

For Winnicott the "transitional object and the transitional phenomena start each human being off with what will always be important for them, i.e. a neutral area of

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38 Irigaray writes of the specific sources and dangers of transcendence: "The earth is a resource. … To annihilate the earth is to destroy ourselves. The patriarchal order is based upon worlds of the beyond: worlds of before birth and especially of the afterlife, other planets to be discovered and exploited for survival, etc" (1993, p. 27).
experience which will not be challenged" (1971, p. 12). The function of weaning for
the child is, on Winnicott's reading, intimately related to the transition from the pleasure
to the reality principle. It is through frustration and disillusion associated with the failure
of requiting this need becoming demand (in Lacanian terms this marking the beginning of
transitivity, of language) that the infant's illusion of creativity and omnipotence (the breast
appears as if part of the child's body) is gradually shattered:

It is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no
human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that
relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience (cf.
Riviere, 1936) which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.). This intermediate
area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is "lost" in
play. (1971, p. 13)

From the moment of the facts of separation becoming known, that desire which assails us
becomes the central fact of our relation to context, and demands to be cathexed
somewhere. This first fact, which is the basis of all of the imagery of Lacan's mirror
phase, entails the recognition of the foreignness of bodies, in particular of the foreignness
of the mother's body, of the infant's foreignness to it. Language is first born then out of
the necessity of an overarching recognition of foreignness.

This fact and the desire it conditions are what we first know and the basis of first
utterances. They remain the model thereafter of knowledge and of speech, both of which
obssess themselves with the nostalgic prospect of returning across a great gulf. Separate,
one knowing we are separate (in knowing we are no longer one body), play takes us on
the play of demand becoming desire - finds an object between us; an old flannel, a
teddy, the canonically mediated (i.e.: mediated by the collective experience of adults and
becoming adults) becoming of cultural artefacts.

In order to begin and to sustain creative practice one must believe in the possibility
of this (transitional) object between us, one must have an imagination of the object, one
must sustain a faith in the possibility of its making difference, of our making difference
with it. One must likewise see this object subjected to judgement and to the ever-present
prospect of rejection.

Creativity on this reading is an ontogenetic practice, one in which we become who
we are. There is certainly no memory\textsuperscript{39} prior to its first instances. Memory and all we
take for granted of cognition would appear to depend upon a foundation of creative play,
a source which seems a supplement. It is out of the play arising from first issues of
subjectivity that our becoming selves is enabled. Our sentient and languaged desire for
the creative then is as a yearning for a return to the requisite time before desire, when the
world was made without any images and yet the world was ours to make.

Creativity then comes from and is the effort of dealing with that originary
mistakenness, the mistakenness in which my body seems to co-incide with that of
another. Creativity is the founding of selfhood and in this sense the making foreign of
the body. This much of foreignness is \textit{universal}; a pattern of rejection which sentence
survives and of which it requires no conscious memory. That sentence which pursues or
is pursued by foreignness thereafter (as the aesthetic expression of creativity) provides for
its spectators an image (as object) of an irretrievable moment, which demands, whether it
receives it or not, a universal response.

\textsuperscript{39} De Certeau writes that the foreignness of memory "makes possible a transgression of the law of the
place" (1988, p. 85).
That creativity in which I achieve selfhood and sentience, to the extent that it is able to be retrieved in aesthetic practice, depends on a consciousness which cannot be exclusively of my own past acts. Rather it depends, as those acts do, on the past before my past and which enables my present.

Thus in the most deep-seated psychological and social senses aesthetic practices depend on an ethics of presence. The objects of art never escape the service of such an ethics. Speech and writing are, as we have noted, among such practices, both privileged and compromised by having as their material and methods those with which sociality is carried on. These embody as everyday practice a creativity which traces its lineage directly from the recognition of foreignness which is the basis of the individual's first language. The proof of this lies in those (inter-cultural) ruptures which, rendering us mutually unintelligible and foreign to each other, demonstrate the need to reach the other by means of translation. The gap in understanding which is demonstrated as the between of cultures arises from a separation which constitutes the most essential fact of sociality and which thus lies among and between us all.

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In Strangers to Ourselves Kristeva writes that the foreigner is within us and that "when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious - that 'improper' facet of our impossible' own and proper" (1991, p. 191). For Kristeva, psychoanalysis is a journey into two strangenesses: that of the other and of the self, a journey towards "an ethics of respect for the irreconcilable" (1991, p. 182). Kristeva asks us how we could tolerate foreigners if we did not know ourselves as strangers. She canvasses an "obliteration of the very notion of 'foreigner'" which "should paradoxically encourage one to guarantee a long life to the notion of 'strangeness'" (1991, p. 132).

The foreigner depends on the idea of elsewhere, the where-I-am-from as the where-I'm-not-now, on the undiscovering of places. Her/his creativity is one of absenting - her/himself or the landscape of others. To begin of absences is the corporeal reality of the foreigner. I am a foreigner in the moment of beginning absence. Evacuating the landscape of others is how the foreigner might make her/himself at home. It is on the face of it easier than finding an accommodation with prior inhabitants.

We know now, not that there is no longer undiscovered land, but that the continents acquired on the basis of having been undiscovered were never able to be emptied of a memory prior to ours. As long as the others remain then either I or they will be foreign. As exile, however I come, I will be at home when they are gone and forgotten or when we are one. It is the same because in either case what remains is my signature over the landscape. The effort to universalise my experience and thus make you mine is doomed by the fact that there is nowhere from which to speak which does not constitute a position. There is no position which is not embodied. There is no body which is not haunted by the memories of bodies before it, which does not make sense in and for bodies around it.

In Terra Australis Incognita we find the logical counterweight to Plato's Republic, a body of land exactly where Dante located Mount Purgatory in order to balance the weight of Europe. What begins as a guess of where we are and how big the world is becomes a teleological crusade of possession. Exploration is the mirror stage for Europe's ego. In The Ethics of Travel Syed Manzurul Islam writes "there are fissures in the opaque body of the mirror, and the subject, along with the impenetrable boundary,

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40 We note here that while Book X of the Republic prefures, in the tale of the resurrection of Er, the setting Danté describes in the Inferno, it lacks the (probably Ptolemaic) concept of balancing the weights of hemispheres.
breaks down every time it proclaims its self-sufficiency". Islam writes of the act of founding the post-lapsarian city, Macondo, in Marquez' One Hundred Years of Solitude, that its effort to provide for European discovery "a place for undertaking the fashioning of a purified subject of history proves more than illusory". For Islam these conditions evoke Borges' image of the labyrinth in the mirror: "The mirror then opens its surface up, forming innumerable passages through which one can slide into a thousand journeys" (1996, pp. 3-4). In drawing a map of itself (from the outside it imagines) Europe discovers the convenience (instead of banishing the poets — or any who covet transitional objects — as imitators of untruth, threateners of civilisation) of destroying by legislation whole pre-existing orders of society. It does this from a great distance, and by saying that these are not societies (not heimlich we might say).

Since the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, indeed since Alaric the Visigoth entered Rome through the Salarian Gate in 410, Europe has been only too familiar with these splits in which it is rendered foreign and always at war. Just as the neurotic personality fuels the dysfunctional family and vice versa, so Europe brings to bear on the separate and individual objects of its contest the armoury it deploys against itself. Our task here in any case is not to show why European peoples, after their thousand years of dark, succeeded on the world scale in the last half millennium at the expense of others, or even that war might be a form of the collective de-cathecting of those objects through which we first discover our foreignness. My aim is to unravel the ethics of presence in which poetry is written and evolves as aesthetic practice. Those ethics depend, if not on origins we are forced to regard as unreachable, at least on the illusions in which the ideality of those origins is maintained and develops.

How long it takes Europe to see that there is an other! Centuries of making itself awake to the consequences, rationalising. And yet we might still ask whether the fact is acknowledged, whether the whole problem is not this reflexivity which starts with us asking questions of the world, of our place in it, and degenerates in short measure to our swallowing that world whole. The moment we begin to question do we not find ourselves behaving as if just woken, do we not see the rest of the world as if it were lost in a dream, much as the one we ourselves have emerged from? Christian Europe until very recently avowed the object of waking the world from an impending disaster, the most immediate form of which was the damnation of the unbaptised. Needless to say it regarded members of its own family who had strayed in much the same light. And there is no need to recount the hypocrisy and barely disguised lusts for which the mission of waking the world provided a cover. Nevertheless if this conquest of the sleepy world (which dominates our immediate past) begins with Europe waking to wonder where it is, then we need to ask how can the mind we inherit from Europe begin not to conquer, begin not to assert its mastery? Today, as Spivak writes: "It is impossible for contemporary French intellectuals to imagine the kind of Power and Desire that would inhabit the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe" (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 24).

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In the time Australia has imagined for its origin (a kind of white dreaming), Bentham publishes Panopticon versus New South Wales in 1802 (1962 pp. 173-248 passim). The contrast of two images of discipline which Foucault develops in Discipline and Punish (1991b), the blockade which arrests the spread of the plague and the panopticon which supervises the carceral subject, is here augmented by a third regime. From the point of view of the science of surveillance and punishment, New South Wales is the Panopticon's other41, its new opposite — a place which cannot be escaped because

41 Bentham contrasts the "colonising — transportation — system: Characteristic feature of it, radical incapacity of being combined with any efficient system of inspection" with the "penitentiary system — characteristic feature of it, in its original state, frequent and regular inspection" (1962, p. 175).
of the emptiness around it, which need not be watched because it is too far away to see. It is the Republic’s other – a place if of banishment, equally of denial. Infected by the emptiness constitutive of its distance from everything, it denies a prior human reality. Even today its mythologies remain those of distance and emptiness. It is a timeless land, one lost to sleep and in which there presents no sentence by which all of its strange and oniric attributes are to be known. Its first European spectacle is the naming of everything. The borrowing of names for the things to be stolen: haunting which must beget a haunting.

Myth

The light that bathes the bible has the same crude and shameless colour as the light that reigns over the unconscious.

Cixous (1993, p. 67)

Mythologies (inevitably) devise the beginnings with which we were never privileged, and which function to explain the inexplicable, thus requiring a yearning to know the irretrievable moment in which we all dreamt together. We need to examine our attitude and relationship to those myths which hail us as ours because myth is a means of explaining our presence and accounting for memory prior to ours. Mythologies fill the emptiness prior to our imagination of our own beginning. They fill this with a knowledge we already have. Not only do they give us the already-ours in the guise of the new, but they re-make our minds through an appeal to what we already know and feel and hear ourselves saying. Myth is the manner in which we remind ourselves. It carries with it the force of a complete recollection, a story complete unto itself. But myth is selective, does not remind us of everything. It is to this extent memory in the service of amnesia.

Barthes tells us that myth is a kind of speech. As a second order system of semiosis, as a metalanguage, myth has "a double function: it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us" (1970, p. 117). For Barthes myth postulates an already completed knowledge of the past (not dissimilar from the monologic epic Bakhtin conceives), where the form "does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it" (1970, p. 117).

Myth is as a collective memory of dreaming: where the signifier becomes stuck on a particular signified (and where from this position a second order semiosis is enabled) and the "normal" language process (that which is characteristic of other than mythic discourse) of glissement is arrested, as in Bakhtin’s "epic past":

The epic absolute past is the single source and beginning of everything good for all later times as well... By its very nature the epic world of the absolute past is inaccessible to personal experience and does not permit an individual, personal point of view or evaluation. One cannot glimpse it, grope for it, touch it; one cannot look at it from any point of view... it is given solely as tradition, sacred and sacrosanct, evaluated in the same way by all and demanding a pious attitude towards itself. (1994, pp. 183-4)
Barthes' (1957) formulation of myth as a second order system of semiosis is anticipated in the conditions of signification which Lacan establishes in respect of metaphor. Grosz writes: "Metaphor requires two hierarchically distinguished orders or levels, generating a signified by replacing it with another which represents it. The first signifier is now the implicit signified of the second" (1990, p. 103). The unconscious, which in Lacan's terms, consists only of signifieds, relles, as Freud determined, on the primary processes of condensation and displacement, identified respectively with metaphor and metonymy.

In Barthes' formulation the double system of myth gives it "a sort of ubiquity; its point of departure is constituted by meaning" (1970, p. 123). What happens in space has happened to time. The absolute rupture of our first event (which only a self-aware/conscientious waking, epochal attempt at history can provide – a First Fleet for instance) happens everywhere at once and means the abolition of all time until then. All that inescrutable "before us" has simply ceased to be. We sing of a ghost in a place never passed, or which has been rewritten. Thus a vast territory which has in almost its entirety never been perceived or known in any way by its invader (and most importantly the borders of which are not fully known), is suddenly and wholly annexed.

For Barthes "the inoculation" is that figure where "one immunises the contents of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil" (1970, p. 150). In his essay "Operation Margarine" Barthes gives a number of examples of this figure:

Take the army; show without disguise its chiefs as martinet, its discipline as narrow-minded and unfair, and into this stupid tyranny immerse an average human being, fallible but likeable, the archetype of the spectator. And then, at the last moment, turn over the magical hat, and pull out of it the image of an army, flags flying, triumphant, bewitching... (1970, p. 41)

In our case immunisation is a condition of entry. We are aware of that spear which will not succeed in deterring us. Refuge is sought in absenting one's self. Once in the blank space of arrival, the subject inoculated with white man's burden (and who knows what other tropical calamities which crossing the world entails), let loose on the landscape and despite all of its strangeness, poses no threat at all to the siren like myth which first lured. Civilisation is a set of material signs. It is possible to detect and number them (or their absence) to see how far we are now from the beginning. The characters who live in our speech, remembered for the purpose of inoculation are, we must remind ourselves, mythic characters, made largely and larger than life, out of the gaps of memory. Defining our presence now entails the doomed effort of getting them back into the perspective from which they first accosted us; getting them, the dead, that is, back into life.

Just as there is not yet an inoculation against a virus so the death which civilisation entails cannot be prepared against. It is Europeans who inoculate themselves to face the wilderness of an alterity which they will deny by the facts of their presence, by making new Europes. We may thus think of the death which civilisation entails for its others as a viral death (a death-in-waiting) of equivalence made universal (of all things made equal). The world is ours in the moment we apprehend it. We render it finished, we begin it again in that moment of apprehension: the present of unelapsed time in which nothing is named, everything to be named. The appearance of this stillness, these ruins as palimpsest, belies a readiness to recommence the invasion. The carrying across on which civilisation depends is one which is constantly sacrificed and resurrected, and the signs of which require constantly to be re-erased. It is in this sense we must acknowledge that myth is a living system. It may describe a past as frozen but it meets the present needs, as we have said, of amnesia as much as of memory. If, as literates, we are condemned to a view over the homeostasis (Ong, 1982, pp. 46-9) by which oral cultures adjust their pasts to present conditons, then we need to acknowledge ourselves as lacking a tool, which would offer a view over the productions of a literate culture.
The characters and events unremembered for the purpose of myth, the spectres of our forgetting, are difficult to retrieve, however an ethics of presence demands them. This is the problem with which T.S. Eliot wrestles in "East Coker", the second of the Four Quartets:

And the wisdom of the age? Had they deceived us
Or deceived themselves, the quiet voiced elders,
Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit?
The serenity only a deliberate hebetude,
The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets
Useless in the darkness into which they peered
Or from which they turned their eyes. There is, it seems to us,
At best, only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience.
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been. We are only undeceived
Of that which, deceiving, could no longer harm.

(1959, p. 26)

In the first book of the Republic, Socrates suggests that the poets speak darkly of the nature of justice and he ridicules the contention he ascribes to Homer, that justice is an art of theft (1952, p. 299). The trail of precedent and principle, in which law, always after the event, seeks to reify itself, as the quasi-nature of things ever-thus, depends on what is outside and before the canonic pattern. It depends on a kind of childish (i.e. boyish) enthusiasm, such as might be attributed to gods, in which the signs by which we know rights and responsibilities are erased, as it were, just this once, and just so that they might be commenced. What kind of hubris would hold the gods responsible for the theft, murder, incest and cannibalism which makes them (and us) possible? It is by sleight of hand, declaring a beginning exempt from its rules, that the law establishes the territory of its jurisdiction.

Where signs absent themselves all plot collapses to this unity: amnesia which masks history's principal recurrence — of invasion, of theft. The past is the story of crime becoming law. History is the process of making the signs absent; activity in the guise of passive apprehension. No habitable corner has been exempted from this most essential function of forgetting. In our case the lines are clearer than elsewhere. Who else has occupied so long, so continuously, so thoroughly, so peaceably? Where else has a sovereignty been so suddenly, so irrevocably overturned and all its signs so easily erased; that erasure so naturalised, as if there had been nothing there at all?

Having emptied the landscape of all but our imagination, how do we deal together now with the facts of collectivity, our presence? Flag, arms, anthem — these are the conventional icons a state imposes on land and on people, in order to make intangible, thus unassailable, its authority. For us, these mythic forms, which naturalise the statehood of countries in Europe, are borrowings which conceal a theft. By virtue of these borrowings we renounce the prospect of authenticity. We are here as others might be elsewhere. The fact of our being here is a mediated fact, the most obvious demonstration of which is in the language by which we apprehend each other and everything around us, a language which is not of this place and yet without which nothing of this place remains for us. Our presence thus takes on the force of a rumour in which we only become natives to the extent that we deny both the fact of our coming and the fact of anything before us. In denying by our presence its very facts is it any wonder that we become confused as to who we are?
The flag we show now is somebody else's plus some sky. The test of identity we now face (what arms to show, what flag to fly, what song to sing together) is one in which everything we borrow for it (a Union Jack, a foreign tune) is as arbitrarily imposed as the timing of the anniversaries (two hundred years of settlement, one hundred years since Federation) which demand that our identity be tested.

The song we love to sing together is one which deals with our presence in a fictive, an impossible, way. An unrivalled choice, it is not an anthem but the inoculation for one. Or rather any anthem we choose will serve as an inoculation for it. It has an unofficial feeling which suits the irreverent spirit which lets us get away with pride. It will be argued that the words we sing together and to signify ourselves together are nonsense or meaningless or just a story. But the myth of our making, "Waltzing Matilda", in fact presents as anti-allegory: the story of what did not happen. Not because it is stranger than fiction but because it is a story from which all the situating truths are exempted in favour of a naturalised order, the sudden ever thus of, not even a colony, but a full-blown new Europe.

Let us begin with the absences: the boundaries in which the swagman has transgressed, the home from which he is absented. But this ghostly, even before the fact of the ghost-making, presence, is itself composed of absences. Without doubting the genuine torment of the swagman as disinherit ed stranger, we note that in the context of a story which sings the facts of our presence (the words we sing to represent us) the blacks are the principal absence. In the frame of terra nullius, by falling below the terms of civilisation, they fall out of the story altogether, into a reality which must be ahistoric if it is a reality at all. The swagman is then the ersatz victim of the permanent facts of law and possession. Dispossession likewise falls below the threshold of the story. There are other absences here: of women, of the fauna (quintessential agency below the threshold of, yet recipient of the effects of the human story). This is a one tree story. Told in a four horse town. Of a farm with one less sheep.

In singing these absences we absolve ourselves of a role in their cause, we absolve ourselves of the primal crimes (murder and theft) by which we come to inhabit, by which we inherit what was never given, what never was ours to receive.

The disinherit ed stranger of whom we sing now, is neither a poet, nor a black singing the country (however unintelligibly to us), knowing the country by song. The doomed wanderer of this, our song, is someone so marginally articulately and mired in his own needs, so out of society, that he sings to his billy boiling and mounts no defence in the face of the law, but only states the ultimate defiance, by which he signifies the coming of his own absence, in which lies the ceaseless process of reversion we know as haunting: of a melody from somewhere else, of lyrics about what's not here. How quickly that laughter of victorious survival (stuffing the jumbuck in the tuckerbag) dissolves into the echo of justice: the what-becomes-of-the-transgressor! How lightly this man drowns himself, takes on the weight of time for good! He saves the troopers the trouble of discharging their firearms or of hanging him from the tree under which he would have absented (and might have expiated) his crime of theft.

A differend here? What we sing is the survivor's, the victor's story, the myth by which the victor absolves himself of the terrible event in which the past of our inheritance is constituted. Because we know by simple fact that what we have now is inherited from those who did the disinherit ing. What is mainly absented then in the reiteration of what we name our song (fearing the audacity to claim something so close to ourselves as an anthem) is, by any measure, the truth – even the most schematic adumbration of how it is we are here. How marvellous to do this in the guise of the battler's tale, the tale of the salt of the earth, rendered now in that form of incarnation, in which he proverbially tells no tale. Magnificent denial on which the nation founds itself.
In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche tells us that myth is "the concentrated image of the world which, as an abbreviation for phenomena, cannot do without miracles" (1993, p. 109). He argues that despite the credibility problems which the critical-historical spirit of our culture bring to bear upon it, "without myth all culture loses its healthy and natural creative power: only a horizon surrounded by myths can unify an entire cultural movement" (1993, p. 109). The miracle on which myth relies must always constitute an overturning of the order on which temporal law depends. The miracle relies that is, on an upending of heaven and earth in which causes and ends, deliberately confused, reify what lies between them: the everyday justice which enables social life.

In our case this means absenting both the known and unknown past for a primal event for which no one remains responsible. This Prometheus, never bound, does away with himself, just in the line of sight of four representative deities (three following orders and whom we know only by number), and who are guilty only of having asked the question (of property rights) which the law exists to ask. In this manner we are provided with the model of a death in custody.

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For Barthes myth is a "stolen language" (1970, p. 131). Poetry, for Barthes is a "language which resists myth as much as it can" and therefore a "regressive semiological system" (1970, p. 133). Myth and poetry, for Barthes, are attempting to do exactly the opposite:

Whereas myth aims at ultra-signification, at the amplification of a first system, poetry... tries to transform the sign back into its meaning: its ideal ultimately, would be to reach not the meaning of words, but the meaning of things themselves.

Bakhtin's opposition between the monologic (epic poetry) and the dialogic (the novelistic) is strikingly similar. In the case of Bakhtin though, our floating signifier, poetry, becomes the bad guy. The epic for Bakhtin is associated with an "absolute past of national beginnings and peak times" (1994, p. 182). The univocality of such a past explaining us sits easily with myth as Barthes has defined it. Barthes acknowledges that classical poetry is rather "a strongly mythical system". He argues that it is contemporary poetry which opposes its methods to those of myth.

The myth defying methods which Barthes cites – of clouding language, increasing the abstractness of the concept and the arbitrariness of the sign and stretching the link between signifier and signified – are only those of poetry now, ones adopted as strategies opposed to those it classically possessed. Poetry, for Barthes, is in the interesting position of having travelled the whole scale of possibility from fact to essence:

Myth is a semiological system which has the pretension of transcending itself into a factual system; poetry is a semiological system which has the pretension of contracting into an essential system. (1970, p. 134)

Thus we are drawn into finding ourselves with Bakhtin on the side of a dialogic, heteroglossic poetic; or with Barthes on the side of that poetry for which myth functions as a foil "for the very end of myths is to immobilise the world: they must suggest and mimic a universal order which has fixated once and for all the hierarchy of all possessions" (1970, p. 134). These are harmonious positions. And the question we must delay asking of them concerns the character they take on and the effects they have,

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42 In our case almost nothing escapes this condition: a blank country scribbled to death, a past emptied of its inhabitants, languages disposed of as surplus to requirement to be replaced with the argot of certain eighteenth century streets which never requested the move – for reasons of distaste, and facilitated by the economy of having come to understand a potential of distance.
when, by failing to establish the limits of their domain, we allow them to suggest a fixed and universal order, such as they set out to uncover.

*Lévi-Strauss' reflections on the myth-making figure of the "bricoleur" are useful here. Citing Boas' contention that mythological worlds are built from fragments only to be shattered again, Lévi-Strauss contends that Boas fails to take into account that it is from the same materials that new mythological worlds are continually reconstructed, and that it is "it is always earlier ends which are called upon to play the part of means: the signified changes into the signifying and vice versa" (1972, p. 21). We might identify this method of **bricolage** with the homeostasis which Ong attributes to oral cultures, as the means by which they maintain a past appropriate to their present. The past shifts to keep the present still, but the fact which underlies all of the possible views of this process, is that the present must actually be recomposed of elements furnished from the past.

For Lévi-Strauss, whereas scientific thought is based on the distinction between contingency and necessity, mythical thought appears to be based on the principle of **bricolage**, based that is, on the use of odds and ends, a kind of making-do with what is at hand. While it is tempting to account for indirection in poetry in just such terms, that it makes do with words and with a world as it finds them, we would fail by this means to distinguish poetry from science, which finds itself in the same predicament: it can only observe and hypothesise and conclude from where it finds itself. The order which science imposes will always be able (with some imagined hindsight) to have been seen as a kind of making-do. Old broken down theories which are recycled from discipline to discipline are not unlike the improvisation which keeps the farm going and somehow makes the rustic life seem closer to nature, less constrained. Whatever the reality of practices, however, we can be sure that the scientist does not for the most part see her/his scientific activities as bricolage. And yet the inspiration and discovery aspect of science is legendarily as open to the play of accident as is what we think of as creative thought.

For Lévi-Strauss art lies between myth and science, the artist is part bricoleur, part scientist: "By his craftsmanship he constructs a material object which is also an object of knowledge" (1972, p. 22). But Lévi-Strauss contrasts the nature of creativity in myth and art in the following terms:

The creative act which gives rise to myths is in fact exactly the reverse of that which gives rise to works of art. In the case of works of art the starting point is a set of one or more objects and one or more events which aesthetic creation unifies by revealing a common structure. Myths travel the same road but start from the other end. They use a structure to create what is itself an object consisting of a set of events (for all myths tell a story). Art thus proceeds from a set (object + event) to the discovery of its structure. Myth starts from a structure by means of which it constructs a set (object + event). (1972, pp. 25-6)

Whichever way we travel this road, it will be tempting to account for the ineffable in poetry as its side belonging to the bricoleur; that which being with what happens to be there necessarily lies out of the description of technique. No doubt "primitive" accounts of science and its products could be accused of succumbing to the shortcoming of just such an account.

The question of where poetry (or for that matter, science or myth) comes from may be unresolvable and inescapable but should not distract from the task of articulating an ethics of presence better served by questions as to what and how to write. An investigation of the nature of poetry's sources ignores at its peril (whatever is now known or practised) the mythic origins, not only of the objects with which poetry deals, but of poetry itself. What should interest us in bricolage is not the fact of randomness per se,
but rather the manner of survival of cultural forms which it allows, the uses to which these survivals are put, the interests at stake in these. Barthes may oppose the methods of poetry to those of myth but the game in which poetry participates depends, as myth does, on a second order of semiosis, the concealing of which is the condition in which belief is suspended. It is from this suspension of belief that doubt becomes a possibility. Poetry depends on this possibility not only because it is, as myth is, a kind of speech, but also because it is forced, by virtue of its presence, at least to attempt to comprehend what it transcends. And that is the myth made world.

Canon, inspiration, homeostasis

That the author of myth is a god (or other supposed a-cultural entity) which dwells in the voice of a poet, is a conception so widespread that we may with it account for a longstanding failure to deal, outside of systems of belief, with the nature of poetry's sources and the manner of poetic knowledge. The supposed divinity of myth, inspiration and poetry, serves in each case as something less sophisticated than an argument against the investigation of the canonic circle in which these are joined. It persists today as a habit after any active belief in divinity. It is able to persist because it always depended on unstated, if contradictory, assumptions, refusing the anthropomorphism of a conception of deity, and thus refusing the circle in which, with words (as with other forms of expression) we animate our presence.

This one word inspiration then lies under the burden of resolving a culture's myths of becoming as well as expressing the contradiction between context and practice. Inspiration is the inevitable and necessarily retrospective cause assigned to what the canon allows. The danger of such a mighty amorphousness (as inspiration) is identical with the danger of the canon. A key which would explain the ineffable of inspiration would have the function of turning literature (or its appreciation) into a religion. It would thus defeat, by virtue of its explanatory power, the ambivalence of poetry or that regime which Kant established in defining art as finality without end (1952, p. 491). It is literature, especially as it is poetic, which undoes the truth for all time which religions establish as their right. It effects this victory by establishing as imaginable the truth (if not the literality) of texts. Canonic logic is the application of bivalent judgement to literature and its hopes of survival. It cannot help but engage fictional worlds as if the question were whether these had the right to exist. This is the question a genuine reading demands to have suspended in favour of belief. Ironically, it is this suspension of disbelief which allows the literary text to become a vehicle of doubt. Its doubts are directed at the laws and beliefs of the context (of reading and writing), which, through the changes they effect, just as they deny them, inexorably threaten the text's extinction as irrelevant.

43 What manner of refuge, we then should ask, is the ineffable? How might we relate this to Ashcroft's metonymic gap or to the zone of inarticulacy of which Wilson Harris writes? We face these questions knowing that if there is a beyond of words we at least have no way to it but in words; which is as much as to say we have no way to this beyond, whether it is there or not. Michael Dash writes in In search of the Lost Body: "It is not simply a matter of deploying Caliban's militant idiom against Prospero's signifying authority. It is, perhaps, a matter of demonstrating the opacity and inexhaustibility of a world that resists systematic construction or transcendent meaning" (1995, p. 335).
Here is the logic of this perfect form of mystification: the canon contains what is the best, what is worth saving. It is inescapable (and there is therefore no point in arguing against it) because one has to choose what to read, what to publish, what to review, what to re-read, etc. Any attempt not to choose entails either being lost, being a victim of literature and equally of the canon's other, of what is canonically defined as not literature, or it entails covert choice (and therefore the assumption or establishment by stealth of another canon). The contents of the canon are the result of the inspiration of genius brought to its proper fruition and preserved by sound judgement. The circular logic here is that the manner of determining what inspired genius has brought to fruition is the sound judgement which determines what is in the canon. How do we know that the judgement is sound? It is the judgement which rightly acknowledges the coming to fruition of works of inspired genius. How do we know the canon contains only such works? Because they are declared such by the sound judgement which is what defines the canonic process. Heidegger describes just such a circle in his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art":

What art is can be gathered from a comparative examination of actual art works. But how are we to be certain that we are indeed basing such an examination on art works if we do not know beforehand what art is? (1975, p. 18)

Lytotard gives us a practical example of this problem in The Differend, as he works towards defining his subject. Note that the passage cited below immediately follows a demonstration of the logic by which the existence of the Nazis' gas ovens is disproved and with it the Holocaust:

Can you give me, says an editor defending his or her profession, the title of a work of major importance which would have been rejected by every editor and would therefore remain unknown? Most likely, you do not know any masterpiece of this kind because, if it does exist, it remains unknown. And if you think you know one, since it has not been made public, you cannot say that it is of major importance, except in your eyes. You do not know of any and therefore the editor is right. (1988, p. 4)

The report card tone of literary criticism, which never stops to interrogate its own certainty of what art is (or rather which if it does, finds itself a different sort of text), is

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44 Kant provides us with most of the elements of this circle in The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement, where it is argued that genius is "talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given", that although originality must be the primary property of genius, there is also original nonsense and so the products of genius must therefore be exemplary. Genius "cannot indicate scientifically how it brings about its product but rather gives the rule as nature." Genius, and the production of works of art according to this view, cannot be taught or learned because "where an author owes a product to his genius, he does not himself know how the ideas for it have entered into his head, nor has he the power to invent the like at pleasure" (1952, pp. 525-6).

45 Of this game Lyotard comments:

Reality is not what is "given" to this or that "subject", it is a state of the referent (that about which one speaks) which results from the establishment of effecuation procedures defined by a unanimously agreed-upon protocol, and from the possibility offered to anyone to recommence this effecuation as often as he or she wants. The publishing industry would be one of those protocols, historical inquiry another. (1988, p. 4)

And we note that in the case of literary canoncity it is not a publishing industry alone which establishes a circular logic of exclusion and inclusion. The publishing industry makes up only a part of the subjectivity of judgement which maintains and re-constitutes the canon. Academic, critical, funding and even writers' organisations may be accused of participating in the same logic in maintaining their own interests in the interests of the canon.
merely characteristic of an industry which most fears the undermining of the credentials on which its judgementalism is based. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot writes of "the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written" (1951, p. 17). He contends that "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new work of art among them" (1951, p. 15). The existing order, though complete before the new work arrives, must be in Eliot's view, modified, if slightly, by the inclusion of the new work. For Eliot "the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show" (1951, p. 16).

What is not discussed is the fact that the purpose of this essay is to establish the criteria of exclusion, in terms of a failure to live up to Eliot's judgement, as to what would constitute the proper expressions of consciousness and unconsciousness of a poem, in relation to the past which makes it possible. Who gets to establish such criteria? By what means? Pound tells us: "Pay no attention to the criticism of men who have never themselves written a notable work" (in Scully, 1966, p. 32). But who is to tell us what notable is? The opinions of critics, however reasoned or concealed, like the productions of literature, only matter to the extent that they are taken seriously. And what survives of and is descended from literary studies in the academy today is generally able to get by without having to let us know, as F.R. Leavis does, that real poets, though mainly dead now, are more alive than the rest of us (1963, p. 19). This is not because the canon has withered away but because the authority of criticism and theory is strengthened by Valéry's pronouncement that "the author has absolutely no authority" (in Block & Salinger, 1960, p. 39). The lack of resort to terms such as inspiration and genius does not demonstrate the absence of such assumptions in the determination of quality and in the selection of texts. It is rather the case that such assumptions need not be argued for when the only text able to set itself above the text above literature is another such text. As to the question of literature's authority, how, we might well ask, could any authority subsist in a voice which, to (at least to begin to) perform its function, needs (as Socrates tells us) to have lost all reason?

We may not be able to get around the fact of inspiration but this does not mean that we need to be taken in by every account of it. Ultimately our best access to its effects, to the mystery by which we participate in context, will be through the surviving products of its past instances, mediated as a canon, by the logic of those who, however they have opposed its logic, have enabled that survival.

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As for the discourse over the past of literary production, so for the discourse over all of the past's production, over all of those artefacts, survivals for which such a discourse finds use. How is authority exercised over or among these? Which logics, which narratives, provide the view which legitimates the acts enabling them? Lyotard contends: "Authority is not deduced. Attempts at legitimating authority lead to vicious circles... to question begging... to infinite regressions... and to the paradox of idiorect... the question of authority is played out in the normative phrase. The norm is what turns a prescription into a law" (1988, p. 142).

In recognising that we privilege ourselves, as we perhaps cannot help but do, with a view back over the past, need it not be acknowledged, as a duty to the honour of thought, that our works are dug back into just such a soil, that they perhaps become surviving artefacts for which a context will be supplied in order that they make sense? Lyotard writes of the discourse of the social contract that it is "a narrative comparable to a myth":

It recounts the birth of the social, but to the extent that it is recounting it, the social is already there as narrator, narratee, narrated, question, and answer to the
question. The social is always presupposed because it is presented or co-presented within the slightest phrase. (1988, p. 139)

Lyotard writes that the social is "immediately complex" and that even when it is taken explicitly as a referent in the phrase of a sociologist "it is also presupposed in the situating of all the instances presented by that phrase"; "The social is the universe which is formed by their situation insofar as that situation is related to human names, and which is signified by the phrase" (1988, p. 139).

Homeostasis depends on the circle Lyotard describes in accounting for the relationship between naming and narrative in Cashinahua society: "A phrase is authorised, one would think, only if its addressee enjoys some authority. What happens when the authority of the addressee results from the sense of the phrase?" (1988, p. 154). Kermode accounts for such turns in opposing a critical practice based on hermeneutics with one based on accommodation. Whereas hermeneutics makes the classic "a closed book that learning can partly open", accommodation finds in the classic "an open text from which new readings may generate... important new senses" (1975, pp. 75-6). The uncovering of a homeostasis (of a past which has accommodated the present of its telling) depends on their having been an unconsciousness of such practices. The decision to deal with a text on its own terms is overtaken by the presence of the context within which such a decision is taken. Accommodation is as involuntary as hermeneutics is necessary: whether from certain points of view misread or not, the story which is not understood ceases to be told.

The text we have now, canonic to that extent, is what survives between contexts. A reader fails in the effort of not coming from a context. Historicising is the effort to draw a line between the context read and the context of the one who reads it. Of it we must ask whether avowing such an intention would diminish the risk of seeing only our own images in such a past. In Simulation and Simulacra Baudrillard writes:

There is a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality – a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity. Escalation of the true, of lived experience, resurrection of the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared...

In order for ethnology to live, its object must die; by dying, the object takes its revenge for being "discovered" and with its death defies the science that wants to grasp it. (1994, pp. 6-7)

Baudrillard asks:

 Doesn't all science live on this paradoxical slope to which it is doomed by the evanescence of its object in its very apprehension, and by the pitiless reversal that the dead object exerts on it? Like Orpheus, it always turns around too soon, and, like Eurydice, its object falls back into Hades. (1994, p. 7)

Is the historicising text the one which, claiming no creative intention and ambivalent towards the poles Barthes inscribed for the poetic and the mythic, actually makes itself invisible by drawing attention to the objects it contains: a precession of generically more proximate texts? The effect of the citation of such texts would have the effect of making the reader forget that s/he is in such a text. If so then does not that poem, which with its many voices subverts narrative unity, have at least one voice operating in this manner: a voice which saying "watch this" distracts the reader from another reified intention, not to say unified purpose? How not to do that, how not to be in the grip of invisible powers? How to achieve plurality? But what genre could escape a homeostatic circle such as has characterised myth? Lyotard writes: "language does not have a single finality, or, if it has one, it is not known. Everything is as if 'language' were not" (1988, p 159).
Already we see how Thesis 11 finds itself in a self-made trap: to interpret the world is to change the conditions under which the world could be changed. Hermeneutics and accommodation do not leave each other alone. In "Can the Subaltern Speak" Spivak contrasts the figure of the peasant as sender, "marked only as a pointer to an irretrievable consciousness" with the figure of the historian who, suspending the clamour of his or her own consciousness transforms "insurgency into 'text for knowledge'". She argues that the postcolonial intellectuals in learning that "their privilege is their loss", provide "a paradigm of the intellectuals" (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 28). Learning that "one's privilege is one's loss" is what we might think of as the subaltern moment: a moment of ironic self-realisation in which the authenticity of one's will and one's acts is undermined by the knowledge which makes these possible.

Does not what we call historicising play exactly the role of homeostatic myth? Does it not justify the present by reforming the past? Perhaps the circle has more turns than that: the historian seeking to overturn the assumptions of which s/he is a prisoner seeks such evidence in the past: the evidence by which the past will be altered to accommodate a present which no longer keeps faith with it. The turns from an imperial to an assimilationist/amnesiac to an indigenous or reconciliatory history could be described in such terms: that each turn sought the evidence which would make it credible.

What would be the point in affirming that each made its myth in its own good faith? A question would remain as to what it would mean in any of these cases to avow one's intentions as mythic. Would one then cease to depend on the past for a justification of present means? Could one by such means short-circuit the second order of semiosis, could one speak plainly by this means? The answer may be that myth is that textuality not avowed as such: that though myth is uncovered by means which may in turn be discovered to be mythic, I will yet fail in the effort of accounting for, or excusing my own work, as myth. Where does this leave a writer like Spivak who, in "Can the Subaltern Speak", dares to openly canvass a prospect of how and to what effect a particular identity might set out to re-write itself? Is it perverse to ask whether the best way to speed up the process of constructing a subjectivity might not be to declare the work a theory, or better still, a truth in the manner of the word of God? Then people would see what was at stake.

Lytard associates three impieties with addressing the gods:

Either the gods are not addressees for our phrases, or, if they are, they do not answer them, and are not interlocutors; or else, if they answer them, they are subject to corruption and passion, and are not just. Thus: they are not; if they are they are mute; if they speak, they say what they are made to say. (1988, p. 21)

This final impiety, of putting words in the mouths of gods, is at the root of the Platonic expulsion of the poets. The poets betray "the veracity of the gods". Myth occults the narrator leaving the audience with a voice which is as the voice of god (1988, p. 21). And in a similar reversal or occultation the academic voice (which narrates the discourse over literature, the discourse over the past) represents the recovery of a quasi-divine exegetic authority: this is what the story meant, this was its significance. Now things happen not because gods made them happen but because that is how the world has been discovered to be. The voice discovering such facts to us presents as truth's best present avatar. All views so presented are to stumble on their having staked claims by virtue of evidence gathered as if theirs had been a clear view; when, as in the nature of a common mode and object of discernment, there can be no such view.

In oral societies the past is unrecoverable but proven in us. Memory is its dwelling and the voice the only means by which it is passed on. The landscape with its ruins and losses is the aide-memoire in which one lives. In literate societies the past is vastly retrievable but who knows where to start looking for one's own story? As the Yarralain of Northern Australia say, white people: "don't know what to remember and
what to forget, what to let go of and what to preserve. They don't know how to link the past to the present; they fail to recognise their own stories" (Rose, 1992, p 16). The past is immeasurably more distant from us because the present is likewise vast, too big to see beyond, crowded as it is with traces. So that an interest in the past as separate phenomenon is no longer automatic or necessary. The impersonal and collective past becomes the specialisation of a certain sort of expert. And in general terms: we do not know where to look for what is with us; we do not know where to look in order to not to see ourselves.

To look ahead then is to concede the contingency of at best a misreading: that would be how one (and one's context) would be made sense of. Poetry, as argued in chapter 1, is in the position which Kermode attributes to the classic: that it changes yet retains its identity (1975, p. 80). Is not common law contingent in exactly the way that poetry is? Such that the meaning of its present instances cannot be foreseen?

**Dreaming/ Waking**

He is himself, and not himself. He hears himself speak and he sees himself act, but he feels that some other "he" has borrowed his body and stolen his voice. Or perhaps he is conscious of speaking and acting as usual, but he speaks of himself as a stranger with whom he has nothing in common; he has stepped out of his own self.

Bergson, in *Le Rire*, of the dreamer (1956, p. 184)

How dares one sleep? Such trust in the loyalty of my body, in the still night, such faith in the order and constancy of the universe!... Tonight, absence you will return! Once again you will resume your few hours' throne, mysterious frightening impotence, quintessential weakness, unbreakable spell that chains the closed eyes to their images... One cannot turn round, held fast in the soft ore of sleep, to catch him in the act – the Monkey that shows the slides of the Dream.

Valéry, "Poems in the Rough" (1977, pp. 175-6)

To continue on in the circle where myth works to convince us of ourselves and where we come from, we need next to ask whence myth derives the authority it exercises over us and which we exercise over others whenever we employ it. The obvious answer would be that such authority derives from the canon or rather we should say from the self-congratulatory circle in which canon, inspiration and genius seek to confirm themselves. But myth, especially oral myth, while it participates in and relies on a critical circle such as we have described, is assured of borrowing an authority elsewhere. The purpose of myth is given to be revealing a world as is, one which need not be argued for, and which, in lying out of contention, renders our presence as unassailable fact. Myth wishes, as it were, to carry the force of judgement but to give the impression of using none. To do this, I will argue, it borrows its authority from dreams. Dreams provide myth with a model of sources which lie beyond dispute, which are unassailable because irretrievable.

But what kind of authority can derive from dreams which, while they may constitute the only sentence of a third of our lives, have their contents discounted as so amorphous as to require recoding before any sense can be made of them? Myth appropriates precisely that authority of which the waking world deprives dreams: the authority, that is, of selves which cannot act but only be however they seem to themselves. That authority which lies out of the judgement of the waking world to show a world as is, really constitutes the opposite of judgement and the opposite of authority. It appears as perfectly innocent of those intentions we associate with the exercise of power. The story in a dream is our quintessential just a story, until as with myth, we begin to excavate a meaning for it. It shares with poetry, in the terms Kristeva elaborates, a radical ambivalence, the logic of yes and no (and as such demands of us a radical credulity). The authority of myth then is a stolen authority and one which we have noted,
at least in the case of *Waltzing Matilda*, functions to justify a theft. Cruelly to essentialise Freud: this nation-making wish fulfilment amounts to a tribe of absences.

I have said that what makes the body foreign and the source of desire are one – in alterity, in the otherness which defines the Unconscious. Here we follow Lacan's formula that desire is desire for the desire of the other. It is in dreamstates that the unconscious regularly exercises that alterity in which desire takes up its residence. It is only desire which keeps us on these rails which our lapses (into consciousness) derail. That derailing is the model of all therapies, by which we bring to attention desire and the lacks which drive it.

Our work with desire (this inner/outer work) amounts to a world therapy. In it we are publicly performing everyone's risk, inviting everyone's rejection. There is nothing rare in this. It is what we all do every night. Or we cannot remember.\(^\text{46}\)

That is why on waking is an important time to write. Not because we are coming from any *pure* land of individual truths but because we may catch the moment before the story fills in our details and before forgetting which amounts to the same thing. Waking is a first moment over the border, on the other side of which we cannot really write (even if we remember writing), we cannot really speak (even if we have a conversation). The community of dreamers, a therapeutic community as we have acknowledged, is one which depends on a speech outside of itself. The dreamer appears to life's waking side as a pure passivity but the spectatorial privileges on which the dreamer relies depend on the risks and desires of the waking mind. Charles Simic writes of an empire of dreams and of a mask he is afraid to put on:

**Empire of Dreams**

On the first page of my dreambook
It's always evening
In an occupied country.
Hour before the curfew.
A small provincial city.
The houses all dark.
The store-fronts gutted.

I am on a street corner
Where I shouldn't be.
Alone and coatless
I have gone out to look
For a black dog who answers to my whistle.
I have a kind of halloween mask
Which I am afraid to put on.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 171)

To dream is to wish, is to take a risk, to take command again at the expense of certain familiar controls. To risk is in the nature of control.

However we situate desire and the sources of writing inside of each other, we acknowledge that each depends on borders and on crossing over. *Jouissance* is one such border. A moment of throwing doors open, a coming and going (letting go in order to

\(^{46}\) As is the case for Descartes in his first meditation where he doubts his own capacity to distinguish between waking and sleeping (1952, pp. 75-6).
come), a point in which old rhythms and flows are abandoned, rejoined. Poeties are interested in such moments beyond control, moments beyond the law, yet apprehended.

That other moment in which we regularly risk the unity of our being is the moment of switching from waking to sleep (and its reverse, from sleep into waking). The border between our most obvious pair of lives is that mystery of wishes into which we commend our spirit whenever we drop off—whenever that switch is flicked (when meanings of the outer world are reduced to the condition of somatic stimuli), when we accept the sighted blindness\(^\text{47}\) of ourselves. Falling asleep—that irretrievable moment of forgetting from which we measure our lapses—is the model of all of our failures to come to a beginning\(^\text{48}\). It likewise, and perhaps this is the affinity aesthetic experience seeks with it, evinces a faith in that state of indirection brought on by being unable to know what is next. It is the model of an entry into the unknown which is specifically ours.

There is an abiding mystery in this unique moment of emergence from a world totally other than that from which it is now imagined, that starting from and into sleep: a most mundane and startling difference. That alteration is the key shift in consciousness regularly iterated throughout our lives and by which they, arguably, are made sane. In *The Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty writes of this shift:

> There is a moment when sleep "comes", settling on this imitation of itself which I have been offering to it, and I succeed in becoming what I was trying to be: an unseeing and almost unthinking mass, riveted to a point in space and in the world henceforth only through the anonymous alertness of the senses. It is true that this last link makes waking up a possibility: through these half-open doors things will return or the sleeper will come back into the world... The body’s role is to ensure this metamorphosis. It transforms ideas into things and my mimicry of sleep into real sleep. (1962, p. 164)

If we compare consciousness of death with our waking consciousness of falling asleep or of dreams—i.e., with shifts in state of consciousness, where the moment of shift is by definition unapprehensible—we note that a kind of essence of death is always on the horizon of thinking; more to the point, there is an oneiric essence not on the horizon (nor in what Merleau-Ponty calls the *trap of horizons*), but which as it were envelops me from within my waking. This is the ever-present Unconscious which phenomenology fails to acknowledge.

Falling asleep is approached then by way of an inverted view which consciousness provides, as a kind of waking: a waking to a strange self, to a half knowledge, to the self seen in a mythic light. (We might equally speak of falling awake.) It is a moment too in which volition and chance never cease to struggle, because, in that other world, however its spatio-temporal outside is intimated, one never knows whether or where or how one wakes. Witness Po Chü-I’s account:

**Sleeping on Horseback**

We had ridden long and were still far from the inn;
My eyes grew dim; for a moment I fell asleep.

\(^{47}\) A notion we may attribute to Heraclitus: "A man in the night kindles a light for himself when his vision is extinguished; living, he is in contact with the dead, when asleep, and with the sleeper, when awake" (Kirk and Raven, 1975, p. 207).

\(^{48}\) We should contrast here the position attributed to a *canonic* consciousness with that which Levinas gives to the *I*: "The veritable position of the I in time consists in interrupting time by punctuating it with beginnings" (1969, p 143).
Under my right arm the whip still dangled;  
In my left hand the reins for an instant slackened.  
Suddenly I woke and turned to question my groom.  
"We have gone a hundred paces since you fell asleep."
Body and spirit for a while had changed place;  
Swift and slow had turned to their contraries.  
For these few steps that my horse had carried me  
Had taken in my dream countless aeons of time!  
True indeed is that saying of Wise Men  
"A hundred years are but a moment of sleep."

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 172)

The border between waking and dreaming, which we may simulate in more than these brief regular moments which daily life (unable to sleep, unable to get up) is always troubled with getting beyond, is a moment which defeats memory and the definition of such moments. Falling asleep is, as instinctual repetition, one thing which cannot be remembered. It is an irreversible relation - dreaming can be remembered and waking can always be remembered - or at least the waking side of waking remains available to the waking mind.

That border and what it opens onto is the model of mysteries such as that which we face in contending with inspiration or in assigning sources to creativity. Hence the fascination, especially since Romanticism, with dreamstates, the idea of a dreamtime (that alterity might retrieve a kind of waking dreaming), with all supposed affinities of dreaming and their association with some undisclosed purity. Much of this we may attribute to a steadfast disengagement with which dreams (and especially daydreams, but in fact any weariness or lapse of conscious attention) are associated. Even Freud concedes to dreams a place which has to be left obscure, a blind spot, the place where the dream reaches down into the unknown. This he calls its navel (cited in Jaye, 1994, p. 334). Valéry writes of the similarity of poetic experience and the dream state:

Dream, when we return to it through memory, makes us understand that our consciousness can be awakened or filled, and satisfied, by a whole range of productions that differ noticeably in their laws from ordinary productions of perception. But this emotive world that we can know at times through dream can not be entered or left at will. It is enclosed in us and we are enclosed in it, which means that we have no way of acting on it in order to modify it and that, on the other hand, it cannot co-exist with our great power of action over the external world. (in Block, 1960, p. 24)

For Valéry although the dreamstate is one which "appears and disappears capriciously", poetic experience is a means of recreating and regaining this condition, "of artificially developing these natural products of... sentient being" (in Block, 1960, p. 24).

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The paradox of the apparent passivity of the dreamer and her/his experiences of omnipotence\textsuperscript{49}, provide us with a model for those intimations of transcendent self with which beliefs make do. We are always returning to this irretrievable moment of succumbing to sleep - in which unities, dualities and multiplicities dissolve and in which another journey begins.

\textsuperscript{49} Describing Fewkoombey's dream at the end of the Threepenny Novel, Brecht's narrator explains that the dreamer was the judge because: "No one can stop a dreamer from getting what he wants" (1965, p. 392).
It is possible to hover around that moment (that fall of consciousness as we imagine it), develop a facility for it, a sort of play. There is a hypnagogic state in which we can retain awareness while allowing the dreamwork to begin. In this true boundarywork we have the ability to watch but not direct or participate – we are as guests or as gate-crashers in our own bodies then. What we understand we have brought from the alien mind whose works are suspended in becoming self spectators. And as spectators we can but be credulous. (It would seem that the dreamer-proper, at least in Lacan’s conception, is infinitely gullible. Though if we accept that lacking the power to say “no” the dreamer has no choice but to accept whatever s/he is fed, we must also recognise that it is the community of the self, however divided, which does the feeding.)

If we engage this half-life (the evanescence of all forms of consciousness) it is as a slippage from which we are constantly about to emerge into or from full dreaming or waking. This is a state which cannot be maintained and yet in remaining awake after the loss of volition we see the imagery of our other world, formed, as we know, by everything that forms our waking selves, allowing of no distraction in the form of metalanguage, yet consisting of, from the point of view of waking consciousness, nothing but distraction. In the Lacanian frame what we see now is the parade of signifiers detached from their signifieds.

In this view over the rim of the crater we find ourselves about to watch and to listen and the price we have paid for this spectatorial privilege is that of having been struck off the role of constituents. Loss of control of the mind’s imagery may furnish a frightening view, as for instance in de Quincey’s account:

as the creative state of the eye increased, a sympathy seemed to arise between the waking and the dreaming states of the brain in one point – that whatsoever I happened to call up and to trace by a voluntary act upon the darkness was very apt to transfer itself to my dreams; so that I feared to exercise this faculty; for, as Midas turned all things to gold, that yet baffled his hopes and defrauded his human desires, so whatsoever things capable of being visually represented I did but think of in the darkness, immediately shaped themselves into phantoms of the eye; and, by a process apparently no less inevitable, when thus once traced in faint and visionary colours, like writings in sympathetic ink, they were drawn out by the fierce chemistry of my dreams, into insufferable splendour that fretted my heart. (1995, p. 40)

We live in an age where all technologies – only ever emerging – take on just this provisionality in which the practices of desire must improvise beyond their subjects’ control. In our century aesthetic technologies have fully exercised the Cartesian split: we have shifted between (and we co-exist in) an age of disembodiment (in radio) and an age of super-embodiment (in film and television).50

In fact it is from waking to dreaming that we evolve that (unjustifiably) superior attitude to which fictions and lies – to which all "other" discourses – are subjected by the rational (which is always alarmed by the discontinuities these necessary lapses of sleep entail). Indeed one could characterise the development of western philosophy as the continuity of failures in the effort at staying awake: the Cartesian trap.

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50 We might likewise suggest that aesthetic practices have taken as a dare Kant’s declaration, in The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement, that they either concern themselves with beauty or with moral sense (1952, p. 521).
That moment in which awareness is lost in favour of another agenda we may take as homologous with inspiration: a letting go, which constitutes giving way to an (a-narrative) diegesis in which we cannot help but participate, but in the uses and awareness of which we have some choices.

Falling asleep is the moment of becoming foreign in ourselves. When we drop off we become foreigners in our bodies: passive, pursued, possessed of volitions which waking logic has the opportunity to abandon. The best we can do is to shift sideways along from one wish to a next, till waking we are wrenched into the symbolic torment of equivalence. We may say that the price of our citizenship of the self is an eternal vigilance, and one which will inevitably and regularly betray itself. That equivalence which troubles our waking returns and re-commits us to the logic of yes or no: things are what they are or they aren't. The virus which catches us coming awake and in which we are naturalised, is metaphor – in whose life or rule we connect signifier with signified, assume a role, a knowledge of ourselves.

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We are lonely in our multiplicity asleep. In a poem, "Ripeness is All", Rumi writes:

Just as, when thou fallest asleep, thou goest from the presence of thyself into the presence of thyself
And hearest from thyself that which thou thinkest is told thee secretly by some one in the dream.
O good friend, thou art not a single "thou": thou art the sky and the deep sea,
Thy mighty infinite "Thou" is the ocean wherein myriads of "thou's" are sunken.
Do not speak, so that thou mayst hear from the Speakers what cannot be uttered or described.
Do not speak, so that the spirit may speak for thee: in the ark of Noah leave off swimming.

(1995, p. 190)

Dream characters, all our own and everyone's, are abbreviated – not as cartoon characters (for which they no doubt serve as a model) – but essentially as ghostly presences, consisting only of what must make them. What of those dreams in which the living come to us as ghosts, having no other way to come? If those characters we dream remind us of ghosts, being never corporeal and always composed of life dismembered, re-formed on these other terms concealed from us as ours, then what could be more spectral than the characters of fiction, avowedly unreal, disclaimed from bearing any resemblance to the living or even the dead? The characters of fiction are as the undead among us and we canonise them with our breath whenever we speak their names.

How can we look at dreams but as a therapy, undoing the damage which is done all day? If we accuse myth (and perhaps fiction in general) of depending on a theft from dreams then surely we must acknowledge that dreams are our greatest thieves, plagiarists. Where can they borrow reality except from our waking? They acknowledge nothing, proceeding as if within their rights. Their sleight of hand is all association, never says what it means. The waking world in contrast has a metaphoric directness – tells us which things are which others, which correspondences we need. Whatever is mysterious in the day's assumptions, our sleeping selves move among these, never challenging any head-on. Dreams rather lull us out of the causes and effects or any ways of making sense which might avail our waking wish or assumption of wholeness.
Metaphor on this reading is a kind of containment – it is the law which says what is what – from which we may infer the borders. From it we devise the map of transgression. When metaphor says that you are me it is only ever telling the truth. It has no other charter. What metaphor does is perfectly natural, equal to any situation. It is the making of myth (cf. Ernst Cassirer’s [1923] essay “The Power of Metaphor” [in Maranda, 1972, pp. 23-31]). In the one moment it tells us what is on both sides of the border, and erasing that border, it makes these entities one, leaving us with an undivided (if now reified) sense of what we assume to be. Metaphor is the uncontained work of waking. Lacan writes: "metaphor occurs at the precise point at which sense emerges from nonsense" (1980, p. 158).

Dream and myth inhabit each other, both dwelling in us. Should we say myth’s collectivity is internalised in dreams? Or can we accuse dream and myth of a reciprocal theft, of picking each other’s pockets? Myth and dream operate according to the same unchallengable authority, subject us to the same swallowing up, the epic monologue which is always becoming our own. Both seem to constitute lapses from the dialogic and living medium of language, and into the frozen time Bakhtin declares the monologic. Dreaming appears to be the making mythic of the self. And this no doubt is because our personal memories of dreaming, are, as our other memories, mediated by the collective mnemonic technology we know as language. Myth appears to be a kind of collective dreaming. Myth and dream both appear to operate by the mechanism of regression to the earliest possible state. In the case of dreams this is the most childish psychic economy able to be retrieved. In the case of myth it is the earliest conceivable origin. In both cases we face an ordering of the world which is prior to the time either of science or of common sense. In both cases we encounter a nostalgia for the simple world (which perhaps never was) in which the passions are giant sized and have their way until bigger passions come in their path. In these uncivilised and unadult conditions (in which civilisation and the self begin to gather to a centre) dream and myth get around the censor to recount the terrible and impossible (the wishing of the self against or around its own interests), as in Barthes’ terms, an inoculation, which serves at once to instil, to anticipate and to justify the law of the father. Myth and dream both frame with complacence the ever thus in and to which we are doomed to return\(^{51}\). It is this sense that the ancients were right to regard dreams as prophetic.

If dreams appear to us as a lapse from the dialogic reality in which language unfolds, that alterity which constitutes the unconscious is however all the proof we require that dreams only appear to be monologues. In fact they are fully polyphonic in Bakhtin’s sense of the term. Dreams are dialogic because we are other to ourselves in dreams. And whereas in Bakhtinian epic what conflict appears is always already resolved (it is the suspension of memory which allows us a fresh approach), the dreamer is very actively engaged in a process of resolution, albeit out of manner of exercise of his/her waking control, the success or failure of which may possibly be measured by faculties of recollection, by degrees of happiness, by the conduct of daily life.

In dreams our apparently passive\(^{52}\) selves struggle with the alterity which inheres in them. By contrast the audience of myth as presented to us by Barthes, truly passive,

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51 Note that both dreams and myths do deal with events which radically shift an existing order. An example is Enkidu’s dream in the Epic of Gilgamesh; a dream become myth or myth become dream or both (?), in which Enkidu sees those who had been gods and those who had ruled the world as servants in a house of dust (in Rothenberg, 1985, p. 65).

52 Note the challenge to this passivity which the phenomenon of lucid dreaming poses. Freud was aware of this phenomenon and thought it revealed the desire of a subject to enjoy his dreaming. Stephen P. LaBerge in his article, “Lucid Dreaming: Directing the action as it happens” writes: “Lucid dreaming presents a way out of this sleep within our sleep, allowing us to take responsibility for dream and waking lives that we have created.” LaBerge presents us with a puzzle of consciousness and its borders: “What does it mean to dream while knowing we are dreaming?” (in Orne, 1986, p. 179).
engages in failing to struggle with a set of mythic norms, the purpose of which could be argued to be to deny alterity.

We have noted that myth appropriates the methods of dreaming. What myth depends on, as a kind of ersatz dream, is the dreaming self’s abdication of judgement, and specifically, refusal. Barthesian myth (and here I include all fictions which work to deny a reflexive reading position – closed texts, in Eco’s sense – by erasing the framing of the equivalences they pre-suppose) is a kind of collective simulation of the dreamstate, in which all are bound, as sleepers, to accept, through necessarily unperceived rhetorical filters, the daylight truths by which all must live. Such is the monumental solidarity which applies to those who speak a common language, and which may apply across cultures for those who share mythologies.

In a dream, as well in a poem if it works, one feels an inevitability in all things as they unfold, when in fact the dreamer and the poem itself actively devise their making. Myth, on the other hand, is ready made but borrows from dreaming the assurance of the tale’s truth to its task. In the dream and the poem we genuinely do not know, as authors and readers, what will happen next. In myths we have already heard, we must simulate this lack of knowledge in order to cultivate an appropriate credulity. And yet what unfolds in a myth does so with the inevitability of the already known. It is easy to see both myth and dream as ideologically pre-formed and set, lacking as they do the mechanism of judgement, by which their materials could be stood aside of. But it is precisely the absence of any facility for judgement which ensures that the dream casts doubt over daylight thought, that it casts doubt over the very process of judgement, by disassembling its materials. Or rather by making do with the fragments of what seemed to cohere in the light of day. The dreamer as bricoleur requires, in the course of suspending her/his judgement, the exercise not only of a faith in the materials which make up the legacy of the conscious life, but with these the exercise of a faith in the doubt which the Unconscious has cast over these. This faith-in-doubt of the dreamer is precisely the subversive aspect of oneiric experience to which Socrates alerts us in Book IX of the Republic where he speaks of “the wild beast nature that peers out in sleep”. In Book V of the Republic we see the affinfty of this state for the productions of the poet. The dreamer, like the poet, is one who likens dissimilar things. And while the power of the art of contradiction is glorious, we may be assured it will not be a governing principle under the reign of philosopher kings. In Book VI we note though that the dangers of sophistry are expressed in the following terms: “philosophers become strange monsters, incorporate with very being”. How can the dangers of dreaming and contradiction be averted by those who choose the examined life? The role model for the vigilance of the guardian is hardly one conducive to self-examination: it is, in Book III, that of the wakeful dog which knows friend from foe only by the criterion of knowing and not knowing. Ambivalence, which unites the poet and the dreamer, is what, in the Platonic conception, the state and philosophy must both guard against.

We cannot pretend that Plato’s poet is anyone other than Bakhtin’s epic-maker. What distinguishes this character from the dreamer is that though they may both be bricoleurs, the cycle set up by ambivalent logic ensures that the faith required of the dreamer is, inter alia, a faith in the doubt which ambivalence constitutes. For Bakhtin this ambivalence is short-circuited by the reification of a present order rendered in epic form as an unchallengeable golden age. For the Plato of the Laws however, the poet is, as has been noted, undoubtedly the agent of ambivalence, one who is unable to tell the difference between good and evil. The golden age of Plato’s poet is unreliable, subversive.

For the ensemble of selves we know as community, waking must furnish the collectivity wherein myth unfolds, depending, as dreams do, on a reification of signs in a dialogue for which consent can never have been sought. Both myth and dream are
backward constructions of being, each in its way relying on (the illusion of) an independence from the world. The work of words is wakening but the gap of forgetting is what enables the ceaseless exchange of worlds which exist in each other. Forgetting belongs neither solely to sleeping nor waking, but it is in waking that our consciousness of having forgotten is strongest. That quotidian consciousness of the irretrievable drives the unrequitable desire to get back to beginning and furnishes an inspiration: that by which we see, perhaps in the manner of Bloom’s misprision, new stories as failed efforts at reconstruction.

A kind of faith by association is what the dreamer and the reader of myth have to go on. On Bakhtin’s reading the forms of authority are built into the tale, the only framing of which is a telling which denies that there is context or a making or anything to pick apart. This style of participation in the text, where the reader/viewer is hypnotically excluded from everything outside of it, ensures that the circle of the story is able to be rejoined anywhere, because it describes a world (however unreal we may otherwise regard it) which is (unlike the one which the living inhabit) complete in itself.

What needs to be emphasized here is the seeming shared passivity of the dreamer and the reader of myth. As ersatz dream, myth apparently substitutes something we do not have to imagine together (that is, something ready made) for a turn in dialogue.

Borrowing logic (we might suggest borrowings between metaphorical and metonymic logics) from one side of the gulf to the other is an inevitable and untraceable necessity. In our waking we are fascinated with the prospect of approaching the secret which is in not waking. This is the basis of a metalanguage: the hope of getting above or beyond, that of which there is no outside. Metalanguage is biting the tail that feeds it. The effect of dreaming we might say is to continually rekindle and frustrate this hope.

Waking sees the logic of its lines as ink on the blank of the unwritten page, the proper writing over the emptiness we inhabit. Waking binds into a unity these fragmented tongues. It makes a community of the irretrievably divided self. Dreaming blurs, as far as we can make out, secondary processes. What we remember from dreams is unconnected scribble, voices lost to sense, which leave us wondering which of our selves has misunderstood the other. But whether the waking misunderstands the dreaming self, or whether the opposite is true, whatever mutual incomprehension divides and unites these selves of ours, we know that they are foreign to each other. It is by that foreignness of self to self that inspiration lies in the very fact of being ineffable and irretrievable. The rhythm this border between selves of ours lays over our daily lives is a mystery which insists on our attention. It is the mystery of a door we never remember but go through every day.

At least part of our difficulty in distinguishing the operation of myth from that of dream has been the fact that whatever incomprehension lies between them, their influences are mutual. It may well be yet another "originary" trap, to regard the technology of myth as being derived from that of dreams. There is no reason to regard the materials of dream as any more or less myth-made than those of waking life. They are the same materials. We can further say that the traffic is mainly one-way: word and image in dream derive from the world in which we speak and listen, from the world in which our eyes are open. But the method of dreaming is so distinct from that of conscious thought (seeming as it were to loosen and let breathe the logics daylight represses) that it is irresistible not to regard the credulity and bricolage (contradictory readerly and writerly aspects) of the dreamer as being the basis of myth and of fiction.

The freezing of the real of which myth is accused is a kind of subversion both of language and of the unconscious and is, as official ideology naturally is, always in the position to claim that it is it (myth) which is being subverted. In naming myth as a type of speech Barthes makes the point that "it is human history which converts reality into speech" (1970, p. 110). His point is that the speech entailed in myth presupposes a
signifying consciousness and is thus subject to the regime Saussure established as
semiology. The type of speech constituted by myth then is as one subversive of speech,
a kind of anti-speech, which must take the form of speech in order to function as such.
(We may as well add then that speech is as subversive of myth as myth is of speech.
One makes solidities of gossip, the other fragments the truth into opinions.) If we claim
that speech is the forward unfolding of the world then must we not acknowledge that the
ever thus on which it relies for a sense of itself likewise unfolds forward as a sort of
speech (whether rendered in writing or not), the type of speech which Barthes calls myth?

Prizing reason and truth over fiction, the Socrates of the Republic appears as a
great transgressor of myth. In fact his aim is to usurp, as one generation of gods might
usurp the place of those before them, the position of poetic for philosophic myth, thus
casting the former into the wilderness. It is a glorious contradiction that what the
dynamism of making culture requires is the freezing of its past in myth, and that this,
paradoxically, is a process of evolution which we could call de-historicising: something
which we literates justify with the word, fiction; but which outside of literacy, having
nothing with which to create discrepancies, requires no justification.

However we measure myth or fiction against them, we can say that the affinity of
poem and dream lies in an ambivalence borne of standing out of judgement; that the
mystery by which we come to and from that state, is the mystery of inspiration. So
saying we inscribe the borderzone where the waking mind is always headed, is always
coming from and yet cannot retrieve. In such a borderzone as Po Chü-I imagines in his
"A Dream of Mountaineering", one gets as much as one loses:

At night, in my dream, I stoutly climbed a mountain,
Going out alone with my staff of holly-wood.
A thousand crags, a hundred hundred valleys –
In my dream journey none were unexplored
And all the while my feet never grew tired
And my step was as strong as in my young days.
Can it be that when the mind travels backward
The body also returns to its old state?
And can it be, as between body and soul,
That the body may languish, while the soul is still strong?
Soul and body – both are vanities;
Dreaming and waking – both alike unreal.
In the day my feet are palsied and tottering;
In the night my steps go striding over the hills.
As day and night are divided in equal parts –
Between the two, I get as much as I lose.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 87)

Haunting & Laughter

This crown of the laugher, the rosary crown: to you, my brothers, I throw this crown! I pronounced
laughter holy: you higher men, learn – to laugh!
Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra (1993, p. 12)

Language both makes and unmakes myth. It provides both analytic tools and the
materials of the bricoleur. It is a borderzone within as between bodies, contending in
both cases with the facts of foreignness and a failure to get across.
Language as borderzone is in the end the only home we have, our only community. If we say that its outside is everywhere, in doing so we concede that it is made up only of borders. It is within this only frame that we have that I wish to propose a poetics of the symbiosis of two poles of inspiration, these being haunting and laughter.

This haunting includes all forms of return: the past which weighs like a nightmare on the mind of the living (Marx, 1978, p. 595), tradition which draws us back to a source which is irretrievable because it is mythic, only ever imagined. Haunting is the apparent permanence of what is unable to be forgotten, of that which demands to be acknowledged, and which intercedes itself mysteriously in the operations of the everyday. It can only be a brake on the process of forgetting and yet it is one on which our sociality depends. The uncanniness of the haunting we experience by means of myth is that of our own story told from the golden age. These are our feelings and reactions we recognise in the tale. It is our situation accounted for, in Lévi-Strauss’ terms, as bricolage. The second order of semiosis is what guarantees a kind of homeostasis: those elements which recombine to show our story can only be those for which the story has a present use. That story can only be the one we are telling and told in now. This is the haunting circularity of making sense.

To pray for inspiration would be to anticipate a haunting, at least to claim that one deserves it. Haunting is demonstrated in the canonc absorption of the past into a knowned subjectivity, such as makes the canon one. In Bakhtin’s terms it is a centripetal force, one which draws all to a centre, a tight clenching against fear.

By laughter I intend the lack of knowledge constitutive of being mistaken, all manner of casting off from, striking off randomly, tripping over the self. In Ch’In Kuan’s poem "Along the Grand Canal":

Hoar frost has congealed
On the deck
Of my little boat.
The water
Is clear and still.
Cold stars beyond counting
Swim alongside.
Thick reeds hide the shore.
You’d think you’d left the earth.
Suddenly there breaks in
Laughter and song.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 100)

Laughter is a sign of selves, of community, it brings back to earth those who have felt themselves released from earth’s gravity. Laughter always consists, not in a knowledge, but in a less conscious discovery. The subject of laughter is always a mistakenness. In the terms Kristeva elaborates in Revolution in Poetic Language it is the moment of laughter, and its relationship with jouissance, which centres practice in the thetic moment and the semioticization of the symbolic. It is laughter which transgresses (1984, p. 225). Laughter thus is a centrifugal force, a letting go, something gone in its moment, such as Nietzsche describes as joy in nonsense:

How can men take joy in nonsense? They do so, wherever there is laughter – in fact, one can almost say that wherever there is happiness there is joy in nonsense. It gives us pleasure to turn experience into its opposite, to turn purposefulness into purposelessness, necessity into arbitrariness, in such a way that the process does no harm and is performed simply out of high spirits. For it frees us momentarily from the forces of necessity, purposefulness and
experience, in which we usually see our merciless masters. We can laugh and
play when the expected (which usually frightens us and makes us tense) is
discharged without doing harm. It is the slaves’ joy at the Saturnalia.
(1994, p. 127)

It is in the opposition of these rhythms of temporality that we come to the problem
of alterity as at once immanence and transcendence. These are impossible out-of-
wordings which, like words, cannot depend on one body alone, but which, like words,
require a body’s breath or the memory of breath.

When we laugh at others we laugh at ourselves. And the opposite is true: others
laugh at themselves when they laugh at us. Bergson in his (1900) essay, Le Rire, writes:

Laughter appears to stand in need of an echo. Listen to it carefully: it is not an
articulate, clear, well defined sound; it is something which would fain be
prolonged by reverberating from one to another, something beginning with a
-crash, to continue in successive rumblings, like thunder in a mountain...
However spontaneous it seems, laughter always implies a kind of secret
freemasonry, or even complicity, with other laughers, real or imaginary. (1956,
p. 64)

Bergson writes of "whimsical wild enthusiasts" (Don Quixote and the like) who make us
laugh through their failures and fallings, just as a fall in slapstick makes us laugh. They
are:

runners after the ideal who stumble over realities, child-like dreamers for whom
life delights to lie in wait. But, above all, they are past masters in absent
mindedness, with this superiority over their fellows that their absentmindedness is
systematic and organised around one central idea, and that their mishaps are also
quite coherent, thanks to the inexorable logic which reality applies to the
correction of dreams, so that they kindle in those around them, by a series of
cumulative effects, a hilarity capable of unlimited expansion.
(1956, p. 69)

Bergson identifies the logic of laughter with that of dreams as the logic of the
imagination, a logic which is independent of and perhaps opposed to that of reason. For
Bergson the logic of the imagination which is evidenced in the comic is like that of
"dreams that have not been left to the whim of individual fancy, being the dreams dreamt
by the whole of society" (1956, p. 87). As for ourselves and the comedy which inheres
in our own position:

the vice capable of making us comic is, on the contrary, that which is brought
from without, like a ready-made frame into which we are about to step. It lends

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53 Breath is our ideal bridge for the hiatus between consciousness and unconsciousness. It exists equally
in all styles and degrees of consciousness. The breath is capable of being brought to or lost from
attention, continuing nonetheless. Like its passenger, language, it goes on unconsciously though we can
bring it to attention, abstract it from instances as now. Or we should say, acknowledging anteriority,
language is like breath in these instances. And breath’s passenger in this sense, we should note, is any
language. Breath is what makes bearable and possible being foreign in the body, any body: "The wind
blows where it will, and you hear the sound of it, but you do no know whence it comes or wither it goes;
so it is with everyone who is born of the spirit" (John: 3:8.). Breath is desire and its burial, ours and its
own. Air is what Prospero perpetually threatens to deprive Ariel of, and ultimately offers him. Breath is
what Prospero ultimately desires of us:

Gentle breath of yours my sails
Must fill or else my project fails
(Epilogue V, i, 1983, p. 1572)
us our own rigidity instead of borrowing from us our flexibility. We do not render it more complicated; on the contrary it simplifies us. (1956, p. 71)

For Bergson, comedy, the condition of laughter, effects a reversal such that: "The comic person is unconscious. As though wearing the ring of Gyges with reverse effect, he becomes invisible to himself while remaining visible to all the world" (1956, p. 71).

What emerges is a theory of the necessary interdependence of tension and elasticity in the body, which while it has ramifications outside of the theatrical, yet appears to have a general aesthetic and performative significance:

Laughter, then, does not belong to the province of esthetics alone, since unconsciously (and even immorally in many particular instances) it pursues a utilitarian aim of general improvement. And yet there is something esthetic about it, since the comic comes into being just when society and the individual, freed from the worry of self-preservation, begin to regard themselves as works of art. (1956, p. 74)

For Bergson, laughter is the corrective for a comic rigidity which persists despite the efforts of society to rid itself of such and assure itself of the maximum elasticity of its participants. Bergson claims that "since the comic oscillates between life and art" we might be able to determine from it the general relation of these to each other (1956, p. 74). Imitation, which gives rise to laughter, depends upon revealing "the element of automatism" a person has allowed in his manner. For Bergson this element is the essence of the ludicrous. Laughter in its most fundamental forms depends on a consciousness of iteration. Bergson writes:

The truth is that a really living life should never repeat itself. Wherever there is repetition or complete similarity, we always suspect some mechanism at work behind the living... This deflection of life towards the mechanical is... the real cause of laughter. (1956, p. 82)

Laughter entails then a kind of community by exclusion: the clumsy, the weak, the absent-minded, the wrong-headed, all those caught up, as it were, in their own inelasticity, we see outside ourselves as laughable; thus laugh ourselves off as we ourselves embody these comic traits. The ability to see the self as comic we may then relate to a capacity to deal with alterity: the unheimlich aspects of the self, the familiarity of others.

In Baudelaire's (1855) essay, "On the Essence of Laughter and generally of the Comic in the Plastic Arts", he writes that "one of the most distinctive signs of the absolute comic is to be unaware of itself" (1992, p. 160). For Baudelaire the comic is:

a phenomenon that belongs to the class of all artistic phenomena that show the existence in the human being of a permanent dualism, the capacity of being both himself and someone else at one and the same time.

These phenomena are characteristic of aesthetic production in general because the comic is comic "only on condition that he is unaware of his own nature; just as, by an inverse law, the artist is an artist only on condition that he is dual and that he is ignorant of none of the phenomena of his dual nature" (1992, p. 161). Laughter is for Baudelaire essentially contradictory because it is essentially human, it is at once a sign of infinite greatness (in relation to beasts) and infinite wretchedness (in relation to the absolute being) and "it is from the clash of these two infinities that laughter flows" (1992, p. 148).

As I have said, the subject of laughter is a mistakenness. That laughter which wrongs the body (as the finding of fault) only ever results from the perception of something wrong with or in or by the body, but is itself the reflex or revenge of the body:
what the body comes to without or beyond words. It is even a demonstration of the limit of words or their usefulness. Always necessarily a self-swallowing, laughter is what the body does (undirected) with itself. Laughter, like the expression of pain, is authentically of the body. Which is not to say, that it, like pain, cannot be feigned. Such feigning is a means of drawing back into the circle of the social what would otherwise express a limit of that circle: the subjective judgement of a body beyond the recourse of words.

Haunting, by contrast, entails a community by inclusion: we belong because we are among those visited, because there is no stepping out of the circle which shows where we belong, because there is no seeing the circle. Why is there no seeing it? Precisely because it is absence which is haunting. Or we should say haunting is the presence of what is not present. Haunting is the outside in the body, the survival of all that is prior-to in the body’s potentials.

Language is full of this presence of what is not there (in Sartre’s formulation, of the "nothingness which haunts being" [1989, p. 11]), of what no longer remains. For Sartre apparition comes from being and apparition is given first as adventure. Grasped as dynamic upsurge it offers us the origin of the principle of causality, "the apprehension of the 'appeared' before it appears" (1989, p. 208). Haunting for Sartre is the key to that temporality in which is enabled "the flight from the past which I am towards the future which I am" (1989, p. 203). Language, instrument of this flight, this way, is always haunted. In it we have no choice but to apprehend what we say as apparition of the already-said. It is by virtue of this that Wittgenstein is able to say: "Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from one side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about" (1994, p. 99).

Poetry works and plays with and in this labyrinth of presences and absences. It is the fact that this work and play is in language anyway, regardless of what anyone calls poetry, which allows Valéry to posit the poetic nature of the word in general.

Never in but always beside language (before it and after it) is the potential of the body we know as laughter. What language is with but never full of is laughter. What language can neither catch nor ever empty itself of is haunting. And yet these two, haunting and laughter, are the common unworded experience of humanity.

The solitary (or collective) victimhood in which the haunted feel themselves to participate amounts to a position not unlike that of the victim of laughter. They are pursued by something intangible, inescapable and which cannot be provided against. Both the haunted and the laughed-at suffer an experience we might describe as the unsettling of the soul. They are both equally victims of alterity out of their conscious control.

And what of those personae – the laughers and the ghosts – those who viciously prove and deny our humanity, perhaps in the terms Deleuze and Guattari establish in A Thousand Plateaus where they write "humans are made exclusively of inhumanities"? (1987, p. 190). Are these not also our selves, in turn, and just as hard to pick apart? When man "howls with laughter", writes Nietzsche, "he surpasses all animals with his coarseness" (1994, p. 243).

Laughter seems to dissolve haunting for all time. Rumi writes of the man who, though fallen asleep, God will not desert, so that he:

... when the appointed Day shall dawn, escapes
From dark imaginings that haunted him,
And turns with laughter on his phantom griefs
When he beholds his everlasting home.

(1995, p. 188)
But what dissolves laughter is precisely those griefs of memory which constitute the haunting with which we are placed and must acknowledge a temporal home or its lack.

It is the circularity of haunting and laughter, their self-swallowing, their interminable flow into and implication of each other, their determination to occupy the same territory, which has them and us dissolve (in fits or as an apparition), in each other's presence.

That which haunts us we constitute as otherness or nothingness, absence not ours, which we appropriate and order ourselves among, merely in the act of naming. That dispelling laughter which wells up from within, which shakes the frame down to its core, is in its moment just as otherly. Its physicality is such that we are hard pressed to disclaim it and yet it presents as a symptom of something not ours, a symptom that is of our own alterity. Laughter is full of echoes which deprive us of sense and which yet themselves are full of the already-said. It is laughter which shows us the outside of sense and which shows sense outside.

The manner in which laughter is haunted and in which haunting dissolves is such that these two cannot but be mistaken for each other. Echoes are what remain when echoes within us dispel. All of our words are canonical but we part with the canon when we fall into speech, when we embody a way in the world, and thus allow mistakenness its part.

Invisible Empires: Postcolonial Bodies

Earth, oh Earth, who could tell your losses?
Only who sang with unflattering praise
of the heart, born into the midst of it all.

Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus (1949, p. 91)

Our world regards itself as postcolonial, as having laughed off all the old empires, ghostly revisitations as they were of the ancient world. Yet our world remains haunted in its own beyond by the very trials and divisions for which, as modern civilisation, it constitutes the beyond. Human rights, the way out of haunting iniquity, are imposed on the weak and the ignorant, who do not know how to handle them. There are rewards and punishments for knowing and not knowing. There is aid and debt. All over the world are fledgling sovereignties taunted with solidities of absence (there is no foreign army here, I fill no forms for foreign officials), behaving as under a powerful influence which they are at pains to deny. Does the west not, religion aside, still behave as if the rest of the world were asleep, unable to feed or look after itself? Is the third world not laughable in its lacks, wholly avoidable as they are, the result of bad sentence or none at all. There is enough food in India but greed and inefficiency... And the former Soviet bloc, that upside-down parody of a world, lamentable miscalculation of human nature, now grovelling with the rest to be made right, is it not the great standing joke of our century? Is it not the body which Bergson prophesied, gripped with a comic rigidity which, only now, our laughter begins to dissolve?

What is it sustains those iniquities which call our consciences to task in the service of all humanity? What but myth can make sense of injustice, can make the oppressed toil under their wrongs, benighted, as if in the grip of nature? How can such myth persist.
when we know, from our lives, that that nightmare under which they live, is able to be dispelled – as mere superstition or a bad habit?

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Myth makes us modern and literate possessors of our own sovereignty believe in our haunting as something benign. It is perhaps apposite now to consider the manner of context within which myth (and as well orality) have been so consistently denigrated in writing. We need not resort here to an argument against something as broad as Derrida’s conception of writing as difference in order to revive the train of thought by which Saussure and later structuralists had hoped to reverse the denigration of speech in a philology delivered in and guaranteeing primacy to writing.

The fact of Derrida’s epistemic success\(^\text{54}\) in identifying the untenability of Saussurean claims to the anteriority of speech in our thought, neither denies ultimately the (phylogenetic and ontogenetic) anteriority of speech nor its continuing preponderance over writing in the everyday lives of most of humanity. It will perhaps rather be seen, now that technologies begin to make possible the end of the reign of writing, as a resumption of the Aristotelian project to establish the primacy of the written word. The fact that we, as literates, cannot approach orality but from a literate standpoint, denies neither the fact that orality can maintain an a-literate view of itself, nor that literacy always depends on an origin and situation in speech.

In approaching the question of myth then we need to ask in what does this vast body of literature, which is as widespread (and perhaps as heterogeneous) as poetry, consist? Is there outside of the modern and later literatures which Europe has allowed, any which can be thought of as other than mythic? For cultures outside of Europe what has the denigration\(^\text{55}\) of myth meant? This is a question we cannot avoid asking the moment we acknowledge that Europe, in failing to establish the limits of the auto-critique on which it commenced in writing of the world, subjected the world outside Europe to what have presented as universal criteria of judgement. We could argue that it has been part of a process consonant with the imperial project: there is an easy continuity between

\(^{54}\) It can easily be argued that Derridean privileging of writing entails a continuity with Platonic and Cartesian anti-corporeal projects. Ashcroft et al contend:

Bodily presence or awareness in one sense or another is one of the features which is central to post-colonial rejections of the Euro-centric and logocentric emphasis on ‘absence’, a rejection which positions the Derridean dominance of the ‘written’ sign within a larger discursive economy of voice and movement. In its turn this alter/native discursive and inscriptive economy which stresses the oral and the performative is predicated upon the idea of an exchange in which those engaged are physically present to one another. In oral performance the meaning is made in the exchange that is a sine qua non of orality. The oral text is not synonymous with the written inscriptions or ‘oral’ texts collected by anthropologists and others in recent years. In practice the oral only exists and acquires meaning in the possibility of an immediate and modifying response, existing therefore only interactively with its whole speech or movement event. In other words the real body is acknowledged in such an exchange in a way in which the "pale" material concerns of recent theory are readily dissolved. (1995, p. 321)

\(^{55}\) In his paper, ‘The Life of Myth and its Possible Bearing on Erna Brodbro’s Fictions’ (Kunapipi, XII, 3, 1990, p. 86), Wilson Harris describes ours as “a time when myth is denigrated or undervalued in favour of a realism divorced from the intuitive imagination.” The danger he sees in this trend is that “subtle links and bridges between multi-faceted nature and psyche are largely eclipsed by an enlightenment so called that concerns itself with fields of experience geared to uniform (rather than cross-cultural) parentage of tradition.” Perhaps as well though we should ask what such a denigration means, by association (as we have noted, with the unconscious, with dreaming and with those collectivities which depend on these) for the European mind.
the dismissal of the \emph{primitive} past and that of what must be regarded the most indigenous aspect of today's clearly syncretic cultural forms.

From what point of view and in the name of which continuities (or claimed discontinuities) is such judgement exercised? The covert canon of the international humanities academy clearly demands as its due a degree of mannered cynicism informed by the right sorts of reading. In his essay "The Politics of the Possible" Kumkum Sangari writes:

non-mimetic, non-western modes also seem to lay themselves open to the academized procedures of a peculiarly western, historically singular, postmodern epistemology that universalizes the self-conscious dissolution of the bourgeois subject, with its now characteristic stance of self-irony, across both space and time. (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 143)

Sangari notes that modernism is "a major act of cultural self-definition, made at a time when colonial territories are being repackaged". In fact we may identify modernism with the peak phase of Europe's avowed imperial project. For Sangari the two are co-dependent to the extent that "Modernism as it exists is inconceivable without the archive, and the archive as it exists is inconceivable without the political and economic relations of colonialism" (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 145).

Thus Modernism, however it engaged a critique of its material and enabling conditions, depended on the world-as-museum which Europe's acquisitive successes enabled. Sangari contends that under the reign of the postmodern it is hybridity (that opening to two worlds which permits the interrogation of historical placement) which, as novelty, ensures assimilation into the line of postmodern writers:

not only because the principle of innovation is the principle of the market in general but also because the postmodern obsession with anti-mimetic forms is always on the lookout for new modes of "self"-fracture, for new versions of the self-locating, self-disrupting text.

For Sangari the \textit{self-ironizing bourgeois subject} remains in the service of a \textit{suffocating Western sovereignty} and the \textit{postmodern crisis} "threatens to become just as imperious as bourgeois humanism". Like modernism it may turn out to be "another internalization of the international role of the west" (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, pp. 143-7).

It may, from the point of view of a criticism or theory which sees (or fails to see) itself as grounded above all in the development of western philosophy, be an easy matter to consign to oblivion a literature (indeed a \textit{proto}-literature) which, taking none of this into account, instead insists upon an authority divinely come by. Europe's own superstitions fill the purported dustbin of its own canon. Though to the extent that these superstitions remain retrievable we note that they are offered a privilege denied the superstitions of orality. What could be more abject or indeed charming (collectible) than other peoples' superstitions? In acknowledging this procedure we need to ask how present practices are discontinuous with the nineteenth century attitude Europe had to its others (and to its own infantile primitive past)?

It would be naïve to think that the imperial project of deciding the standards by which nations are to be judged was one abolished by the UN Charter. It would be equally naïve to imagine that this is not a problem for the conscience of the West and all who are similarly haunted. It would be almost as naïve to think that seeing the problem allows us to stand outside of it. Justifying the persona of the liberal ironist, Richard Rorty concludes his book, \textit{Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity} with the following paragraph:

To sum up, I want to distinguish human solidarity as the identification with "humanity as such" and as the self-doubt which has gradually, over the last few
centuries, been inculcated into the inhabitants of democratic states – doubt about their own sensitivity to the pain and humiliation of others, doubt that present institutional arrangements are adequate to deal with this pain and humiliation, curiosity about possible alternatives. The identification to me seems impossible – a philosopher’s invention, an awkward attempt to secularize the idea of becoming one with God. The self-doubt seems to me the characteristic mark of the first epoch in human history in which large numbers of people have become able to separate the question "Do you believe and desire what we believe and desire?" from the question "Are you suffering?" In my jargon, this is the ability to distinguish the question of whether you and I share the same final vocabulary from the question of whether you are in pain. Distinguishing these questions makes it possible to distinguish public from private questions, questions about pain from questions about the point of human life, the domain of the liberal from the domain of the ironist. It thus makes it possible for a single person to be both. (1989, p. 198)

My cosmopolitan doubt is somehow more valid than the insular certainty by which primitives know themselves and by which they know themselves got at by the world outside. But how well do the primitives know themselves? How can knowledge, for instance in oral society, measure up against the epistemic resources of writing? Ong writes of those variants which appear to diverge from a standard language, "the grapholect includes all the other dialects: it explains them as they cannot explain themselves" (1988, p. 107). If we stumble through this conundrum uneasy how to decide our loyalty, our pain will perhaps be eased in acknowledging that these are not choices we get to make. We (readers and writers in this kind of text) are haunted in the manner of liberal ironists, not in the manner of the pre- or post-colonial others of Europe.

When Bakhtin writes of the absolute and completed time of the epic past, it is tempting to ask (along the lines of Freud’s enquiry in "The Future of an Illusion") which kind of writing may not be accused of reifying its own past and conditions of presence. It is tempting to ask how much of the freeze is from writing itself and how much of the freeze is from myth. It is not that Bakhtin’s distinction between the epic and the novelistic easily collapses. Rather that, in blurring as we now must, the distinction between fictive and other (for instance theoretical) discourses, this distinction needs to be seen both in the light of the relationship between the oral and written development of literatures and as itself a particular overview and privileging. This overview and privilege are not easily reversed. It is not easy for the illiterate epic mind to take in or formulate any useful critique of the novelistic. Nevertheless, a view over any culture, a totalising view, is one also in danger of becoming an absolute and complete (monologic) version of the world. In "The Responsibility of the Writer" Sartre tells us that:

the stronger the ideology held by the ruling classes, the less the writer who is in touch with the governing classes is responsible, the more he inclines to be merely the guardian of that ideology, and as it always claims to be eternal, it is obvious that he is going to be an observer of eternal values. (in Block and Salinger, 1960, p. 175)

Problematic as this conception of ideology (as strong or weak, possessed by one class or another) appears, it yet avoids the danger of consigning to error all that a particular culture may be capable of. This is precisely the danger to which the wholesale denigration of myth commits us.

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In The Wretched of the Earth (1961), Fanon describes the transformation of the oral cultural tradition in Algeria at the time of the struggle for liberation from France:
stories, epics and songs of the people – which formerly were filed away as set pieces are now beginning to change. The storytellers who used to relate inert episodes now bring them alive and introduce into them modifications which are increasingly fundamental. There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernize the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke... The formula "This all happened long ago" is substituted with that of "What we are going to speak of happened somewhere else, but it might well have happened here today, and it might happen tomorrow." (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 155)

Perhaps a properly epochal (rather than eternalising) view of literature's productions needs to take account of the context of that production in relation to, rather than in the guise of, the materiality of the text. Speech and writing may themselves have no natural allegiances but it becomes increasingly clear that literacy cannot help but privilege its own overview of all discourse. The epic past need be no more or less dialogic than a novelistic present or poetic modernity. In each case we need ask which intentions are served by particular matchings of genre and context.

Of the writer working under the sway of a strong ideology, Sartre goes on to say that though he (sic) limited himself, on the surface, to establishing the values of the class in currently power:

he went beyond them as a writer, because, nevertheless, he placed them face to face with freedom. His work was a constant appeal to human liberty because without even realizing it himself, implicitly, by the mere fact of presenting these values, by dint of holding them up to observation and discussion, by dint of naming them, he invited men to go beyond them. (in Block and Salinger, 1960, p. 176)

If we write this off now as a self-justifying wishful thinking, then we ought at least pause to consider what style of ethics with which to replace it. In Algeria, Fanon writes:

the epic, with its typified categories, reappeared; it became an authentic form of entertainment which took on once more a cultural value. Colonialism made no mistake when from 1955 (two years before Barthes' publication of Mythologies) on it proceeded to arrest these storytellers systematically. (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 155)

We should emphasise here what for Fanon is the immediately dialogic nature of the epic the storyteller makes with an audience:

The storyteller replies to the expectant people by successive approximations, and makes his way, apparently alone but in fact helped on by his public, towards the seeking out of new patterns. (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 156)

Any context in which conservative forces maintain exclusive control of print media will surely tend to revive the dialogic force of the epic, of all oral culture; conversely to promote the most monologic and reified of official fictions. In the absence of recording technology the spoken word, once spoken, is already effectively hidden, its retrieval a matter of individual memory. This is why torture is generally carried out on individuals: in order to retrieve the spoken word. Where the printed word is easily repressed (by dint of its physical presence as a thing to be hidden, discovered), especially in a newly or marginally literate culture, pressure is redoubled on orality for it to express opinion, for it to be a means by which the culture arising from unofficial quarters expresses its relation to the official line. For a good deal of its plot, Orwell's 1984 presents the opposite nightmare, one in which a subversive writing appears to be possible when speech is not. To interpose Bakhtin's terms here we might easily suggest that what is living and interactive or conversely dead and frozen in a text has little to do, unless locked into position by definition, with the nature of specific genres, and
everything to do with which of these forms is enlisted on the side of oppression and which on the side of liberation.

Fanon's storyteller, we note too, brings our solitary dreamer full circle – he appears to tell the story alone, his appears to be a fixed voice of the past. In fact the voices of others are in him, not merely as the ghosts of past telling, but in an immediate and interactive sense, together they unfold a possible future. So it might be with all dreaming together. Without wishing the risk of falling into a universalising trap or of undervaluing the complex relations of difference obtaining between the spoken and the written literary text, it would seem that the unconscious freedom of which Sartre writes must equally be possessed by the makers of both literatures and regardless of their own opinions as to sources.

Bakhtin has correctly identified the contradiction in the fact of an oral culture becoming frozen, other than dialogic. This discovery and that of the heteroglossic dialogism of the novel does not guarantee the written some incorruptible status. Indeed the work of Lord and Parry on the epic may be taken as suggesting that at least one method of freezing the epic into completed time is the recording of it in writing. The access of modern criticism and theory to the epic texts which are for them formative is necessarily through a frozen and literary record, the act of the making of which constitutes in itself an end of the interactive potential of the epic's telling.

Just as we have acknowledged that dreams only appear to be monologic so we must now at least recognise that in regarding (originally oral) myths or epics in this light we have by and large taken the word of writers who have examined written materials, materials which may find but do not have the capacity to make audiences in the sense intended by Fanon, materials to this extent removed from the living interactivity in which they were born/e. Claiming that the epic world is invariant and unchanging is then a little like finding a mammoth in the ice and claiming from one's observations that this was a cold-blooded animal which could never move. The purpose here need not be to rehabilitate the processes which Barthes named myth or Bakhtin epic (neither of which were identified exclusively with orality), rather we should question what has been implied by both of these critiques: the derogation of orality as a lesser sentence.

We should be particularly mindful of the consequences of universalising this derogation (neither author sets cultural limits to the discursive phenomena he describes). True, Barthes referred to specific semiotic conditions but we need to acknowledge that by naming these myth was understood a derogatory revelation, as primitive, of the methods or structure of modern culture (as opposed for instance to those of modern poetry), this derogation achieved by association with (what were considered) superseded cultural forms.

We need neither be apologists nor enthusiasts for the process of talking most of humanity out of its stories and sense of itself. But it is a far different process to talk the oppressor out of the story which justified past world-wronging work, than it is to universalise the critique of one's own acquisitive childhood, as if it applied equally to everyone else: as if, in fact, those who had not conquered (or had done it less recently) were stuck in some earlier stage of development. Reflecting on the position from which we offer this view, we can only suggest that our critique should properly be of the universalising form which oppression took and which it still takes.

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56 We might equally account for this phenomenon in terms of Ong's *homeostasis* (1982, pp. 46-9), emphasising that where orality persists, it is really the present order which the epic is designed to preserve, and it does this, despite its own conviction to the contrary, by shifting, subtly and convincingly, the terms which make up its past.
All this said, if the function of myth is to freeze the past into an unchallengeable ever thus in which our freedom is made impossible, then does not myth deserve to be the subject of all forms of derogation? Barthes' purpose is to show how myth is alive and well among us, how it survives in and feeds off literate culture. Surely then we are duty bound to pass on the benefits of that perspicuity which writing bestows on us? But what literacy and the arrogance attending it risk is an imbalance between haunting and laughter. The written world may be one in which haunting has come to the surface and remains there inert, ready for our borrowing from it. Where sound and visual sign have parted ways, as in English, it is easy to feel oneself in the presence of lost etymologies; to work with and from an awareness, that is, of an irretrievable past in which I am formed. I write in a room full of words waiting for and which must anticipate mine. From these facts of presence how can I not assume a greater knowledge than that of those who never can sort through their haunting, who cannot remind themselves but rather must be reminded? The mind which constitutes itself as post-colonial does not distance itself from such a conclusion, rather it makes writing ubiquitous and generalises the access of a certain style of haunting to us. Should we then argue against writing as if it were the source and the seat of oppression under which "post-colonies" labour? This would be to argue against ourselves, against the mind beyond which we have no frame and no authority. And yet we write of orality, of just such a place, as if by the right of those beyond it, as if what haunted us of it were a sufficient knowledge.

After half a century of decolonised ruling elites exposing their subjects to what might be seen more or less as a continuity with past oppressions, it is difficult to argue that the theoreticians and wordworkers who deal with this oppression should be denied any of the tools which might help them expose oppression. The risk of course is (as Socrates suggested in calling poets the paid apologists of tyranny) that the tools of those who are descended from but have forgotten colonialism, are used to continue and modernise a process of oppression in which imperialisms continue.

If it appears that I write among the saved and I speak among the lost, we note that by this observation we assume that knowledge is the pursuit of spectres, retrievable through access to writing. In writing it seems we go after ghosts, in speech they come to us. But knowing, Sartre reminds us, is an absolute and primitive event (1989, p. 216). Pressures in the direction both of a consciousness of ideology and of a generally reflexive consciousness suggest that the less retrievable our spectres are, the less susceptible of scrutiny, the more haunting they are. The literate world does not so easily as this escape the conditions of orality. It is in fact a world which cannot turn from the implication of these phonologies of meaning each in the other. We live in a confusion of speech and writing and the implication of their processes in each other, a confusion demonstrated when we stumble over the choice of whether to write "so-and-so-says" or "so-and-so-writes", a confusion we avoid by settling for "so-and-so-tells-us". Writing cannot but be haunted by speech and once we have written the opposite of this is also true.

There is no writing, and equally no speech, independent of the ethics of where I am and how I come to be here. If this is the truth of historicism then likewise we may say that there is no access to the past explaining me except by means of my present truth. When Barthes writes of myth as second order semiosis he writes of a metabusiness which pretends not be one. Myth is the story about our being here which becomes the manner in which we are here. It shows us the crossing of the line from representation into life and back again, which is the circuit the work of art must travel in order to survive. Whenever we speak or write of dreams, by virtue of this process of speaking or writing, we implicate them in a textual loop which renders them mythic. Thus our difficulty in accounting for dream and myth as separate entities. Just as our speech of dreams is modelled after myth which imitates our dreaming, so such a circuit implicates speech and writing in literate society and has the effect of making text which lies out of the activity of such a circuit either disappear or appear as frozen.
I have described myth as memory in the service of amnesia. In an oral society we have every reason to believe that the stories we regard in the light of myth, are not only created dialogically through a process of interaction between story teller and audience (cf. Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry, Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*, 1977, passim), but that they compete with other such stories through the turn taking process in which an audience yields up and indeed apprentices its story tellers. In oral culture myth must be the kind of gossip which has at least temporarily silenced its opposition, which has, that is, converted its partners in dialogue, for the time being, into an audience. The stories told may be reifications of a past which cannot stand the scrutiny of other accounts. But to the extent that they are borne of a dialogical process, one in which turns are taken, they in fact must face such scrutiny and, if they survive, must at least for a time suit what we may think of as the general purpose of a community or whatever power relations have it inhere as such. Myth, in oral society, thus lives as the testing of reification. So truth is what stands the test of time.

Oral myth, as it is preserved in literate society and by the process of written record, is something functionally different from either its *pre-domesticated* version or from the complex mixtures of semiotics in which Barthesian myth is rendered. Oral myth written down has undergone a double reification, which ironically removes it well and truly from the world of the credible or the real. What was not only the subject of contention but in fact a form of speech immediately responsive to the conditions of its telling, one generically not far from gossip, becomes unchallengeable because it exists as an authoritative version and of a culture no longer there to participate in it. A speech which freezes the past as a story is frozen out of speech. It threatens nothing because it presents as the sort of spectre we must seek out ourselves. Its death is evidenced by the fact that it cannot be disagreed with, it cannot only be disagreed about. And yet it is kept alive through our revisitation, that is, through an authorial haunting of it, which takes the form of a *making transitive*: Joyce haunts us with Ulysses. And if myth lives again this way it is able to constitute a threat. In some senses Barthesian myth, for instance advertising, provides a threat along these lines. Presented as writing or image or more likely, a combination of these, it allows us no opportunity to interject. Shouting at the television will not change its tune. When we change the channel, switch off, even write an angry letter, we are not responding in kind. By virtue of its medium unassailable, modern myth has us take our opinions elsewhere, into a different kind of text.

Perhaps one such as Freud creates in claiming ancient myths for the modern psyche. In this way, as Bouveneros notes, considering the unconscious as myth in *Wittgenstein Reads Freud*, the reconstructions of psychoanalysis are of "events that had to happen" (1995, p. 68). They are, as well, of events which have always happened. Homeostasis explains the dynamism of myth by suggesting that things of the past must be changed in order for the same grip to be kept on the now. Through such a process we become the spectral presences haunting our own past. And yet even in the process of that haunting, in the exercise of altering the past to suit us, to suit even our absence of intentions, our grip on the now must shift. So that past and present continually slip within and around each other, however we conceive them.

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The survival of any text depends on unrelenting judgement as well as a continuity of transmission by whatever means. But it depends on many more moments in which the faculty of judgement is, as in the case of a dreamer, suspended in favour of what we must regard, however primitively, as a form of faith. Beyond any question of a denigration or rehabilitation, there is the fact of our survival in and through myth, the fact of myth as our making.

How like and unlike dreaming all our telling fictions are, and whether mimetic or otherwise, how apt it still seems, to think of all stories as in the manner of a dreaming made collective. But then we need to ask "whose dream?" and "whose collectivity?".
what ends these are employed. We can say with Sartre that there is inherently in all telling an opening onto freedom. How satisfied we should be with our consciences then. The fact remains that the forms of oppression equally with those of liberation are cultural forms. What Sartre identifies is the hope of a potential we cannot afford to be without.

How does poetry break the spell of myth which we lie under with it? For whether or not it is writing which freezes myth out of the world of speech, the fact remains that myth (spoken or written) functions to freeze the past in which speech is constituted. We have learnt to distrust the means of our access to such observations, and yet with only these to go on, we are forced to acknowledge poetry as neither anti-writing nor anti-myth, but rather as a form of speech which depends on the contradictions which inhere in moments between waking and dreaming. Poetry's role then, through ambivalence, is to re-open the past, to disallow its finishing, to re-assert that speech on which myth relies and which myth lies under. An ethics of presence demands the cycle of dis/solution in which haunting and laughter dis/engage each other. Whatever is produced in this cycle or its interruptions, just as it has no guarantee of not being written, has no guarantee of not being made myth. "I suspend judgement", Montaigne had inscribed on the beams of his study. Was this wishful thinking on his part? Poetry too, suspended between waking and dreaming, works by not remaining in one of these minds, but rather acts as two texts, hoping but failing to break in to each other. Where poetry works for us we are possessed by neither but by a passage between them which cannot be possessed. This betweenness points to an interest in prescription and transgression — in the iterative and tropic processes of language — those tending on the one hand toward stability (the Apollonian) and on the other towards change (the Dionysian).

The cringing cap-in-hand conscience which Shelley brings to the gates of Atopia, hoping to have himself and poetry re-admitted, as just representation, is answered in Novalis’ assertion, of the body as abbreviation of the cosmos\textsuperscript{57}.

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Civilisation — the tomb maker; that unceasing stillness and undeniable collectivity which we have made and from which we are made, has come to threaten the breath of speech and thus all enabling.

All breathe the same air but not with the same facility or freedom. It is our industry which is making the physical process of breathing more and more difficult for more and more of us. The disaster at Bhopal, where flyspray was turned on the species it was intended to protect, attests this on the local scale.

But the air has no local or global borders. There is nowhere beyond the smoke of our fires. That is our main species shame\textsuperscript{58} today. It is as if what we exhale has overwhelmed our hopes of drawing in what gives us life.

\textsuperscript{57} Among the aphorisms in "Pollen" Novalis writes:

\begin{quote}
How can a human being have sense for anything if he does not have the germ of it within himself? Whatever I am to understand must develop organically within me; and whatever I seem to learn is only a feeding, an incitement to the organism.
The seat of the soul is where the inner world and the outer world meet. Where they overlap, it is in every point of the overlap. (1960, p. 66)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58} And yes - this collectivity we note, as (mainly) man’s (a gendered) inability to get beyond himself, the bad taste he leaves in his own mouth, is a form of return (reflux) which seems eternal, and which as our century has shown, is ignored by the worst sort of conscience, not necessarily that of the self-proclaimed superman, but certainly one which does not accept the consequences of its action beyond those skins it most easily reads.
Our eggshell biosphere (skin we share) is one in which empire is regenerated from traces which continue to generate profits and losers, continue to convert in largely obvious and visible ways, the suffering of the many into the comfort of the few. Is there anything new in this? Robert Creeley writes in his poem "After Lorca":

The church is a business, and the rich
are the business men.

When they pull on the bells, the
poor come piling in and when a poor man dies, he has a wooden
cross, and they rush through the ceremony.

But when a rich man dies, they
drag out the Sacrament
and a golden Cross, and go doucement, doucement
to the cemetery.

And the poor love it
and think it's crazy.

(Hoover, 1994, p. 144)

The world is everywhere owned and controlled in a way which favours the languages and cultures of domination, those languages and cultures which the oppressed nearly everywhere beg to go on, to guarantee progress, if not for their own sake then for the sake of their children.

If there is a voice claiming wholeness in itself it is the dispassionate voice of the newsreader which tells us of the restoration of democracy in Russia or Haiti, or any of dozens, if not more, imaginary regimes where the citizenry have in the bad days been subject to forms of government other than the condition of nature which England has bestowed.

Canonic logic, the logic of sameness, difficult to catch because it shifts, it splits when our attention is that way, mirroring the movement of creative practice, makes itself indistinguishable from what it sets out to judge. It is the non/practice of not risking.

Now we are told we are cured, the world cured, that the good guys have won. The happy ending which Gonzalo gives a voice in The Tempest, is one in which, in a poor isle, we find ourselves, "when no man was his own" (V, i; 1983, p. 1571).

Those artefacts which the canon selects to privilege are properly buried in the continuity of process which is the endless scroll, the endlessness of flow, the breath in which we work here, as elsewhere, at the edge of empire. Here growth is a faith to stave off the inevitable cycles into which we are born, out of which we die. This imposed continuity, by which we expect to count to an ever higher number, is far more dangerous than avowed myth, which says this is how the world became, began, this was next; which calls for belief, which claims to be out of the flux. But we know that the walls of the temple are always building, always about to fall.

The function of religious myth is to allow gods a moral immunity to which the laity have no appeal. It's all right for God to rape his mother just in order to become, to kill everyone in order to have charge of time, to be, in short, everything we are commanded not to be. This is the guarantee of a life over and before ours (of parents, ancestors, kings and parliaments), the anterior barbarity which assures (if only by brute force) the conditions we know as society. We are subject to laws no god could accept.
We will not find a way out by saying that the Bible presents a succession of laws in which the newer supersedes the older. The old law does not lie in ruins under the new. It still makes possible the law which is lived now. The canon of texts (which includes an apocrypha) which makes up the Bible, does not begin to exclude itself. So it is with canons in general, that the lost plays a role in the ethics of everything after. Maintaining the exclusion of the outside is the xenophobe's work – to depart ever further from reality in order to live with oneself, not alone but oblivious.

Myth is the word of god addressed to a silent audience, the passivity of which guarantees that their process of making god and myth will be inaccessible to them. It is in other words a kind of block to dissipate the danger of reflexivity. Myth's generic corollary – the other blind turn in this dialogue of absent partners – is prayer: the word of man (sic) addressed to a silent god, a god powerless to answer, and from whom any intelligible and widely accessible answer would severely compromise the mystery which justifies the asking, that particular channel for desire. And prayer is virtually the opposite of dreaming. It is the self in its most monologic mode, mouthing what is expected for an audience which is, in one sense, entirely tame and, in another, entirely open: a partner, whatever its or His reality, almost fully internalised, whom certain more or less spontaneous formulae are evolved to appease. Prayer is that mirror of absence into which we call and call and never hear a whimper. We no longer take seriously the idea that the results of invocation pour through us like wine. And while invocation is the other side of inspiration, the request for an audience, the calling on a god; prayer assumes that the channel is always open, that the god can always be bothered, has nothing better to do than be there for your benefit. But is to pray to seek inspiration or rather to beg forgiveness? Those who pray are haunted by conscience but have shunned the idea that one among the tribe of gods might choose them. For these very reasons, prayer is risk free, and in the terms of Pascal's wager, something one would be mad not to try. The questions which prayer brings into focus are the same as we ask of myth, of dreams, of poetry: the questions of consciousness and authenticity. Who are we when we pray? Who do we think we are? Do we become ourselves that way? Valéry asks in "Poems in the Rough":

Divided, how may I pray? How pray when another self is overhearing the prayer? - Therefore one must pray only in an unknown tongue. Render riddle for riddle, riddle to riddle. Lift up the mystery in you toward the mystery in itself. There is in you something equal to what is beyond you. (1977, p. 178)

Both myth and prayer are efforts to circumvent the differend which is between the partners in a dialogue. This differend is what makes analysis and interpretation and dialogue itself interminable. The fact that people are not clones guarantees the fundamental undecidability at the heart of speech which is poetry's home: not a place at all.

The third voice, now the other voice (or is it both mine and yours?), in the post-war, post-modern, post-colonial world if it is one, is Caliban's. A voice (of darkness, given darkness) struggling to get out of the space constructed for it by the world's true

59 Compare Herbert's version in his poem "Prayer", of "God's breath in man returning to his birth, / The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage.../ Engine against th'Almighty, sinner's tower./ Reversèd thunder (1967, p. 90)

60 Or a God perhaps such as that which Rimbaud describes in 'Evil':

There is a God, who smiles upon us through
The gleam of gold, the incense-laden air,
Who drowses in a cloud of murmured prayer
(1976, p. 54)
inheritors, the generations of slave owners, a voice which, if ridden with superstition and myth, is yet torn with the reflexive engagement entailed in its status of being everywhere made foreign, a voice trapped for the most part in the language of the trap61. But whose voice is at stake here, whose reflexivity? And how are we to pick apart the mechanism allowing such a voice from that voice itself? Who are we after all? That is the question from which we do not escape by means of the presupposition which constitutes the asking we. That chained and unintelligible creature rumoured through a London street: have we any speech of such a person? Have we any knowledge of a person like that? But we do have something of another place; something not mine, but made mine, however I choose to regard it; made mine in the act of being given a voice, in the act of becoming intelligible. And we have over this body, however real, however fictional, a war of phrases, what Lyotard calls a war at the border, one which "forecloses occurrence at the boundaries of the narrative corpus constituting the social 'body' the way paranoia allows the 'movement of desire' to return from the outside, as 'reality' " (1988, p. 155). Somewhat in that likeness, somewhat choosing or chosen in that identity apprehended as other; would one not in the effort to speak, articulate, as Spivak insists, "the difficult task of rewriting (one's) own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of (one's) possibility"? (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 27). Only thus could the subaltern speak.

The absence of the slave owners, which is only ever really an absence so long as it remains convenient to them, opens onto the moment which we now inhabit. Is that Caliban's their voice, is it the voice of their shadow? What has it do with the other human/s fallen under their words and their prayer? My words, my prayer? All these centuries hard up against the mirror seem to have had an effect. There were others out there after all, whom my imagination altered. Jack Spicer writes in "Imaginary Elegies":

Cat feeds on mouse. God feeds on God. God's goodness is
A black and blinding cannibal with sunny teeth
That only eats itself.

As for the poet and her/his relation to dreaming, Spicer exhorts:

Shelter the dreamers. They're like lobsters now
Hot red and private as they dream.
They dream about themselves.
They dream of dreams about themselves.
They dream they dream of dreams about themselves.
Splash them with twilight like a wet bat.
Unbind the dreamers.

Poet,

Be like God.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 107)

The breath of hope is always at home where we foreigners are. Unseen and unseeing, it believes in itself and in all of us, desires us. Not again but as never before.

---

61 The voice of the body of which Prospero says: "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (V, i) (1983, p. 1571).
ticklish

consequence of borders

devout in voices, undeterred

one day old
and preparing to flee
hearth dark with day

in weightlessness of limbs set free
up in the tower or under the tide

making borders with bare hands
empty
made waiting to cross
happy dullards

and these the teeth of old myth
dissolving their glass of coke

*

shack for a pyre
beached on this sea
plenty has hold
and won't let up

suspends over the flame this faith
– the wound healing time, how it becomes us
a randomness to all affection

refusing doom I dare no fates
    but only the given by law
    lays us down

in dreams
how a nakedness
hangs in our doing
– unsaying whatever
we work for all day

at last
a great hiss of machinery
out of the depths

*

respectability never lets up
it hangs on fresh adversity
has to keep shaving the armpits

    still for kip's suburb
    (ears all point one way)

when I am nowhere
    here at home longing
    appetite suspended
    in its generality

    toiling off
    nightstuck
    trembling to know

    heart to its ocean depth fallen

stroke the glans of day
coax rising
under the mat of our mastering paws
    a sky of dice is loading now
    a tug of mind my quiet

    echoes of the rest in me
    no sword falls for their ravel

black patching of a sun shot through
flags of skin till dry we fly
and love which unadulterates

*

beside the sacred cistern
the oracle says
for a good time
ring this
desiring transcendence
won't get you beyond
nor ever the trick of disinterest

that muck in the bottom of the lungs is
smoke from the dream
stood at the window
wind tamed to words, propriety

not absence
but a disappearance

truth comes to us
having no other way to go

falling up
off the ladders last rung
watch us
the air
and its piecing together
wings wear out
it's the echoes that last

inside the itching for its soup
(weather prays for us
expecting too much)
the scrotum-scape sea
in minutes by change
which only the lover
of man attests

lungs spread like a sky over that

year of thunder
myth of hymen

skin to skin
and in
you my drum to beat upon

I dreamt of awakenss
how sleep wouldn't come

the dwelling-in
of everywhere
a dancing at the edge
misreading
this adversity sought
and so I lost my conversation
had it by craft, by doubt
stepped sideways for the approbation
fondling at deformity

in the womb
I woke a sailor
canvas rigged
to catch at words
blood to help us
from the heat

*

the history of lips then
 – where all come from,
none can deny

colour of lips
made to match out of longing
the hidden made sudden
wherever we meet
reminds me of you
reminded of me

all gestures
dry stone or mortar coursing
are as death's light
in the living skull
the future's survival
backwards in us
– soul's grip of visible bone

sniffing for fear
among the old bruises

*

everyone wanting it
shoulder to groan
seaweed strewn after
a deep end to drown

fins, gills again
everywhere likes to be touched

what paw to sniff
what snout to scratch

back of the head, the nape, the brow
behind the bushes parents hear
eagerness doubtful joyous consenting

spite of motherly bluster

    o fruity genitalia
    made in matching
and smugly know the what's to be touched

under the beards of fear
lies the boy
fostering absence
moment to moment
    longing and sense
    their rub

and billed as the wound that heals
there's one
(skins fall over themselves to get in)
wakes broken to tongue in deep of day
    flesh healing over
    a stab at our seeing
    this piteous sigh
hands in before the scar can set
swimming an ache in the wind to its end

God's gaping eye
angels all dive in
– wings back straight
the silence studies

a winner
the moment you climb in

te absolvo
says over the box

still and despite all
edge of the afterbed
easy the every animal guise

love gets used to us

first ethics
would ask
would it, how could it not
whether the world is wasted on me

*

I'm sorry again
that was penis spoke

over the flesh bowl
a good shake
and bleed
there's a trooper
that's the colour

sat to attention
when I'm in you
and faraway
doing the boundless business
at tunes of thick with harem, pantry

sleep speaks in him
a team of supporters
tiny trap but lots to say
yawns through the evening
a beer, the papers
part of me which never marries
faithful to a purpose though
fits flesh to fancy

    my pet
    my little Pteros

can only count to one
will that make me monogamous?
    stroke my wings
    I charm the world
    I open doors, lift dresses
    all with that tent pole
    inattention of being
    simply stuffed with life
    and in a rakish charming way
    gets the girls light candles

    and eye behind blindness
    under skirts of imagination
    ring around me       shrine I serve

my shining still
    cartwheel sex of all containing
    part of you that's in my head
pictures of us were, will be

part in my heart which won't let up
skullduggery maid who after whispers
tails into paintwork

    what if
    during
    they call the roll
    and I'm off jiggling
    with the boys then

smoke behind dunnies
    and the wind changes

I'm an astral traveller
woken up in the ground

gravity does me
    a last stage abandoned
    loose decaying
    in orbit
my pariah moment
a voice takes up with any other
just where the mermaids hear me sing
*
subtle head
sheep dog
beside me
by morning
a fluke to fall in like this
too clumsy
back in the womb
recovering virtue
this the lost property office
none but us virgins here
down from the sick bay
heroic humping swag
shovelling down
in the coal to convince you
I come to that room
risks never have taken
fantasy's underside, raw, in a mess
I'm building a tomb
in my own yard of longings

Resolve me! Absolve me!
o swallow me down
lead me away to the vanishing place

counting doom
till the lip
is dry having said

back in the womb
what a party we have
anchored to wings
in never the one place

back by ourselves in forever together
it's dark in here
    and I light a cigar
to celebrate there's no repression
    stink the place out
but then what am I here for?
    kick up my heels
and outside they say ow
revenge for the seasickness
    always afflicting
we all of us love the carrying cow
forward into the pain
    a brave silence

    I start up the lorry
after a day of titanic becoming
eat them out of house and home

sudden with strangers
    outside

*

I turn the border
    crossing me
but such is the effort
    of naming
    I'm over

you're with me
in the other scene

soul's hesitance
where it always was
love's never tiring

    after the sea
    has had me
    I'm thrown

lay my horn aside to wake

there will be drugs
    in that age I am sure
- smack for the pain
and work back from there
keep the chest clear
until the inevitable
then it's roll up the proceeds
    all cheroots
desire stumbling over
    to get in the door
then think of death as your tea never comes
the bowels unmoved and unpronounced
starvation, blindness, unfeeling eternities
that's how God ends up without us
all absences finding
that once and for all
    we live that way
    and carelessly
steps back from the brink
    it's day heaves every prospect forward
buries subtle shades discerning
    a catch between the eye of day
    and ours which makes it mean
believe what you like
nor am I ready
for the sort of book
to make sure of which
you begin again
just as you're finished
there's always
    a last thing subtracted from
and if not guilt then resignation
a shadow of making
casts over all
3. Consciousness & Reflexive Practice

Before the first awakening of our consciousness language was echoing about us, ready to close around our first tender seed of thought and to accompany us inseparably through life, from the simple activities of everyday living to our most sublime and intimate moments – those moments from which we borrow warmth and strength for our daily life through that hold of memory that language itself gives us.


Knowledge begins with reflection... Consciousness was there before it was known.
Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (1989, p. 239)

W.S. Merwin writes in his poem "Utterance":

Sitting over words
very late I have heard a kind of whispered sighing
not far
like a wind in pines or like the sea in the dark
the echo of everything that has ever
been spoken
still spinning its one syllable
between the earth and silence

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 198)

All utterance is overfull with words gone, which went in making our words now. So Vico and Bakhtin, among others, have observed. There is no metalanguage because there is no outside of our talking. No discourse refers except to itself, its making and to its others. There is, that is, nothing but metalanguage. Mandelstam writes:

So
whoever finds a horseshoe
blows off the dust
and rubs it with wool, and it shines,
and then
he hangs it over his door
to rest,
ever again to strike sparks out of flint.

Human lips with nothing left to say
keep the shape of the last word spoken,
and arms keep the feeling of weight
though the jug splashed half empty, carrying it home.

What I'm saying, now, is not being said by me,
it's dug from the ground, like grains of petrified wheat.

Some
coins show lions,
some
show a head;
flat cakes of copper, gold, bronze,
lie in the ground all equal.
Their time tried to bite them through, here are the teeth marks.

Time cuts me down like a clipped coin
and I'm no longer sufficient unto myself.

(from "Whoever finds a Horseshoe", in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, pp. 391-3)

We have already acknowledged, with Valéry, that the language of literary, as indeed other, word workers has the same materiality as that of the everyday "practical instrument... used for immediate needs and modified at every instant" (in Block & Salinger, 1960, p. 27), and this fact has the consequence that there never can be in the verbal arts the hard and fast line which divides, in other forms of aesthetic expression, talk about aesthetic production from the substance of that work itself. A musician might not absolutely require a music reading ability in order to improvise, might naturalise the practice of making music to the extent of feeling that the instrument s/he plays is an extension of the body, but the skills of the hands in this practice are essentially different from those involved in other everyday tasks.

Because language is partly a conscious and partly an unconscious activity and because the language of literary art has the same – partly conscious, partly unconscious – substance as everyday speech and as other (non-literary) forms of writing, we have no choice but to see these as contiguous parts of a single abstracted entity, as much formed by as forming the individual, which shapes and is shaped by all of the potential which individuals and their interaction entail. These are processes which, if not largely invisible, are at least ones from which our attention is usually drawn.

If there is, beyond a purely formal orientation, anything learnable about the process of literary writing, then it must be sought in a consciousness of how meaning is made and unmade, deployed and deterred, hidden, revealed, transformed; not only in poems but in their general sources and in their destinations in other than literary uses of language. Socrates set the tone for this conscious investigation with his now clichéd dictum in the Apology: "the unexamined life is not worth living" (1952, p. 210 ). It will equally be clear, from the foregoing chapter, that poetries have a long standing interest in other than conscious states and sources. Nietzsche in The Gay Science, succinctly stresses the dangers of consciousness and its cult:

Consciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and consequently also the most unfinished and weakest part of it. From consciousness there proceed countless errors which cause an animal, a man, to perish earlier than necessary... If the preservative combination of the instincts were not incomparably stronger, if it did not in general act as a regulator, mankind must have perished through its perverse judgements and waking phantasies, its superficiality and credulity, in short through its consciousness. (1977, p. 158)

In like vein, Amiri Baraka writes in his poem "The New World"

Those who realize
how fitful and indecent consciousness is
stare solemnly out on the emptying street.
The mourners and soft singers. The liars,
and singers after ridiculous righteousness. All
my doubles, and friends, whose mistakes cannot
be duplicated by machines, and this is all of our
arrogance.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 261)

Consciousness presents as a problem for poetry, not because poetry requires a
definition of it in order to function but because the question of consciousness in relation
to poetry ultimately resolves as one of asking whether (and to what extent ) poetry is
entitled or able to know what it does or how it works. Khlebnikov writes in his essay
"On Poetry": "Does the earth understand the writing of the seeds a farmer scatters on its
surface? No. But the grain still ripens in the autumn, in response to those seeds" (1990,
p. 153). Conversely one might ask, in the spirit of a poetry hoping to recover something
in the way of naivety, what a poem is entitled to not know about itself. Thus in
Ashberry's "The Skaters":

I am not ready
To line phrases with the costly stuff of explanation, and shall not,
Will not do so for the moment. Except to say that the carnivorous
Way of these lines is to devour their own nature, leaving
Nothing but a bitter impression of absence, which as we know
involves presence, but still.
Nevertheless these are fundamental absences, struggling to
get up and be off by themselves.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 176)

And if poetry is entitled to questions as to the viability of its metabusiness, then those
questions, though perhaps more generally avoidable, must be available to discourse and
to thought in general. The patterns of assumption and intention in which these formulate
each other may well involve contradictory investments, but involve equally, in Hayden
White's terms (echoing Kant's aude sapere), a will to know (1978, p. 20).

Out of complex negotiations of cultural specificity (which indeed have been
challenged as determinist) Benjamin Lee Whorf established a relationship among the
investments of language, thought and consciousness:

Actually, thinking is most mysterious, and by far the greatest light upon it that we
have is thrown by the study of language. This study shows that the forms of a
person's thoughts are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is
unconscious. These patterns are the unperceived intricate systematisations of his
own language - shown readily enough by a candid comparison with other
languages, especially those of a different linguistic family. His thinking itself is
in a language - in English, in Sanskrit, in Chinese. And every language is a vast
pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms
and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses
nature, notices or neglects types of relationship or phenomena, channels his
reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. (1956, p. 252)

Following Whorf we may say that the amorphousness of language is that of
un/consciousness. From the point of view of verbal arts, consciousness is the medium
wherein originality and collectivity shape each other. If we admit a plurality of
consciousnesses as including all styles and degrees of awareness – including those conventionally thought of as unconscious or other than conscious – then we need to acknowledge that such a plurality presents as an immanence borne of and demanding transcendence: communication requires of us the impossible position of being at once inside and out of consciousness. And because there is no access to the consciousness of others except in language, and because there is no language outside of the immanent/transcendent loop of consciousness just described, we may say that these two abstractions, language and consciousness, are as the one river given different names, for the simple reason that we discover them on separate occasions.

*

The problem of consciousness for poetry is one of meta-awareness; it sets the limits of what and how poetry can know about itself. But it is equally the case that poetic consciousness is thought to at least partly involve other than normative or everyday states of mind. Such was the object of Freud's musings in his (1907) lecture "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (originally translated in English as "The Relation of the Poet to Daydreaming"). In this work Freud divides writers into two camps which may be analogous to the division Barthes makes between the modern and classical or mythic in poetry. Freud believes we must distinguish "writers who, like the ancient authors of epics and tragedies, take over their material ready-made, from writers who seem to originate their own material" (1959, p. 149). Freud tells us that the day-dreamer hides his phantasies because he is ashamed of them, that the disclosure of them would bring us no pleasure, but that "when a creative writer presents his plays to us or tells us what we are inclined to take to be his personal daydreams, we experience a great pleasure, and one which probably arises from the confluence of many sources" (1959, p. 153). For Freud accomplishment of this is the writer's "innermost secret". The writer's "we poetica lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others" (1959, p. 153). Freud goes on here to postulate that the enjoyment of literature "proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds" and that this might be mainly brought about by "the writer's enabling us henceforward to enjoy our own daydreams without self-reproach or shame" (1959, p. 153).

Freud's aesthete is, like the rhapsodist of Plato's Ion, one who is in touch with something s/he cannot hope to control or understand, let alone formulate judgement with. It is a commonplace, and as such one that ought to be seriously interrogated, that poetry and other forms of literary art entail a heightening of awareness. This awareness must claim to be of how the past stands in our saying now and how we ourselves stand in relation to each other and the world.

But why should the desired position of poetic consciousness be assumed to be above that of the norms from which its measure must be taken? Jung warns us against assuming that we should find the unconscious below consciousness but this is

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62 Note for Bakhtin poetry, through the epic, is easily be associated with the monologic of official consciousness.

63 In his essay, 'Language', Heidegger echoes the Formalists on the relationship between poetry and everyday language: "Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (melos) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer" (1971, p. 208).

64 It should be noted here that psychoanalytic (and semiotic) theory offer us a number of options for configuring the relationship between the unconscious and consciousness, particularly that Freud's third term, later abandoned, the preconscious, has been dealt with in various relations to the other two. For Freud this category refers to thoughts which, though unconscious at a given moment, are not repressed and are therefore able to become conscious. Kaja Silverman (1983, p. 88) describes the relationship
precisely the relationship in which both the popular conception and the Freudian
topography place them. Heidegger, in "What are poets for?" cites a letter from Rilke in
which the poet radically reverses such a topography of consciousness:

However vast the "outer space" may be, yet with all its sidereal distances it hardly
compares with the dimensions, with the depth dimensions of our inner being,
which does not even need the spaciousness of the universe to be within itself
almost unfathomable. Thus, if the dead, if those who are to come, need an
abode, what refuge could be more agreeable and appointed for them than this
imaginary space? To me it seems more and more as though our customary
consciousness lives on the tip of a pyramid whose base within us (and in a
certain way beneath us) widens out so fully that the farther we find ourselves able
to descend into it, the more generally we appear to be merged into those things
that, independent of time and space, are given in our earthly, in the widest sense
worldly, existence. (1971, p. 129)

We should not underestimate the difficulty of separating, in the popular conception, the
sense that awakening is from a lower and less knowledged state. It is an ideological
inversion par excellence for the discourse judging poetry to claim that poetic
consciousness stands somehow above its own. The notion of poetry's knowledge of
itself suggests a shorthand for the knowledges of those who have invested in poetry.
That consciousness which is privileged in relation to the process of poetry's survival is
waking, decisive and certainly, for all practical purposes, regards itself as superior to (at
least able to stand above) those productions it sees itself as duty-bound to discriminate.

It could at this point easily be argued that this position above is the canonic view
(as such one with which literature itself cannot afford to be stuck) and that it is imposed
on literature, by its mediators, as a kind of wishful thinking; these mediators hoping to
glorify themselves by association with that clarity and elevation of view, to which poetic
imagination is entitled. But the makers of poetry are, when we come to identify them,
too thoroughly entangled in the investments, if not the actual practice of this view, for
there to be any practical separation. In practice the poet is the one who, standing
between (if not among) selves, is doomed to become numerous. Her/his scene (or
community) is as an infinite cast recomposed from a handful of players, the leading one

between the Freudian preconscious and conscious in the following terms:

The preconscious is the repository of cultural norms and prohibitions. It contains data which are
capable of becoming conscious — memories which can be voluntarily recalled. Therefore, the
movement from the preconscious to the conscious is essentially fluid, although the
conscious can accommodate only a finite amount of information at a given moment. Within this topography the
conscious is no more than a kind of adjunct to the preconscious, a receiving room for internal and
external — i.e., psychic and perceptual — stimuli. (1984, p. 56)

Subsequent to Freud there are a number of arrangements of this topography among which to choose. For
Metz, in Le Signifiant Imaginaire the category preconscious is maintained as separate from the others.
This is a middle position compared with those of Lyotard and Lacan. For Lyotard the preconscious and
the unconscious are antagonistic categories but for Lacan the preconscious is conflated with the
unconscious.

For the purposes of this study a Lacanian version of the Freudian topography of the unconscious
is preferred; one in which the Unconscious and the preconscious are conflated. This choice is adopted for
a number of reasons, some more or less arbitrary. Foremost among these reasons are the availability of a
correspondence between the psychoanalytic terms and the pair conscious/unconscious as used in a less
technical sense in discussion of the language sciences and arts. A third term between consciousness and
unconsciousness interferes with the idea of developing continua between these two. The Lacanian view
entails certain pre-suppositions about the relationship between language and the unconscious and whatever
structural properties they share, underlying which from the present perspective is the convenience of
assuming the invalidity of the abstraction, langue.
of whom, as subject, is likewise continuously recomposed and in the process of becoming numerous. Walt Whitman sees himself as such a multiplicity in his poem "Salut au Monde":

What widens within you Walt Whitman?
What waves and soils exuding?
What climes? What persons and cities are here?
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering?
Who are the girls? who are the married women?
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their arms about each other’s necks
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?
What are the mountains call’d that rise so high in the mists?
What myriads of dwellers are they fill’d with dwellers?

(1975, p. 168)

There is in fact, and this must be especially claimed by its mediators in order to justify their presence, this idiot savant aspect to poetic consciousness (which has likewise been attributed to the inventive aspect of the scientific mind): that it is capable of ignoring (or unseeing) the obvious in favour of making connections which the everyday world happens to miss, indeed must miss, in order to perform its functions. In Bronislaw Maj’s poem "An August Afternoon", a childhood is recalled in terms which, it is demonstrated, cannot have been those of childhood; so that the reader is made aware of the process of recollection as a distorting glass:

We look at the mountains,
my mother and I. How clear the air is:
every dark spruce on Mount Lubon
is seen distinctly as if it grew in our garden.
An astonishing phenomenon – it astonishes my mother
and me. I am four and do not know
what it means to be four. I am
happy: I do not know what to be means
or happiness. I know my mother
sees and feels what I do. And I know
that as always in the evening
we will take a walk
far, up to the woods, already before
long.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 158)

The everyday is recovered by textual means to which the everyday need have no means of resort. The burial of the obvious which poetry chooses to work with or against in no way constitutes for language a problem needing to be solved. It is an inevitable consequence of the impossibility of meaning only one thing one at a time. In The Prose of the World Merleau-Ponty writes "the perfection of language lies in its capacity to pass unnoticed" (1974, p. 10). Whatever shifts of consciousness poeticities entail, they do not buy them out of this perfection.

Poeticies' stumbling on or with the truth hardly need be constitutive of a view over anything. It is difficult, in this light, not to regard the heightening of awareness expected of poetry as involving it in an impossible movement towards the critical vantage point; a movement, which, because it cannot be completed, serves to reinforce the value of that consciousness which awards itself the privilege of judging poetry.
That foreign consciousness which we will argue is necessary to the makers of poetry does not however find its primary habitation in the bodies of those people. Wang Wei even wrote of being stuck in the wrong body, as if with the wrong expressive vehicle:

Lazy About Writing Poems

With time I become lazy about writing poems.  
Now my only company is old age.  
In my earlier life I was a poet, a mistake,  
And my former body belonged to a painter.  
I can't abandon habits of that life  
and sometimes am recognized by people of this world.  
My name and pen speak my former being  
but about all this my heart is ignorant.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 280)

Rather than constituting a bodily survival the work of poets is hypostasised in the substance of the poem which they hope to have outlive them. The poet's is a voice which hopes for an echo bigger than itself. We must concern ourselves then with the sense in which consciousness may be said to inhabit that echo. Literary, as other writing, we note, to this extent is a viral substance, one which appears in itself as inert and requires the activation of the embodied consciousness in order to go anywhere or become anything.

Completed self-consciousness, the identity of the authorial position with the sentience of context or the form of consciousness which declares and defines itself as a view over others: if each of these options is to be discounted, what then do we expect of poetry in the way of consciousness? In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" T.S. Eliot writes "the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious." For Eliot these are both errors which serve to make the bad poet personal. They are errors because poetry "is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." The emotion of art is impersonal, its haunting resolved in the poet who lives "in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past", something of which he (sic) is unlikely to know "unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living" (1976, pp. 21-2). Few would now seek to promote a poetry which avowedly does not know and takes no interest in what it is doing. Although we might accept a poetry which came to this position as a result of a process of negotiations available to the reader. A poem such as Wisława Szymborska's "View with a grain of sand" avows what it cannot know by arranging the poem among those objects which cannot know themselves:

The window has a wonderful view of the lake  
but the view doesn’t view itself.  
It exists in this world  
colorless, shapeless,  
soundless, odorless and painless.

The lake’s floor exists floorlessly  
and its shore exists shorelessly.  
Its water feels itself neither wet nor dry  
and its waves to themselves are neither singular nor plural.  
They splash deaf to their own noise  
on pebbles neither large nor small.

And all this beneath a sky by nature skyless
in which the sun sets without setting at all
and hides without hiding behind an unmingling cloud.
The wind ruffles it, its only reason being
that it blows.

A second passes.
A second second.
A third.
But they’re three seconds only for us.

Time has passed like a courier with urgent news.
But that’s just our simile.
The character’s invented, his haste is make-believe,
his news inhuman.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 68)

As for Eliot’s idea that the bad poet is personal, David Antin devotes his work “a private occasion in a public place” to a problematics of self-consciousness which draw us from such a conclusion:

im doing what poets have done for a long time they’ve talked out of a private sense sometimes
from a private need but they’ve talked about it in a rather peculiar context for anybody to eavesdrop

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 232)

Once we discard both the intentionalist fallacy and the view over poetry which canonic criticism cannot but claim; once we sacrifice, that is, the prospect of definitive judgement for its turns with ambivalence, what choice have we got but to commit the ontological sin of regarding poetry as constituting a consciousness in its own right? Rather than make the abstraction we know as poetry a mere systemic reification of a certain form of speech, we may regard it as a corpus of instants of thought and expression, identical perhaps with what the canon contains, which in themselves as a unity constitute a sentence which outlives, for the reader’s response, both the makers and the judges of poetry. It is a sentence on which these personae depend. Our task, in apprehending poetry, is to work at connecting this consciousness, outside of our own and on which ours already depends, with what we ourselves are able to make. That task depends on a risky kind of resurrection: of words from one context to another. It depends, as in Denise Levertov’s poem “Witness”, on a vigilance which cannot maintain itself:

Sometimes the mountain
is hidden from me in veils
of cloud, sometimes
I am hidden from the mountain
in veils of inattention, apathy, fatigue,
when I forget or refuse to go
down to the shore or a few yards
up the road, on a clear day,
to reconfirm
that witnessing presence.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 72)

In the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth writes that our thoughts are the representatives of all of our past feelings (1950, p. 678). Just as our words are alive in
and to the fact of being ours, so poetry in its survival lives, and responds to us, anticipates us, as what we may regard as accumulative consciousness. Generically unconstrained, modern poetry like language itself (or like its shadow) behaves as a vast and evolving game in which each move alters imperceptibly, but nevertheless unfailingly, not necessarily the nature of the game but certainly the system in which it is constituted. Eliot acknowledges as much for the canon in claiming "the existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new work among them." (1976, p. 15) What he fails to acknowledge is that the ideal order behaves like this because this is how language behaves; because, we might say, a lexicon, as a canon, reveals a snapshot of what language has come to contain.

What we expect of poetry under these conditions is that it show the workings, or at least enough of them, to demonstrate the exercise of consciousness necessary to its work. We demand of the poem, in short, not merely that it demonstrate a movement of consciousness (consciousness always entailing such a movement, at least since William James' stream of consciousness), but that it should do this in order that it shift our state of mind as readers or listeners. Poetry achieves such a shift on the basis of an appeal to authenticity. Whether the observation betrays a modernist emphasis or not, it remains the case that here is no poetic form which fails to meet this criterion we might think of as epiphany or satori, the most straightforward examples of which would be the turn in a haiku or sonnet, in either case a confronting of the mind of artifice with the facts of presence. For Czeslaw Milosz, in his A Book of Luminous Things, epiphany is:

an unveiling of reality. What in Greek was called epiphaneia meant the appearance, the arrival, of a divinity among mortals or its recognition under a familiar shape of man or woman. Epiphany thus interrupts the everyday flow of time and enters as one privileged moment when we intuitively grasp a deeper, more essential reality hidden in things or persons. (1996, p. 3)

The epiphanic moment of the epic for instance, however unacknowledged, is the means by which it locates its audience as present to the tale which accounts for them. The historicity (or pseudo-historicity) by which it makes the past from the here-and-now of its audience is a magical inversion in which the sharing of a past provides a present community. Whatever limiting of freedom or freezing of the past they entail, however they bury their endorsement of a status quo, epic texts must turn the mind in order to account for where that mind finds itself. Invocation is the means by which the epic discounts its effects as inspired and absolves itself of having any intentions of its own. The danger seen in such texts, from the modern vantage of freedom, is precisely that, by hiding them, they naturalise the intentions of the turn for which they speak. As which texts do not?

The consciousness we attribute to completed poetry, in its moving our consciousness, is that of an other. It is a consciousness which, while it moves ours, cannot move itself. To this extent it is a pseudo-consciousness. The poem, as artefact, has no recourse to mental or other acts. It demands a survival which we must facilitate. It thus presents us with the image of a de facto alterity, one which lives in our practice and always under question, if we are both readers and writers, as a continuous cycle of immanence and transcendence. The poem's alterity is between the genuine outside of others and that which has been associated with the unconscious of psychoanalysis. Poetry as an exchange between enabling others, one living in our sentience, does indeed come to constitute a movement which we rightly regard as consciousness. Does it need to be explained? Does it need to explain anything? Is there a protocol in terms of which it

65 Ulmer, in Heuristics, cites a number of sources towards the contention that "the experience of eureka is inherent in the structure of mythology." (1994, p. 232)
could know, without bringing to harm, itself or others? Lucian Blaga writes in his poem, "I will not crush the world's corolla of wonders":

I will not crush the world's corolla of wonders
and I will not kill
with reason
the mysteries I meet along the way
in flowers, eyes, lips, and graves.
The light of others
drowns the deep magic hidden
in the profound darkness.
I increase the world's enigma
with my light
much as the moon with its white beams
does not diminish but increases
the shimmering mystery of night -
I enrich the darkening horizon
with chills of the great secret.
All that is hard to know
becomes a greater riddle
under my very eyes
because I love alike
flowers, lips, eyes, and graves.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 435)

In identifying consciousness as in perpetuum mobile, and the possibility of poetic consciousness as a form of indirection\textsuperscript{66}, we merely acknowledge a post-romantic framework. It is not only poetry which depends, to locate itself, on all of the spatio-grammatical resources of the language medium in which it finds itself. The same may be said of consciousness generally and of the bodies which it infests. It is, as poetry, as language is, all over the place. And as these are and their subjects are always en route and bumping into each other, we can but conclude that our knowledge of them is a knowledge of borders and of provisional lines of movement. It is a provisional knowledge, describing phenomena in flux and solely by the means of those phenomena. Borders are necessarily sites of power and knowledge – sites, in short, of becoming. We bring them with us. And equally, we are the vectors between them, those straight lines, as seen from space, which everywhere mark the wake of humanity among the ragged edges of the world as found.

Consciousness / Unconsciousness

The unconscious is always the fly in the ointment, the skeleton in the cupboard of perfection, the painful lie given to all idealistic pronouncements, the earthiness that clings to our human nature and sadly clouds the crystal clarity we long for.  

C. G. Jung (1985, p. 233)

Interminable analysis: the Unconscious has been assigned the increasingly difficult task of itself being the infinite form of secrecy, instead of a simple box containing secrets.  

Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 289)

\textsuperscript{66} Cleanth Brooks saw indirection as a characteristic of all poetry. (1971, p. 1042)
The divide between consciousness and unconsciousness replays the shift between waking and dreaming and we can easily claim the former as a more rigorous and esoteric version of the latter, one further abstracted from life. The unconscious, as lack, along these lines, contains all that cannot be conscious of itself or which the waking mind finds unconvincing. We could even say that it is the role of waking, the manner of its negativity and affinity with judgement, to constantly reject and discount what the unconscious presents to it. Dreams and mad states may believe they know themselves (as in the epiphany in a dream of the dream within the dream) but they are discounted as chimerical from the point of view of waking consciousness. But what could be more chimerical than the very idea and construction of the unconscious, which as lack must more or less contain all that the conscious mind will regard as rubbish whenever it has the opportunity? Not so much a floating as a drowned signifier, construction by the waking mind of its own alterity as abstraction, it has for us this attraction: that as it is utterly unable to know itself we are forced to credit it with an absolute authenticity. It may be misnamed, it may suffer from unfair associations, nevertheless we cannot but regard this immanence of each of ours as genuine and unpretentious. We can frame this authenticity of the unconscious as the individuated artefactuality of people: the what-they-are-but-cannot-see, revealing (in our conscious analysis of it) how they have become. Equally, in these terms, we may challenge the ascription by psychoanalysis of motives (ones often ordinarily irretrievable because repressed) to the unconscious, as an nth degree of individuation of authenticity. Here the self beneath the self and concealed from the self, turns out, in its very concealedness, to be something shared and therefore able to spoken of and from and through. These facts are sufficient to form the basis of a hermeneutic industry — the one we know as analysis. They further serve to signpost what may be at stake where the term authenticity is deployed.

Conscious thought, by contrast, is condemned to the inauthenticity which inheres in the moment it hopes to know itself, knowing already that it cannot achieve this self-knowledge. It may be able to set itself above those productions of the mind which it sets out to lose but in doing so it acknowledges an outside, from which it is forbidden a view and thus it is prevented from completing the acts which would be involved in knowing the self.

How can poetry not lose itself between these states (of consciousness and unconsciousness) implicated at every stage of its making as it is, both in judgement and in the ambivalence which constitutes the lack or the failure of judgement? Poetry is an eternal recurrence, a process in which we set out to replay the owning and disowning of the mind in-itself, the struggle of my consciousness with its others, inside and out. It is one thing to say that the unconscious is the site of my very own alterity, another to propose an ethics with which to salvage and deploy, for the purposes of waking consciousness, the authenticity, my authenticity, which inheres in it. Just as the conscious mind condemns its own other as unconvincing, so the unconscious mind, the mind which acts unavowedly and out of assumption, while making no judgement of its other, cannot but regard consciousness in the light of the inauthentic: its events are those, as for Hamlet, too much thought on. In this light then should we not ask whether reflexive moves are always about drawing attention to the question of authenticity. They ask: "Do I know what I'm doing?" and "Who do I think I am to act thus?"

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Romantic and post-romantic poeties have interested themselves as practices in the ambivalence of a hiatus between consciousness and unconsciousness. Parallel to this interest has been a concern with the gap between denotation and connotation. Both relationships have been theorised as alternatively bipolar oppositions or as open ended scales offering multiple positions. In either case the privilege of conscious and denoted
reality establishes as monist synthesis. The assumption of Romantic poeiesis has been
that the conscious life is as the literal truth. If, as Derrida tells us, *metaphor is never
innocent*, then neither is its supposed opposite number. Literality is neither a tropic
degree zero nor the proper avowal of any trope. It is a phantom trope, a kind of buried
metaphor, a Ø metaphor, where, not only (as in the case of metaphor) are the signs of an
equivalence erased, but as well, the very signs of being: the literal participates in and as
the stream of unnoticed words. Its function may likewise be characterised as that of
unseeing worlds in order that a world be acted in. Auden declares: "The greatest writer
cannot see through a brick wall but unlike the rest of us, he does not build one." (1962,
p. 31) The coincidence of the literal and the conscious is the result of struggles which,
not needing to be argued, it is the duty of *presence of mind* to bury. A poetry which
challenges as provisional the viability of all such abstractions as consciousness and
literality needs to temper its questioning, not with a faith in the logic that formed us, but
with the knowledge that there may be no other way to go but in such an assumption – of
the literality of truths in life. This is despite the fact that speech and writing adopt all
manners of style and degrees of consciousness. Our difficulty is in admitting at once,
along with the impossibility of any completion of awareness in language, the
impossibility (and necessity) of any language having a view over itself.

Language as, in Levi-Strauss' terms, *unreflecting totalisation of human reason*
(1972, p. 259), involves a collectivity of buried patterning which the Russian Formalists
knew as automatism and which Whorf formulated as covert categories or cryptotypes,
grammatical features 'which may easily escape notice and may be hard to define, and yet
may have a profound influence on linguistic behaviour' (1956, p. 92). Examples Whorf
gives in English are gender, intransitive and copulative verbs, the order of adjectives. In
Whorf's terms these *cryptotypical* patterns form an underlying logic peculiar to the
grammar of a particular language, which defy translation and which are not able to be
adequately expressed by native speakers.

Of all the ambivalences which poetry has come to express, that between
consciousness and unconsciousness is perhaps its easiest refuge, because, as we have
said from the outset, it is one shared with every instance of language, and one therefore
available to all kinds of thinking. It is the refuge of all language to know and not know
what it is up to.

The Freudian *unconscious*, however seriously we take its claims to a structural
affinity with language, however seriously we take it *in toto*, relies on a similar kind of
epistemological ambivalence. Its contents are something one already knew without
knowing it. As such they have the same status as Socrates' argument in the *Men*o that
there is neither teaching nor learning but only recollection (1952, p. 180). Whether we
need this particular abstraction or not, whether it tends to purposes as they evolve, we
shall certainly not dispense with the adjective *unconscious*, we shall not get by without
acknowledging the *unconsciousness* of language.

* This is a highly self-conscious process of patterning involved in the making of
many modern poems – by highly conscious I mean not *fully* aware, but deliberately
investing in self-awareness. This modern and later tendency is representative of a poetry
which works or fails on the basis of judgements which must include the assumption that
aesthetic practice involves consciousness of its own activity. This is a poetry of
uncovering patterns and bringing words to pattern, and it forever runs the risk of trying
too hard. The poem which works too hard at being a poem, the overly self-conscious
work, risks being nothing at all, in referring too subtly referring to nothing. Those most
reflexive, most meta-aware texts, those most *concerned* with their own textuality (and the
seamlessness or otherwise of their contextual connections) may today also run the risk of
being indistinguishable from the rest of the wallpaper of context locating them. Thus we
imagine an apologetic fridge magnet after William Carlos Williams' "This is Just to Say"
the poem automatized, fastened for what seems like forever to the door which opens onto immediate desire, and bound to be forgotten there.

In dealing with artefacts which are interested in erasing the signs of their making (ideological artefacts to this extent) we need to be wary of assigning them to any unified intention or position. The play which the canon allows between the poles of invisibility and unintelligibility is such that it will be difficult to claim for any text a specific place on an imagined continuum between these two. Wordsworth’s diction in The Prelude may have altered the possible range of poetry but it is writing nevertheless of (from and to) a class and place and gender (rather than of rocks and streams and rustic musings) — if the canon shifted with it we also note that it was the canon which allowed it because it made sufficient sense in terms of what went before. (By the same token the canon continues to allow it on the basis that it makes sufficient sense with what comes after.) The same is easily said of another extreme: what might be perceived as the shift to a highly self-conscious poetry in a modernist classic such as Eliot’s The Waste Land, with its display of derivativeness and drive to place itself. In both cases it is the management of shifts of frame, of context and of expectation, rather than adherence to a position, which has allowed these texts, in becoming canonically, to supply the difference from which the canon was shifted.

The admission of the two risks, of being, on the one hand indistinguishable from, and on the other of being unintelligible from (any particular) context, should not be taken as implying that texts which lean towards either of these dangers either do so as the result of anything they have avowed or manage in so doing to avoid the other risk. Neither the avowal of consciousness nor the evidence of reflexivity, guarantees communication or response or the achievement of any sort of target outside of the poem. In the "Ars Poetica" of John Forbes' Stalin’s Holidays "the poem sounds/ like a revolving door that/ makes the noise a car makes/ bumping into the dole —/ that's the target" And later "Put a brick through/ a real-estate agent's window/ and it bounces back/ and cuts you. That's what/ I mean about targets." (1980, p. 48)

Reflexive Practice

Watchfulness is the path of immortality: unwatchfulness is the path of death. Those who are watchful never die: those who do not watch are already as dead.

Buddha's teachings, from the Dhammapada (1995, p. 5)

To discuss language, to place it, means to bring to its place of being not so much language as ourselves: our own gathering into the appropriation.

Heidegger, in "Language" (1971, p. 190)

In Being and Nothingness Sartre writes that "knowledge begins with reflection" and that "consciousness was there before it was known" (1989, p. 239). Just as Sartrean freedom finds its limits in freedom, what limits signification lies in the process of signification. These each are circles which close upon themselves as reflexive practices, practices which are as subject to themselves as are the worlds these practices constitute.

Degrees of reflexivity should be concerned in the extent to which subjects are able to articulate or formulate the nature of their interests. But as there is no normative point beyond a context of texts and no outside of these negotiations, such as a metalanguage would presuppose, we face the frustration which inheres in all efforts to see ourselves

121
and in the end the fact of there being no subject matter apart from the subjectivity in which
the negotiations of discourse need be seen, if self limiting, also as self constituting.

If the ambivalence of a hiatus between consciousness and unconsciousness has
been definitive of Romantic and post-romantic poetries, then we can say that what
distinguishes modern and later aesthetic practices is the reflexive turn: the desire to at once
be and know itself. A glance at almost any Platonic work reveals modernity has no
claims as originator here: the basis of Socratic irony is very generally the turning of ideas
and authors on themselves. Claiming the reflexive turn as definitive of modern and later
art is naturally a trick of hindsight and one which furnishes the post-modern as a nemesis
providing its own nemesis. All of which amounts to saying that, with hindsight, the
issue of framing is rarely unproblematic for modern or post-modern works. They do not
succeed for long in avoiding questions as to their formal validity as works or processes of
art.

Reflexivity is the permanent condition which Barthes demands of the practice of
reading text. The shift from a frame (that of work) which exalts a singularity of view
outside of the need to consider its looking, to one which insists on seeing itself for what it
is and for what it does, is a shift, however necessary, into an ultimately unfinalisable
chase, the emblem of which is the continual frustration of desire, or, following Barthes,
we could say pleasure:

Pleasure is continually disappointed, reduced, deflated, in favour of strong,
noble values: Truth, Death, Progress, Struggle, Joy, etc. Its victorious rival is
Desire; we are always being told about Desire, never about Pleasure; Desire
has an epistemic dignity, Pleasure does not. (Barthes, 1975, p. 57)

Metabusiness is that reflexive practice entailing the trap and the freedom of the gesture of
self-description. It is a gesture because it does not succeed in limiting itself to being its
only object. The trap of freedom here is a kind of hermeneutic circle: a trope trap. A
totality only knows itself by those symptoms which make sense as a totality. One may be
subject to one's own subjecting but only in the sense that others are.

Once we claim our view is privileged over that of those who cannot see their
situation, are we ourselves not doomed to be so overseen? Such is the fate both of
ideologies and the declaration of ideologies (as false, for instance): to be superseded by a
view which claims to take account of them. Consciousness of his own moral superiority
is what Gibbon expresses when he describes what he imagines to be Attila's
consciousness of superiority over those he conquers (1877, Vol VI, p. 4). And we do
as much in relation to both merely by mentioning these facts here. How do we escape
this view over the consciousness of others, in the moment of which we render authentic –
in the manner of a citation – such consciousness, where we inadvertently proclaim ours
transcendent of theirs?

The answer must be in the effort, however frustrated or doomed it may be, of
subjecting ourselves to our own subjecting; by, to this extent, becoming foreign in our
bodies. Desire, writes Sartre, is overcome by means of a reflective consciousness.
(1989, p. 385)

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Poetry may express itself as a movement beyond limits but we note that this is a
movement apprehended in the prose of the philosopher. The turn of philosophy towards
limits inevitably presses in the direction of a reflexive practice, because all of the limits in
question are ultimately those of a subject in the context of practice. It may be that the tail
chasing the dog is our best self portrait at philosophy. Or perhaps a more apposite image
would be of the dog's body, turning itself inside out endlessly, in the hope of seeing
itself and at once its view of the world, the dog's or the philosopher's body becoming an
animate version of Fortunatus' purse, the value of which Lewis Carroll explains in the following terms:

"But why do you call it Fortunatus's Purse, Mein Herr?"
The dear old man beamed upon her, with a jolly smile, looking more exactly like the Professor than ever. "Don't you see, my child - I should say Miladi? Whatever is inside that Purse, is outside it; and whatever is outside it, is inside it. So you have all the wealth of the world in that leettle purse!" (Sylvie and Bruno, p. 494, 1982)

In the case of Fortunatus' purse what interests us is not the solidity of this figure but rather the flows which this model of inside and out allows: its gathering of all elsewheres into a presence which must also be absence, into a simultaneity which cannot stand outside the flows of time, into a haunting which must be of and by itself. Here totality is defeated in the fact of its being comprised.

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Nietzsche is probably our best original of the pressure in the direction of self-reflexivity for philosophy. In Beyond Good and Evil he writes: "It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary memoire." (no date in volume, p. 6)

Le Doeuff, in The Philosophical Imaginary employs an example from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason to show the reifying uses philosophy makes of imaginaries, particularly in constructing the terms of its landscape. The passage is from "Of the Ground of the Division of All Objects into Phenomena and Noumena":

We have now not only traversed the region of the pure understanding and carefully surveyed every part of it, but we have also measured it, and assigned to everything therein its proper place. But this land is an island, and enclosed by nature herself within unchangeable limits. It is the land of truth (an attractive word) surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the region of illusion, where many a fog-bank, many an iceberg, seems to the mariner on his voyage of discovery, a new country, and, while constantly deluding him with vain hopes, engages him in dangerous adventures, from which he can never desist, and which yet he never can bring to a termination. (1953, p. 93)

Such terms of imagery for Le Doeuff allow every philosophy the opportunity to "engage in a straightforward dogmatization, and decree a 'that's the way it is' without fear of counter-argument, since it is understood that the good reader will by-pass such 'illustrations'" (1989, p. 12). Philosophy has been like this from the beginning. What we have of pre-Socratic philosophy is partly aphorism in the form of a landscape imagery seeking to naturalise abstraction (e.g., Heraclitus' not stepping in the same stream twice). Aristotle hoped to place himself beyond what he saw as a fault in this, claiming in the Physics that earlier thinkers had turned "so far aside from the road which leads to coming to be and passing away and change generally. If they had come in sight of this nature, all their ignorance would have been dispelled" (1952, p. 267).

The involuntary memoire which Kant and Aristotle reveal above is one in action akin to that of Lyotard's differend: here it is the assumed primacy of the philosophic landscape which silences another view (any other view). The privileged view of the philosopher takes in a landscape. Le Doeuff's aim is not to arrive at a philosophy which transcends the necessity of a landscape as ground: it is her dictum "there is no thinking that does not wander". In concert with her view is de Certeau's suggestion that:

The imaginary landscape of an enquiry is not without value, even if it is without rigor. It restores what was earlier called "popular culture", but it does so in order
to transform what was represented as a matrix-force of history into a mobile infinity of tactics. It thus keeps before our eyes the structure of a social imagination in which the problem constantly takes different forms and begins anew. It also wards off the effects of an analysis which necessarily grasps these practices only on the margins of a technical apparatus, at the point where they alter or defeat its instruments. It is the study itself which is marginal with respect to the phenomena studied. The landscape that represents these phenomena in an imaginary mode thus has an overall corrective and therapeutic value in resisting their reduction by lateral examination. It at least assures their presence as ghosts. (1988, p. 41)

Le Doeuff’s work provides us with a convenient model for the self-scrutiny which a reflexive practice entails. Such a practice suggests a particular rhetoric, that of the spatial tropes entailing a correspondence between the mind and the terrain in which the body negotiates a way as a starting point (one which for instance suits Freud’s topographies). But there is no reason why such a method ought to ignore any of the rhetorical or grammatical dimensions of the text which cannot help but describe its own position. No exegetic move directed at the feigned invisibility of a perspective belying the involuntary memoire can ever be exhaustive.

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We cannot claim that the topography we have traversed to get here – of islands made empty in imagination, a great storm of mastering magic, billabong murders, the burial of evidence in everyday words – is any less fanciful than those encountered by Kant’s mariner on his voyage. If we find ourselves missing, faithless, disgruntled, can we claim more than that we are in the common grip of a fascination with our own images?

Paul Carter, in The Road to Botany Bay, emphasises the place of naming in the desire “to see the horizon and to find a route there.”

it was the names themselves that brought history into being, that invented the spatial and conceptual coordinates within which history could occur. For how, without place names, without agreed points of reference, could directions be given, information exchanged, "here" and "there" defined? (cited in Ashcroft et al, 1995, pp. 404-6)

If, as Ashcroft et al note, "language always negotiates a kind of gap between the word and its significatio", then the landscape we dream up is constituted in the fact of our ceaseless returning through it and in it (a plenitude of presence): this return the consequence of there being nowhere else. It is the fact of our return (our ceaseless iteration) which makes the landscape sensible, the fact of our movement (but not only ours) which renders it in flux. If we know the voices in this picture then surely they are our own. If we are saved the ignominy of knowing the tail we chase as just our own and of smelling our own doggy breath, then this is a consequence of Heraclean flux and of its realisation being eternally frustrated by the fact of there being, however invisibly all move and are moved, no stillness in any part.

To examine the world is to appropriate it, to make it one’s domain. In a sense it is to panopticise it because, in providing the world with a subjective centre (the point of view of apprehension), we cannot forestall the solipsism of a world made mine in my making. Thus Sartre writes "I am the view; the panorama is myself dilated to the horizon, for it only exists through me, only for me." (1989, p. 591)

To examine the world is thus to disqualify one’s self from the prospect of examining it as anything other than mine. To examine the process by which appropriation takes place is not to let oneself off the hook. It would seem that the world
is mine or else I have no access to it. It is mine in other words by virtue of certain privileges over it, the exercise of which denies me the privilege of apprehending it apart from myself. My only way of working through this would appear to be a self-examination, one which might have the effect of squeezing the world out of me. But how can I even begin to apprehend my self, when I am changed not only in, but by, the moment of apprehension. It is in this sense that the self-declared opponents of the black-arm band view of history (for instance John Howard, in Barrett, 1997, pp. 508, 622) in this country are quite right to regard the ethical question as to rights of possession as opening onto an abyss in which whatever is conceded, either materially or morally, will never be enough. Nothing can make up for the facts of presence and for the dispossession which they cover. Myth is the bad faith by which I (or a people, a nation) get around these problems. In myth no waking logic bothers me. I am always beginning in media res, my past already justified merely in the fact that I am, that I am here to tell the tale. Australia begins then in its nameless state (as the new nameless half of New Holland) as a taunt to the panopticon. But the world comes to its ends and the map is only the beyond of the visible. Once an outline is drawn, skulls will begin to be measured. In this process we see that myth is judgement made nature, word given to God. If we forget that we have arrived via a civilising process which meant the subjugation of other races, then that forgetting amounts to the bad faith of an unreformed character’s self-absolution. Such a character may yet be brought to unforget. That judgement in which the world is named and unnamed, forgotten, remembered; far from being incidental, is the process of the world’s making.

There is thus a circle in which judgement appropriates and brings to itself its own means. Only in bad faith does judgement manage to stand out of the means of its own apprehension. By contrast poetry’s special risk can be to stand out of that circle of judgement. This special status does not however exempt poetry from being subject to its own subjecting. John Forbes’ poem "Speed, A Pastoral", refusing the frivolity of a view over lives in which poetry is made, begins by placing its own persona next in the line to be assessed by means, which as those of the poet, are self-defeating:


it's fun to take speed
& stay up all night
not writing those reams of poetry
just thinking about is bad for you
— instead your feelings
follow your career down the drain
& find they like it down there
among an anthology of fine ideas, bound together
by a chemical in your blood
that lets you stare the TV in its vacant face
& cheer, consuming yourself like a mortgage
& when Keats comes to dine, or Flaubert,
you can answer their purities
with your own less negative ones — for example
you know Dransfield’s line, that once you become a junkie
you’ll never want to be anything else?
well I think he died too soon,
as if he thought drugs were an old fashioned teacher
& he was the teacher’s pet, who just put up his hand
& said quietly, “Sir, sir”
& heroin let him leave the room.

(1988, p. 28)

The shifting of ground, by which the persona manages to evade any finality of judgement, is a method which has long been available to the authors of literary works. Only in the post-modern has it been available to the critical habitus, until now confined to
a singular point of view. What does it mean for the critic to access this trick and to turn it, in the spirit if not the name of judgement, on itself and on its producers? Is it another reflexive step or is it the step which bars reflection by appropriating it to judgement? Bernadette Mayer writes in "The Obscured Poem":

The poem may have to mean nothing for a while or reflect in its meaning just the image of meaning. As a method of learning how to write, the obscured poem must still cover to hide a real energy in training. The obscured poem leads nowhere on its own, it is a study, it is occasionally a political nothingness text, it is an experiment conducted by a person (who may have something to hide).

(in Hoover, 1994, pp. 658-9)

To examine the self, one's life and one's past must be to begin the process of forgiving myself my own making. Or of congratulating myself. Or of disinteresting myself. Or of feigning to myself any of these things. What gets between me and the prospect of authentically accounting for myself is precisely the technique by which I do the accounting. The moment we begin to examine the world how can we not take sovereignty over it? And the moment we take sovereignty over ourselves in this manner, privileging one moment and one view over other moments and other views, how can we act authentically? We could argue that that one moment and its one view are the centre which defines my authentic self, that to the extent that I am able to conform to the requirements of such a centre of subjectivity, I am indeed acting authentically. But this is unconvincing. Ashbery's poem "How Much Longer Will I Be Able To Inhabit The Divine Sepulcher..." throws into doubt the possibility of its persona having a subjective centre. In a movement not unlike the tempo-spatial shifts to which Kurt Vonnegut's protagonist is subject in Slaughterhouse 5, time and reminiscence run this character in the direction of existential doubt:

How much longer will I be able to inhabit the divine sepulcher
Of life my great love? Do dolphins plunge bottomward
To find the light? Or is it rock
That is searched? Unrelentingly? Huh. And if some day

Men with orange shovels come to break open the rock
Which encases me, what about the light that comes in then?
What about the smell of the light?
What about the moss?

In pilgrim times he wounded me
Since then I only lie
My bed of light is a furnace choking me
With hell (and sometimes I hear water dripping).

I mean it – because I'm one of the few
To have held my breath under the house. I'll trade
One red sucker for two blue ones. I'm
Named Torn. The

Eventually we face the questions "Who are you anyway?" and "Am I wonder./ Strategically, and in the light/ Of the long sepulcher that hid death and hides me?"(1987, pp. 36-9). The spread of myself through time and through space, the lack of authentic continuity which I present precisely in the fact of presenting as a continuity of consciousness (as being the same person who was or who is to be ashamed or embarrassed in a certain manner) would appear to present for authenticity an unbearable burden. Rae Desmond Jones, in "The Poets" sets up an unresolvable tension and interdependence between the inside and the outside of the persona so named:

they speak to a vast audience
consisting mainly of one another
all of whom nervously shuffle
manuscripts & wait their turn

meantime the masses who are
as usual blind deaf & stupid
just keep walking to the bus or
into the office reading newspapers
& quite obviously don't give a fuck,

& who can blame them?
for of course they have real
problems, the problems of carrying
on the business of carefully
& unselfconsciously

living & dying & paying off the
telly getting tired disillusioned
& old but nonetheless keeping
the nose to the grindstone etc.,

but if one should by some incredible
mischance happen to actually read
one of the poems published
as an occasional cultural piece

but not too prominently
in the corner of the review page
of one of our Saturday morning papers,

he nods, baffled, & turns back to
the real problem he has of the second
mortgage or thinks about his wife

swollen with the third
or the legs of the office girl
so tightly clenched he thinks
her pussy must almost pucker &
blow him kisses

but rarely he might think
at how unreal the world has
become & how beautiful & how
soon he must leave it which is

also beautiful & how time
passes but in any case perhaps
just for a minute he thinks
poetry & knows himself

dwarfish, blind & ugly &
returns once again to the real.

(1973, pp. 23-4)
Semantic change and the unconsciously tropic nature of everyday language both interest the shifts of consciousness with which poetries concern themselves. We know that language changes and is chosen in many respects and instances in conditions which could not be described as fully conscious. A linear model suggests consciousness and unconsciousness as more or less arbitrarily declared positions on a scale with no end points. This position underlies the (generally) metaphorical schemata in which consciousness is usually considered. (We come to realise things, we reach understandings, we wake up) There is a still simpler conception of consciousness which also retains a powerful idiomatic force. This is best expressed in the lightbulb metaphor, which draws the popular conception of un/consciousness very close to that of sleeping/waking: consciousness is off or on.

We acknowledge that if the object of consciousness is to achieve a totality of meaning, then this is an object which the exercise of consciousness itself must frustrate. Consciousness will always find itself beyond itself. This is how the history of science (perhaps the history of knowledge in the West) generally presents itself – as an uncompleted path in the direction of complete awareness. Experience of the supersession of theories may lead us speculate on the manner of the demise we anticipate for them. Nevertheless, for the duration of their currency as best accounts, they appear to complete the thinking which enabled them. Their inadequacy likewise suggests that the conditions for which they sought to account, have somehow receded from our grasp. Awareness, we may say, is what incompletes itself. And whereas in science certainty is always about to be foiled and the scientist the one who will be mistaken; modern poetry begins in the destabilisation of its own view, as an avowal of consciousness shifting.

Just as it is impossible to attain a totally self-aware speech so it is impossible also to be fully unconscious in any use of (production or reception of) language. Meaning is sent, meaning received. The gap or lack between these, the mistakenness which inheres in such difference, may be taken as symptomatic of meaning’s motions. Spivak asks the question: “Can a strategy be unwitting?” To which she replies: “Of course not fully so.” (1988, p. 207) Semiosis takes place, even if it is as automatic, as apparently unconscious, as in the case of Malinowski’s phatic communion: the keeping open of a channel (in Ogden and Richards, 1923, p. 315). Consciousness may transcend itself towards itself but, in its identity with language, it does not succeed in dispensing with itself. Consciousness is, for Spivak, not thought, “but rather the subject's irreducible intendedness towards the object” (1988, p. 154). Meaning persists even in silence because silence is always between two signs and in this position is itself a sign.

Because there is no pure denotative speech, no hope of access to truths or realities capable of indefinitely or universally maintaining their privilege over other truths or realities, because the reflexive investments of texts serve to undermine claims of both consciousness and authenticity; we find ourselves committed to the investigation of strategies of meaning: an investigation more appropriately, if provisionally, framed in terms of styles, rather than degrees, of consciousness.

Styles and Codes

We need to be careful in distinguishing the intentions and investments of individual subjects in the process of discourse and the underlying motivation/s of the context which situates them. From the point of view of language seen as the origin and exercise of consciousness, of greatest interest is the simultaneity of different types of meaning, of the different styles of consciousness these entail and of the ambivalent sites these offer to practices of social and individual volition. To any particular utterance more
and less conscious (and equally more or less reflexive) strategies of meaning may be attributed. This is both because of that historical formation of the word which Vico and others have pointed out to us and because of the multivalency of meaning, which Halliday, among others, demonstrates is characteristic of the clause. The loss of that multivalency we may associate both with the rigidity with which Bergson attributes the conditions of laughter (see chapter 2) and with the Russian Formalists'—especially Jan Mukarovsky's—notions of automatisation and de-automatisation/defamiliarisation (see chapter 4). To design to mean one thing at a time is to draw attention to the manner in which the investments of one's speech are overdetermined. One does not succeed in underdetermining them. To this extend speech is always wild.

In acknowledging the viability of such a conception as styles of consciousness we are forced to abandon the hope that the only measure of consciousness might be its abstraction as a single linear continuum. Basil Bernstein's distinction between elaborated and restricted speech variant codes offers a convenient example of an opposition between styles of consciousness, which cannot be reduced to a question of degree of awareness or intention.

Broaching as his "wider question... the relationships between symbolic orders and social structure" Bernstein examines, in a study the methods and findings of which have been vehemently opposed by William Labov, the interaction of division of labour, class system and the availability of elaborated codes. These are those codes which allow their participants access to more universal and non-specific meanings than might be needed in an intimate context. Restricted codes, by contrast, those demanded by intimate context and with limited prospects for communication beyond such a context, are "likely to have a strongly metaphorical element" (1972, p. 165):

restricted codes have their basis in condensed symbols, whereas elaborated codes have their basis in articulated symbols;... restricted codes draw upon metaphor whereas elaborated codes draw upon rationality;... these codes constrain the contextual use of language in critical socialising contexts and in this way regulate the orders of relevance and relation which the socialized takes over (1974, p. 176)

While we need to be wary of assuming that what Bernstein means by metaphor will be useful from the point of view of a literary exploration, we note that his data support the hypothesis that specific, particularistic meanings, those made for the benefit of a relatively closed group, are more metaphorical; those made for the wider world, by contrast, more transparently accessible to heterogeneous groups, that is, more open.

In fact, shifting from a consideration of those (attention-getting) clashes in code which leave a gap in communication, we need to acknowledge that every position involves us in a set of assumptions about the type of relationship, real or imaginary, purported between participants in context. The subjectivities which poetries entail have no privilege among other discourses as contextually unconstrained. If they are capable of superior (or indeed inferior) awarenesses then these must obtain in the social and textual configurations which allow their position.

Outlining the "structure and functioning of the field of restricted production" (contrasted with that of "large-scale cultural production") Pierre Bourdieu describes the position of the "restricted language" of "experimental art" or "pure poetry":

To appreciate the gulf separating experimental art, which originates in the field's own internal dialectic, from popular art forms, it suffices to consider the opposition between the evolutionary logic of popular language and that of literary language. As this restricted language is produced and reproduced in accordance with social relations dominated by the quest for distinction, its use obeys what one might term "the gratuitousness principle". Its manipulation demands the
almost reflexive knowledge of schemes of expression which are transmitted by an 
education explicitly aimed at inculcating the allegedly appropriate categories. 
(1993, p. 119)

The difference Bernstein develops between elaborated and restricted codes, which we 
may gloss (at the risk of hyperbole) as the difference between speaking to everyone and 
speaking with ourselves, has, in Bourdieu's terms, a logical corollary in the inner 
dialogue of the avant-garde's field of restricted production: "To the extent that its 
products require extremely scarce instruments of appropriation, they are bound to precede 
their market or to have no clients at all, apart from producers themselves" (1993, 
p. 120). Rae Desmond Jones' poets are in just such a position.

We might postulate at this point from Bernstein's hypothesis that the more closed 
a poetic text the more metaphorical would be its methods, the more open the less so. This 
seems counter intuitive. The most open texts, in Eco's sense, would appear to offer the 
most heterogeneous readings, the most diverse and ambiguous directions for 
engagement. In this sense, as Eco (1984, p. 75) illustrates (literally), Finnegans Wake is 
a (meander) tale which leads back to itself in all directions.

While it is tempting to hazard that the poetics of the open work, the work in 
movement, allow it to speak at once both to its selves and its others, our best prospect for 
resolving the apparent anomaly is to posit an inverse proportion between the openness 
(i.e., polyvalency) of text and the restriction of cultural production. The most closed 
texts, on the other hand, those in terms of which the idea of errors of interpretation is 
most sensible, those which offer one reading for all readers (in Halliday's terms, the 
maximum amount of "congruent realisation") are in the immediate term, the most 
universally received and offer the best prospect of being understood.

Bernstein's terms: elaborated/ restricted, universal/ particular - need to be read as 
endpoints on scales which allow infinitely subtle gradations. There are not two types of 
family or two classes, each homogeneous in its own right - rather these are useful as 
abstractions if we acknowledge such variability requires a norm which must vary for 
every point on the scale, and in every instance (just as every instance of measurement of 
rainfall or temperature bears on the average against which a next instance is measured) 
even as these blur into continuity with those beside them. That is, for such-and-such a 
family, for a context so composed and at this approximate moment, then this degree of 
metaphoricity, this degree of closedness, restrictiveness of code, would be the norm. 
Needless to say, the moment the moment is spoken (and properly it would never cease to 
be), it has passed and with it, this abstracted norm, has shifted.

Bourdieu implicates the educational system in the reproduction of the two regimes 
of cultural production he discerns:

Among those characteristics of the education system liable to affect the structure 
of relations with other elements of the system of production and circulation of 
symbolic goods, the most important is surely its slow rate of evolution. This 
structural inertia, deriving from its function of cultural conservation, is pushed to 
the limit by the logic which allows it to wield a monopoly over its own 
reproduction...

As indicated, it is impossible to understand the peculiar characteristics of 
restricted culture without appreciation of its profound dependence on the 
educational system, the indispensable means of its reproduction and growth. 
(1993, p. 123)

One cannot help but feel the adequacy of this explanation to the different types of 
marginality, those of the socially disadvantaged and the culturally elite, which Bernstein 
and Bourdieu consider (even if on the one hand the disadvantage would seem to be 
imposed from without and on the other self-imposed). When Dransfield, in Forbes'
poem, puts his hand up to be indulged by heroin he illustrates those conditions which define the habitus of the restricted culture.

We can relate the social disability which Bernstein (and the isolation in autonomy which Bourdieu) describes in his restricted code to Jakobson's (1956) observations on two types of aphasia and their relation to the metonymic and metaphoric poles of language. For Jakobson those who suffer from contiguity disorder are the ones who cannot make metonymies, whose thinking is therefore biased in its organisation towards the metaphoric pole, finding expression in what Jakobson refers to as "quasi-metaphors". In what might seem a paradoxical relation between these social and psychological views of metaphor, those subjects who are limited to a restricted code, which code is facilitated by metaphorising processes, suffer from what might be called, by analogy with Jakobson's model, a heterogeny disorder. In making specific and heavily context dependent reference they exclude, or have passively excluded from their experience, a larger, more heterogeneous and more metonymic world. They make metaphors, not intending to universalise their own concrete experience, but with the effect of insulating the group from dynamics larger than itself. They fail to appreciate relations of contiguity in their context of culture and in so doing are assured their world is one of monolithic habitus and continuity. Lovers do this as an unconscious means of keeping their world "dreamy". Rarely can they devote more than part of the day or part of their lives to the beautiful illusion of a world so unified. But where access to the outside of such a code is severely restricted, as in the case of the marginally literate in a highly literate society, difference is subsumed in a speech which is only accessible to those holding the appropriate metaphoric keys, these in the form of the cues to equivalence or analogy which characterise what, in Bakhtin's terms, we might think of as a particular accent.

To return via Jakobson to the philosophic implications of Bernstein's elaborated/restricted distinction: the subjects in a restricted code are made or make themselves the victims of a differend—they are silenced as opponents in a language game. Historical events are instances of such silencing. These are the moments when injustices become inexpressible. Under the sway of relations of equivalence, the subjects of a restricted code deprive themselves or are deprived of the opportunity to see what is next to them, i.e., the context in which they are situated and possibly the conditions of their own oppression. When such restriction is exercised as one of a repertoire of moves in dialogue, it has the effect of fostering solidarity by asserting a border between those in and out of understanding; when it is the only available move then its subject, in asserting such solidarity also implicitly asserts the fact that s/he is locked into the lowest of positions offered by a vertical (i.e., paradigmatic/metaphoric) view of the world. Among these positions we observe the exchange of bodies between the community of excluded others and the community of excluding others.

We may explain in this manner the opposition which Deleuze establishes between metaphor and metamorphosis: the system of equivalences in which language regulates itself through its participants has a prophylactic effect on the desire to see or alter the larger world. But of course such a world is one represented, of representation; the prophylactic screens the subject from the desire of seeing through Auden's brick wall, it does not demolish the wall or what is beyond it. So Lyotard can write: "You don't play around with language. And in this sense there are no language games. There are stakes tied to genres of discourse" (1988, p. 137). In these terms we may perhaps begin to account for the continuing disappearance of poetry at its own hand, as indulging an

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67 Inversion of production and reception regimes may be what is demonstrated in the Deleuzian opposition between metaphor and metamorphosis: the self-imposed pattern in which the work of words apparently makes things other, turns out to be the pattern in which things remain the same. What happens dialogically among participants in restricted codes and what happens monologically to the same people as receivers of texts which, in their act of reception, they en masse make popular, is that the frenzy of words allows the world stasis.

131
increasingly restricted (albeit esoteric) code, one so self-obsessed that any simple reference it avows is plainly not to be trusted.

In the case of poetry we face the contradiction that those works which make the most of heterogeneous and abstract materials — the most densely or variously tropic of texts, the most modern of poetics (the least decided and the most open of texts in Eco’s sense), have the smallest audiences, having restricted their readership to those with the appropriate training or taste. They are engaged in Bourdieu’s “field of restricted production” (1993, passim). As example of this take a stanza of Wallace Steven’s “The Idea of Order at Key West”:

She sang beyond the genius of the sea.
The water never formed to mind or voice,
Like a body wholly body, fluttering
Its empty sleeves; and yet its mimic motion
Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry,
That was not ours although we understood,
Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.

The restricted code requires a knowledge of its participants. The restricted field works to deprive its reader of reference with which to place participants. Genius, sea, body, she, we, the cry, humanity, understanding — how can we begin to claim in what tropic relations these abstractions and concretions stand with each other? The poem demands and yet frustrates the effort to have its meaning approached from one angle. It dares us to take its side or stand aside. We cannot know what either of these positions would mean and yet we are implicated in them. Its “veritable ocean” cannot be read as such because it folds back into the world the singer makes, who “Knew there never was a world for her/Except the one she sang and, singing, made.” We are implicated in her song because it is composed, as is Wallace Steven’s poem, in words which we cannot disown: “Words of the fragrant portals, dimly starred,/And of ourselves and of our origins,/In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.” (1959, pp. 54-5) In all these ways we may say the poem is difficult to be with; equally difficult to get away from. Needless to say, when such a text achieves canonic status, through whatever complex negotiations, it takes on the necessary dignity of the already approved. The product of the restricted field is absolved of its restricted status through the virtue of becoming an example, even a rite of passage.

On the other hand the most epic forms, often narrative, those whose codes assume the most specific and contextually bound knowledge, those with the most predictable and unified tropic strategies, in which the world is made particular, are those with the widest audiences. Such is the status of Homeric epic, equally of the television sitcom; episodic texts, able to be rejoined anywhere, requiring no specific training; yet once deprived of their synchronic place, these too require to be explained68.

From the point of view of habitus, the implication here is that those with the training to speak to the greatest number, actually nobble themselves (and their sales) so as to identify and speak exclusively with each other. Their something-worth-saying is restricted to the code they share with those worth-speaking-to. To speak with everyone would be to exclude one’s self from the club within which the worthwhile is spoken. And so the elite of poetic production constitute themselves as a kind of pseudo-oppressed, a mob, however tiny, who can only be understood by each other. Naturally they are mocked and derided by those who, similarly knowledge (themselves in their day jobs?), produce a universalising culture for mass consumption. The difference

68 The diction in C.J. Dennis’s Songs of a Sentimental Bloke, a poem which had a huge audience in Australia, provides a convenient example. Or imagine the exegetic effort of explaining to a class of overseas students the iconic cultural status of A.B. Paterson’s “Clancy of the Overflow”.

132
between them and the true oppressed though, and we should acknowledge that these groups may overlap (for instance in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol"), is that the cultural elite's work, while it may effectively, however briefly, lock out the world in general, generally contends with that world and hopes, against odds it itself increases, to make a difference in that world. Conversely those most subject to the monolithic habitus of restricted codes, are most susceptible to a universalising mass culture. They are most susceptible, that is, to mythic or epic discourses, those which, as we have seen, rewrite their enabling conditions in order to maintain and naturalise present relations of power. Such differences, doubts and susceptibilities inhabit the collective pseudo-personae of Rae Desmond Jones' "The Palace of Art":

we don't believe in being destructive
& only wish to direct your attention
to the contempt which you have (on
occasion) displayed towards the workers
for whom you express an affinity
but whose company you dislike

& the bourgeoisie whose manners
you ape & by whose standards you would
dearly love to be approved,

even art in your hands has become
an expression of contempt as it takes
away from human creation its humanity.

but it is not our intention to be
impolite & because we believe in the good
we will direct you consistently & gently
to self-knowledge, realisation, samadhi.

soon the rail trucks will come to escort
you to a new destination which you may at
first dislike but you which you will come
to rejoice in for it will be yours to own
& for this reason it is likely to be a quiet
place where the night air could turn chilly

but the sky will be clear & on weeknights
there will be music to which you can dance
if you can manage the appropriate dignity,

we suggest you practice the waltz.

it has been pleasant for these few moments
entertaining you & it is time for us to part,
vaya condios, & don't lose your numbers,

because you are a different breed of man
from those we hope to send after you.

(1981, pp. 8-9)
If we adopt the position that there neither is nor can be a zero degree of connotation, that all texts are therefore implicated in tropic strategies, then claims for various discourses of more or less metaphoricity are unlikely to impress. We may however note that where epic texts work, in the main, formulaically, by anticipating and fuelling the tropic expectations of their audience, modern poetic texts work to confuse, if not upset, prediction. Those who read them expect to be surprised, to have to re-read and work out which way to take things. This slipperiness and contrariness is characteristic of metonymy, metalesis and above all, irony. Ashbery’s poem “Paradoxes and Oxymorons” employs and discusses each of these:

This poem is concerned with language on a very plain level.
Look at it talking to you. You look out a window
Or pretend to fidget. You have it but you don’t have it.
You miss it, it misses you. You miss each other.

The poem is sad because it wants to be yours, and cannot.
What’s a plain level? It is that and other things,
Bringing a system of them into play. Play?
Well, actually, yes, but I consider play to be

A deeper outside thing, a dreamed role-pattern,
As in the division of grace these long August days
Without proof. Open ended. And before you know
It gets lost in the steam and chatter of typewriters.

It has been played once more. I think you exist only
To tease me into doing it, on your level, and then you aren’t there
Or have adopted a different attitude. And the poem
Has set me softly down beside you. The poem is you.


Whereas popular and epic texts establish, largely by means of metaphor, a world where everyone of the audience is meant to agree and where morality is therefore universal, the ironising text challenges the ethical bases of judgement of any sort, and is, by definition, turned on itself, its own presuppositions and judgements. Rae Desmond Jones wrote in his Fraser era poem, "Mr Fraser": "to condemn sir fraser in terms of morality/ is more than useless it is to condemn morality/ in one in whom morality is manifest to deny/ this is to deny that innately we need his/ blindness to blind us" (1981, p. 33). The interactive epic of an oral culture, likewise the formulaic riddling known as taming, show an inside and an out of culture: who hears these belongs or is a barbarian. Poems, in our time, work at making us unsure of our belongings, of where we belong. And the modern telly epic or ad myth, with their dreamy metonymies placing our words with the things desired, appeals to the automatically tropic character of the dreamwork. Its function is to help us work out what we want – a kind of dream plus the therapy, text with its own sufficient exegesis. These are technologies which short-circuit the separation of truth from fiction, in order to return us to something resembling an oral homeostasis.

And what of avowedly non-tropic, non-poetic texts? The straight talking encyclopaedia claims only to denote and not to decorate its subject, and maintains on this basis possession of the literal truth, of being thus the measure from which connotative discourse departs. But what appears in the guise of the normative discourse of truth, generally relies on a failure to place itself: its words are neutral and final because they are not from anywhere. They are not a story, neither are they contested. They cannot see themselves and they work against epiphany because they deal with what is universally revealed. And yet the student of culture cannot accept them on these terms because the connotative plane is the terra firma on which human interaction and thought take place.
In this light it appears then that Bernstein's *more metaphoric* code entails the lesser reliance on some other trope or movement among tropes; that a less metaphoric code relies on other tropes or tropic strategies for their denial. The relation between texts and contexts is essentially tropic and so there is no discourse which ultimately succeeds in not being placed: this is why encyclopedias lose their value so quickly. There is likewise no discursive move which is not a tropic move. Lacking absolute congruences and literal modes, we have no choice but to acknowledge the figurativity (which is not to say decorativity) of all expression.

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In these necessarily provisional investigations, the absence of any centre of gravity (our dependence on a radical variability) is revealed in the inherent *betweenness* of language and of languages. From the point of view of observation this is borne out in the refusal of all instances of language to sit still and merely denote, or at least to vary from a transparently available norm. Text and context are, as the heavenly bodies, engaged in a simultaneous plurality of movements, of which some are more readily perceptible than others.

A radically heterogeneous version of context demands a shifting norm. In other words, if there are norms they must respond to the variability of the contexts in which they are operative. Foucault's mentor, Georges Canguilhem, has demonstrated the context dependence of norms: "Taken separately the living being and his environment are not normal: it is their relationship that makes them such." Humans for Canguilhem are normative, not because of any conformity on their part, but because they open relationships in which they depend on an environment (1966, p. 78).

The problem with prospects for determining the normative with regard to poetries, is firstly that while poetries, as other types of text and context, are constantly shifting the ground on which that might be determined, poetry has kept or we should say has passed on through ages, this one name; secondly that poetry now insists on a consciousness of itself as innovative, in other words as norm-defying. Insisting on a display of norm defiance as constitutive, poetry is locked into the contradiction of regarding itself as one, but insisting on defining itself as the one making difference, becoming plural.

If language and context are in continuous flux, none of this is able to be made self-aware in the *phonological moment*, the only true grounding on which language relies, the only place where text is becoming (*énonciation*). The movement of language is thus caught paradoxically between the stillness of that past in which language has become – *énoncé* – and the dynamism of any one moment of speech in which the future of that past, anticipated until now, is realised. Discourse and its texts are caught between awareness and necessity. Each word utters, as we have said, all of those uttered before – in their addition, their average and their force. It is this *past* of words, their echoic instability which also ensures that their substance will continue to be mutable. Merleau-Ponty writes, "it is because it has been used in various contexts that the word gradually accumulates a significance which it is impossible to establish absolutely" (1962, p. 388).

The word is never entirely known because it is never finished. Not even a dead word from a dead language is finished if we choose to bring it to mind, which is as much as to say *if it is known*. Such words may be more conveniently regulated than those of living languages but to the extent that they interact with other words (i.e. to the extent that

69 Cf. Bakhtin/Volosinov's account, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, of the dead as alien language and the far-reaching contention that "dead, written, alien language is the true description of the language with which linguistic thought has been concerned" (1973, pp. 73-6).
we know or use them) there remains to them a mutable aspect. And because the word is never fully known it is always the site of an ambivalent play of previous contexts, always potentially the site of poesis.

Repetition and change become the poles from which we must guess at the normative (guessing of us). Lest we be too easily hypnotised in the manner of Zeno’s paradox of the arrow (which cannot move because it must be at rest in each moment of its apprehension), we should remind ourselves of the obvious facts of language use: that meaning is made out of and despite intentions, and that instruments such as dictionaries prove, not that language is an object which lies still for our scrutiny, but rather the perception of a need to rein in the movement and scope of meaning – beyond the grasp of individual consciousness as these are.

The infinitude of context is of the relatedness of texts, of their between. Paradoxically, the between of texts is that which is immanent in textuality. To say that all textuality is thus inter-textuality is not to devalue either term but to admit that the processes by which all texts come to be, depend, despite whichever awarenesses are promoted in particular cases, on the fact of context.

Carnival Trap

In the face of the relativising of the denotation/connotation polarity (that ideal difference, in words, between the way things are and the way they seem as if they ought to be) we establish a radical, if necessarily unstable, context dependency, where the normative needs to be considered, not as the unchallengeable truth, but as the mainly unconscious pattern in which truths enlist us. To admit that our participation in such processes is without the least necessity of meta-awareness and goes on in the most mundane of our businesses, neither absolves that participation, nor prevents us from enquiring into it. The affinity of poetry with such processes is that it engages – subjects and objects, consciousness and its others – as an act of remaining between.

The uncertainty to which such an ambivalence commits us does not absolve us from formulating an ethics of presence, it merely means that the truths we assert in any case will be truths to context, rather than verities of the eternal or universal kind. The claims to ubiquity or permanence which inhere in myth remain part of the subject and subjectivity of poetry, but they are no longer its method. Likewise states, which exist from and so as to order their myths, do so only so far as they maintain the homeostasis which renders them sufficiently believable. Rousseau writes in The Social Contract: "If Sparta and Rome perished, what State can hope to endure forever? If we would set up a long-lived form of government, let us not even dream of making it eternal" (1952, p. 419). The audience of nations (its citizens, their others) today may not want to hear about thousand year Reichs. Nor does it wish for imminent collapse and dissolution. It wants to believe not to think what it is. The desire of peace then is generally that questions of identity lie out of contention (cf. Renan’s argument that: "It is good for everyone to know how to forget", in Bhabha, 1990, p. 16). Yet it is through consciousness of who we are and how we came to be, that the issue of authenticity arises. And from this issue likewise arises the issue of what and who and how we may be. Are we really who we think we are? By what means are such thoughts mediated? In
a general way it is the function of culture to answer or evade such questions, or at least to reformulate them.

The production of art somehow entails a balance between meaning to mean and allowing meaning spontaneously to arise. Poetry’s role, as an art of remaining between words, between subjects, involves the infinite delay of freedom, that freedom we would know from the effect of a decision. Epiphany, that presence of consciousness in which a reality is unveiled, is for the poem what stands in lieu of decidedness. Jack Spicer, in his “Imaginary Elegies” writes:

Poetry, almost blind like a camera  
Is alive in sight only for a second. Click,  
Snap goes the eyelid of the eye before movement  
Almost as the word happens.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 104)

All that we can say of consciousness in this respect is that it does not sit still, and that the apparent restfulness of the poem-as-artefact, needs to be an illusion. "How can I describe anything when all these interruptions keep arriving and then/ tell me I dont describe it well WELL forgive them big ME", writes Hanner Weiner (Hoover, 1994, p. 185). Revelation casts doubt over all that precedes it and therefore over all that enables it. Epiphany in the poem in this way is, however it seems, the manner of not arriving, not being at home. Or finding a home elsewhere than where or how it was.

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Plato and Bakhtin both banish poetry. But whereas Plato banishes myth-making tendencies in favour of the singing of hymns and praises, Bakhtin’s wish is to dispense with the already congealed of poetry; the reified and finished-for-all-time past which never was, that which denies the multi-accentsal reality of the word.

In Revolution in Poetic Language and elsewhere Kristeva is interested in a transgressive poetry, one which, following Saussure’s anagrams, concerns itself with words under words, text in text, a poetry which pushes in a plural and horizontal direction (in the direction of a text like Finnegans Wake), a poetry which stresses the dual nature of the poet as creator and created and the fact of language’s being doubly constituted as text and as communication.

From Bakhtin Kristeva borrows the true and false logic of carnival ambivalence and contrasts this with the true or false logic of identity. Kristeva’s ambivalence entails the contradictory nature of a poetic language that includes always its own negation: speech and non-speech, real and non-real, norm and transgression (1984, pp. 116-126). A result of this position, whereby a poetic language refuses to obey the (thetic) rules by which language generally or normally proceeds is that it is virtually impossible to speak fairly of poetry (1984, p. 70); that is, in a way which accommodates the terms of its different, ambivalent logic. Thus the conflict between the poets and the academy is the conflict between ambivalent and bi-valent logic. We note here, in Heidegger’s terms, the naturalness of this conflict: “Every decision... bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision” (1971, p. 55).

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70 Bachelard gives ambivalence the status of “a basic law of the imagination”, writing: “a matter to which the imagination cannot give twofold life cannot play the psychological role of a fundamental substance” (1971, p. 83).
For Kristeva the carnival in poetic language is invisible, unobservable because it is the movement of language itself and unable to be contained by the conventional logic of language (1984, p. 16). Kristeva coins the term orthocomplementarity to make more subtle the difference between true and false which a poetry need not accept as finality. Kristeva is interested in a truth which "consists in the ability to participate in the process of contradiction which, logically and historically, both includes and goes beyond" (1984, p. 222). Hopkin's *inpress* (Lechte, 1990, pp. 113-4) is an example of such a transcendence, one which entails the dissolution of the subject as identical with itself and foreshadows a general negativity (in this case the ground or fourth term of the Hegelian dialectic which Kristeva relates to the psychoanalytic concept of rejection), that of the empty space, independent of signs, in which subject and text are constituted. From this negativity/rejection Kristeva is able to relate the ambivalent logic of poetry and the dissolution of the subject, to the (synecdochic) idea that the part can be equivalent to the whole.

There is a risk of disappearance in the hope of standing outside of judgement and there is a risk of self-swallowing in a logic which allows parts to be equal to or greater than wholes. A post-modern poetry has to cope with the problem of its splits in subjectivity being such as to implicate it in the system of judgement it would claim to be bigger than or outside of. This said it needs to be acknowledged that it is the post-modern condition which draws our attention to splits which were always there in the (in our case literary) subject.

Nevertheless the infinite of an ambivalent poetic logic implies a threat to society because it suggests that the individual (part of society), that subjectivity which poetry composes and decomposes, can be equivalent to the whole\(^7\) and that society itself is based on the fiction of the masses becoming one subject, one organism, one will.

Thus it is claimed that the transcendental subject of phenomenology is surpassed and with it the central position of consciousness. Kristeva's subject in process is one of flows and charges, of jouissance – a semiotic (thus pre-symbolic) subject – associated with the unrepresentable space of the semiotic chora and one to be contrasted with a symbolic subject (associated with the place and the law of the father) (1984, pp. 68-9).

From the point of view of art, and thus poetry, the semiotic and the symbolic are equally essential. In the poetic work where, through nonsense and laughter, the semiotic violates the symbolic, the thetic itself, the precondition of language, of signification, is challenged. For Kristeva, the practice of modern poetry attacks meaning through

\(^7\) Poetry may not be innocent of such fictions but in deploying them it draws our attention to the problems they entail. For instance Gunnar Eklof writes:

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In my dreams I heard a voice:
- Habib would you like this onion
Or just a slice of it?
At this I fell into great disquiet
This enigmatic question
Was the question of my life!
Did I prefer the part to the whole
Or the whole to the part
No, I wanted both
The part of the whole as well as the whole
And that this choice would involve no contradiction.
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(1971, p. 21)
laughter (1984, p. 217). This semioticisation of the symbolic (1984, p. 79) undermines
the myth by which the state and its "representative" institutions constitute reality, the myth
by which the thetic moment is denied, and which denies the crime at the origin of society
(1984, p. 70). In our case this is the crime of invasion and dispossession – that is the
theft of the country, the murder of the people, the testimony by which we come to the
knowledge of a drowning.

Such crimes are no doubt at the origin of all societies; ours is no different in
devising its myths to conceal or justify them. But a claim of safety in numbers has
ethical force only where memory of more recent crimes blocks or relativises those
preceding, by making us other than those who committed them. Should Italians feel bad
about the Roman Empire? Should Germans feel guilty, as Aryans, as Huns, as Holy
Romans, about the countless and forgotten tribes and nationalities whose place they now
occupy? Why should they feel culpable for this when they can feel guilty for a definitive
Holocaust, only one or two generations back? Remembering who we are, what guilt and
pride composes us, is the difficult and unavoidable function of myth. In our case, we
are the holocaust which befell Aboriginal Australia; the only other crimes which have
occurred in the time of that holocaust are ones either overseas or throughout the world
including us. And as for that other non-normative Australia, the "ethnic" one, should we
ask in vain at what point migration to Australia became, from the point of view of
indigenous, other than genocidal?

For Kristeva the geniality of a poetic language undermines fetishism, the
homogeneity of the social, the unitary subject and the structure of the bourgeois family.
The force of poetic language is a practice, a revolutionary practice, preparing the way for
a new symbolic order. The thetic moment and the semioticisation of the symbolic imply
poetry's potential to challenge all aspects of reality and language, even as these construct
each other and ourselves, the social order, the family, sexuality, signification,
subjectivity. The ethical, which for Kristeva is "coextensive with textual practice" and
thus "separates us from the 'scientific morality' that would like to found a normative ...
ethics based on knowledge", is a practice not to be made explicit (1984, p. 234). Perhaps
a practice not becoming explicit is the only means of combating a society whose "subjects
are called upon to participate in a law whose determinations and articulations they neither
know nor control" (Lechte's translation cited in Lechte, 1990, p. 148). The permanent
opposition to the law constituted by laughter as practice may be what enables poetry to
uncover from the law and its logic their founding and enabling crimes. Ambivalence in
the face of the law is powerfully expressed in Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol":

I know not whether laws be right,
Or whether laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong

(1963, p. 739)

In developing a critique of Kristeva's poetry which cannot decide, theory which
cannot help but decide, we note firstly the blurring and convergence of these text types
under post-modern regimes, and that our practices in the world are such that we do decide
and are decided, that the narrowness of our ranges of action always imply larger textual
frames which serve as (already decided) context. If we come to the paradox that not
deciding is equally impossible as its opposite, that not deciding thus is another of those
things which we do not get to do; if we then ask where this leaves us, then the answer
must be, in motion, in the process of coming to a decision (or to indecision).

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Between consciousness and meaning, between the individual and the social
aspects of communication, between what is and what is yet to be understood we may
locate the everyday and ubiquitous filtering of tropology, that set of relational
transferences which establishes truth out of the nonsense of the real. Poetry exploits the
reversibility of this relation which locates us, limits, includes or excludes us – that most
ideological of mechanisms by which all is made normal or all is unmade.

For Kristeva consciousness is what represses the struggle within heterogeneity
which is constitutive of practice (1984, p. 204). The practice which Kristeva proposes
leads us away from any unified consciousness\(^2\) and in the direction of an infinite
dialectical movement. For Levinas this process - the process of signification - is infinity.

Tropology is a tool (potentially an heuristic tool) by which modalities of the real
are established. The answer to the questions, How real (?), Real in which way (?), is
given in tropes. Denial of the tropic, or approximations of such a denial ("it was almost
literally... ") imply claims of a transcendent reality, one established in terms of
unconscious, internalised norms, which are themselves always delivered as tropic
relations. Exhortations to plain speech (as I.A. Richards points out in *The Philosophy of
Rhetoric*) are famously like this. Examination of them reveals that the *untropic*, those
words which tell us what is what, are really metaphors in drag: "Beauty is truth, truth is
beauty."

*

The role of poetry in the work of recovering what never was conscious, of
hearing the ghost in the billabong, challenges at once the foundations of subjectivity and
consciousness. For one thing it challenges an accepted assumption that the conscious
life and the literal are normative realities against which and in terms of which the deviation
of, in each case, the unconscious and the figurative is measured. By evading the
conditions of a general and panoptic view, poetry demonstrates these as the convenience
of a particular and self-justifying metabusiness. Poetries are able to demonstrate the
unviability of all abstractions which outlive their ends in composing the real. Craig
Raine’s poem "A Martian Sends a Postcard Home" elaborates the foreignness of words
and things by exhuming metaphors from everyday experience, in an attempt at distance;
an attempt at showing the strangeness of things we know:

Caxtons are mechanical birds with many wings
and some are treasured for their markings –

they cause the eyes to melt
or the body to shrink without pain.

I have never seen one fly, but
sometimes they perch on the hand.

Mist is when the sky is tired of flight
and rests its soft machine on ground:

then the world is dim and bookish
like engravings under tissue paper.

Rain is when the earth is television.
It has the property of making colors darker.

---

\(^2\) We should note here that the efficacy of a movement away from a *unity* of consciousness need not constitute the grounds on which we could succeed in abandoning consciousness altogether. Indeed it is only the un/consciousness of alterity which is able to guarantee our movement from such a unity.
Model T is a room with the lock inside –
- a key is turned to free the world

for movement, so quick there is a film
to watch for anything missed.

But time is tied to the wrist
or kept in a box, ticking with impatience.

In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,
that snores when you pick it up.

If the ghost cries, they carry it
to their lips and soothe it to sleep

with sounds. And yet, they wake it up
deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

Only the young are allowed to suffer
openly. Adults go to a punishment room

with water but nothing to eat.
They lock the door and suffer the noises
alone. No one is exempt
and everyone’s pain has a different smell.

At night, when all the colours die,
they hide in pairs

and read about themselves –
in colour, with their eyelids shut.

(Allison et al, 1983, p. 1397)

These doomed and important efforts to convey in the particularity of words their
particular and imagined outside, describe our problem in approaching alterity; our own or
otherwise.

If, as for Levinas, signification is infinite (cf. Peirce’s principle of unlimited
semiosis) then it depends on the fact of alterity; it depends that is on the voice of the other
in me, that voice which Lacan declares to be the unconscious. It is by this route that
Levinas is able to propose alterity as an alternative to transcendence. The path away
from universals and from the same of thought is not via any transcendence but the
conversation which acknowledges that there is an other. The impossible task of
establishing what is between us as the measure of us both, despite anthems and choruses,
stalls on the fact of the voice’s beginning and belonging in one body.

This conversation and this other, on which we depend for a sense of the self, is
only known as a tropic dimension. Consciousness and tropology intersect in an interest
in degrees and styles of the real: the meta-business of poetry.

All that we attempt in the way of abstraction or theory – however we dignify our
effort – all of our conception, reconception – all metabusiness – is still about language
and has not by intention (but certainly by practice) ultimately made language anything
different from the object of scrutiny or play with which we began. Like Wu Cheng En’s
Monkey in The Journey to the West (1961, p. 84), we have flown to the pillars at the end
of the world, we have had a piss there to leave our mark and, returning to the open palm
of the Buddha – days and nights ceaseless flight it has taken us – we discover from the
smell to which the Buddha alerts us the fact of our never having been anywhere else.
None of which we would have known by ourselves.

Perhaps we should take the advice of Robinson Jeffers, who in his poem,
"Carmel Point", writes of "the extraordinary patience of things", of the image of pristine
beauty which lives in the grain of granite safe as the endless cliff climbing ocean; and of
people, say ourselves, as a tide whose works dissolve, and who:

must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
As the rock and ocean that we were made from

(Milosz, 1996, p. 34)

It remains an open question whether or not we can, especially by means of words,
work towards a community beyond the "we" of human sentence. Heidegger writes "The
task is to see the riddle" (1971, p. 79). Acknowledge the trap and we may set a limit to the
dangers of telling by which we are here. There is the risk though of mistaking the
trap or of traps set within traps; there is risk, that is, of tricking ourselves with the
imagination of limits, known only in and through words. Language, the carnival trap,
pretended and temporary overturning of the law, is that palm in which we are free and in
thral, our sphere, our never having been elsewhere and in which we come to join with
each other, knowledge and its lack, in every style and absence of mind in the body.

*

Poetry and philosophy both look back into what haunts them. That is their
reflexive practice and their ethical course. It is a course which, in drawing them to
abstract their own position from that which they discover locating them, involves them in
a retreat from authenticity. Demonstration, description, definition, explanation,
historicising – in each of these we witness the slipping away of the authentic expression
which seems to call for the analysis. Authenticity slips away into abstraction wherever
we reflect on it. Abstraction in turn is swallowed up in the authenticity of the forward
unfolding of speech.

In his essay, "The First Person", Wittgenstein demonstrates these facts with the
concept of fear, which he says we would define by acting, i.e. by an inauthentic act. He
goes on to write of what we might consider the blurring of authentic acts with the
reflection upon them which ends up in words:

A cry is not a description. But there are transitions. And the words "I am afraid"
may approximate more, or less, to being a cry. They may come quite close to this
and also be far removed from it. (1994, p. 203)

I have already argued for both the unviability and inevitability of a metalinguistic
separation (such as that of langue from parole) of the instances of speech from its
abstraction. All paths return us to the defeat of an irresistible (because
impossible) desire: that of transcendence. The question of how to achieve, without
desiring, the cessation of desire, is a koan central to the spirit of Buddhist enquiry.

73 And we can conveniently divide the language theorists of our century according to whether they
believe that Saussure erred on the side of giving too much priority to langue or too much priority to
parole. Derrida's early work and the privilege in it which he extends to the broad generality he calls
writing, represents the following of the privilege of langue to its logical conclusion.
There is no beginning, no end and no beyond of the instances of language, of text, of discourse, of the canon. These are each phenomena which close themselves in circles of interdependence. It was just this prospect, of an infinite regress necessitated by the denial of beginnings and ends, which Aristotle rejected as entropic in the Physics (1952, p. 306). His fear was of the reflexive enfolding which we now embrace: of the change of change, the becoming of becoming. There is no outside of text because there is no outside of language: no writing other than writing, no speech other than speech (and therefore no prospect of a metalanguage or of Aristotle’s hoped for substrate underlying the processes of becoming). Just as we only think and speak in language, so language only consists of the instances of thought and speech. There is therefore no position outside of such systems from which such systems may be viewed. Acknowledging this fact is not the same as saying that there is nothing systematic in the phenomena which wholly envelop us – merely that the patterning in language is only ever able to be apprehended from within it and by it.

It is a form of idealism to give credence to the imagined unreal point outside of language from which we desire a view. In Mudrooroo’s poem “Hide and Seek”:

Once our words ran together...
As long as the sentences
We once formed
From our initiation marks,
Cut deeply into our living flesh,
By masters of our languages.

(Tranter and Mead, 1991, p. 229)

These are easy ambiguities, in which we wonder whose “our” words are, where they’re from, how they inhabit the flesh, how and where its wounds are from. We wonder whose language, who is mastered in it. Who does the mastering? In fairness the same questions need to be asked of the white forerunners of black poetry, particularly the Jindyworobaks. Take for example Rex Ingamells’s poem, “Moorawathimeering”, a work which, without resort to a glossary, must be alike incomprehensible to white and black Australians:

Into moorawathimeering,
where atninga dare not tread,
leaving wurley for a wilban,
tallabilla, you have fled.

(Elliot, 1979, p. 11)

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74 If Derrida’s “writing” is the broadest generality we can imagine from the failure to accept such a paradox, then the narrowest imaginable instance is the competence and performance of the ideal speaker/listener, posited by Chomsky.

75 Elliot in his glossary gives the following equivalents (Elliot, 1979, p. 317-8):

- moorawathimeering - the Land of the Lost, a sanctuary for outcasts
- atninga - a group sent to carry out tribal justice; vengeance party
- wurley - dwelling; hut or shelter of boughs
- wilban - cave
- tallabilla - outlaw

Note that no language of origin or linguistic authority is cited for these words although Ingamells’ influence is known largely to have been Arunta.
Perhaps this work enacts for its reader the alienation of linguistic banishment. Nevertheless its failure to communicate with anyone not prepared to undergo a training which can have no end but the enabling of its reading, underlines the questions to which Mudrooroo points us. His poem disallows the identification on which Ingamells unquestioningly and unconvincingly insists. Again we ask, whose language masters whom, in whose interests, to what end? Or do we, in the case of Mudrooroo’s poem give up an ironic reading in favour of pure nostalgia: the poem is only about something lost, something which we can only imagine. In that case the poem gives us no better access to that lost world than does the man on the two dollar coin. The same self-marginalising populist danger is run in Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s comic piece "No more boomerang":

No more boomerang  
No more spear;  
Now all civilized —  
Colour bar and beer.

(Tranter and Mead, 1991, p. 105)

By using a recognisable Aboriginal english grammar, such as is not used in her writing generally, the poem risks serving itself up either as stereotype or parody of contemporary Aboriginal culture. Somehow its sentiment and the manner of its solidarity manage to get it out of this hole. Its authenticity is to a position between cultures. Its method is to apprehend each by means of the other. Its loyalty is to the oppressed and especially to the voices lost. The thoroughly ironic position of this subject turns tragedy and comedy to each others’ purposes. It is in such terms I imagine the survival of such a poem: that our breath will bring us back there. Leroi Jones, changing his name to Amiri Baraka, writes in his poem "Leroy":

When I die, the consciousness I carry I will to  
black people. may they pick me apart and take the  
useful parts, the sweet meat of my feelings. And leave  
the bitter bullshit rotten white parts  
alone.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 265)

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A canon is the application of limits to the generalised corpus. The canon as corpus is the totality of what is deemed to be worth saving. Canonic logic is predicated upon the fact of there being a system of oppositions in which there is always a positive and a negative term. There is always better than and worse than. The dignity of the canon may not require the list to descend below a certain level, but it is precisely depths which are implied by heights. There is an outside of the canon but not of its logic, which is that of finding equivalence through its denial (this is not equal to this other: it is better, worse): a logic of unrelenting judgment which establishes membership of the one class.

The ethics of the canon are such that the work of making and unmaking equivalences must always regard itself as, though it will never be allowed to be, finished. To wish ourselves out of these ethics is to wish ourselves away. Or, just as absurd, to wish ourselves the inhabitants of a literal world, the world of truth which Nietzsche describes in "On Truth and Falsehood in an Extra-Moral Sense":

What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned and after long usage seem
to a nation fixed, canonic and binding; truths are illusions of which one has
forgotten that they are illusions; worn out metaphors which have become
powerless to affect the senses; coins which have their obverse effaced and now
are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal. (1974, p. 180)

Cid Corman, in one of his many tiny poems, writes:

If these words be ours
and the words nothing –
as they are – then we
are nothing too. Yes –
yes – let it be so.
But let the words know.

(1987, p. 106)

Ontology and epistemology are as rehearsals of each other: how to be rehearses
my knowledge of myself; that knowledge rehearses my being. What we need to take
account of in the process of writing, is an intersection in ethics of ontology and
epistemology. Writing cannot help but articulate a knowing how to be and a being how
to know, not because it needs to be any author's intention to show these but because all
uses of language share this function. Imagined worlds are, in this sense, naturally ethical
constructs. This naturalness is an abiding irony because it undermines the naturalness to
which all such constructions pretend in their particularity. It is never irrelevant to ask, in
such contexts as we frame and make, how power and its operations are served or denied;
how the inside and outside are told from each other. In Deleuzian terms the question for
(a relativist) poetry and its metabusiness, descended from Spinoza and Nietzsche, is how
to achieve an ethics without morality:

ethics which is to say, a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces
morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values. Morality is the
judgement of God, system of judgement. But ethics overthrows the system of
judgement. The opposition of values (Good-Evil) is supplanted by the
qualitative difference of modes of existence (good-bad). The illusion of values
is indistinguishable from the illusion of consciousness. Because it is content to
wait for and take in effects, consciousness misapprehends all of nature. Now, all
that one needs in order to moralize is to fail to understand. It is clear that we have
only to misunderstand a law for it to appear to us in the form of a moral
"You must ". (1993, p. 74)

Thus we return (must we?) to the divide with which we began, between
prescription and description; a divide which emerges everywhere we engage language as
vehicle and object of scrutiny. Deleuze writes "a difference of nature is constantly
manifested between knowledge and morality, between the relation of command and
obedience and the relation of the known and knowledge" (1993, p. 74).

Our ethics of presence we may formulate in Kristeva's terms – by asking how
can we practise poetry which is not murder (1984, p. 72) and which is also not a species
of spinelessness in which murders are condoned or collaborated? How can we fail to
comply with our authentic grip on the world, by which we make our way, deprived of the
knowledge in which consciousness entitles and defeats itself?

All knowing what is to be done is a risk, the exercise of practices never properly
understood. A principal risk and for some a duty is that of confusing the world as it is
with the world as it can be, the world and the selves which we will to become with the
world and the selves we are given. And where there is nothing to be done, where there is
no way forward or out, where there appears to be limited exercise even of consciousness; perhaps there is still poetry to constitute an ethical universe. Such a poetry such we find in the "Seventh Eclogue" of Miklos Radnóti, written in a concentration camp and found perhaps in the notebook buried with him in a mass grave at Győr in Western Hungary:

Do you see? Evening falls, fringed with barbed-wire
the hacked-out oak fence and barracks waver, sucked up by dusk.
The framework of our captivity is undone by a hesitant gaze
and the mind alone – the mind alone – knows the tautness of the wire.
Do you see, dearest, imagination here can free itself only this way.
By dreaming, that beautiful liberator, our broken bodies are unleased,
in that moment the prison camp starts home!
In rags, heads shaved, snoring, the prisoners fly
from Serbia's blind heights to the hiding homelands.
The hiding homelands? O is our home still there?
Maybe no bomb touched it? Might it be, as when we were drafted?
The one groaning on my right, the one sprawling on my left, will they return home?
Tell me, is there still a homeland where this hexameter will be understood?

Without accent marks, feeling out line after line,
here, in the dusk, I write this poem just as I live
blindly, a caterpillar inching my way on the paper.
Flashlight, book, everything taken away by the Lagar guards,
and there's no mail – only fog settles on our barracks.
Among false rumors and worms, here in the mountains live
Frenchmen, Poles, loud Italians, Serbian separatists, and brooding Jews,
a chopped up, fevered body, still living one life,
waiting for good news, woman's beautiful word, free human fate,
waiting for the end that drops into dense twilight, for the miracle.

I am lying on a plank, a captive animal among worms,
the fleas' assault starts up again, but the army of flies are at rest.
It is night, one day shorter again, you see,
and, one day shorter, life. The camp is sleeping. The landscape
lit by the moon. In its light, the wire is again taut.
One can see through the window, cast on the wall,
shadows of armed guards passing among the night sounds.

The camp is sleeping, do you see, dearest, dreams are rustling,
a startled man snorts, tosses about in his tight space,
already back to sleep, his face radiates. Only I sit up awake,
I feel a half-smoked cigarette in my mouth instead of the taste of your kiss,
and sleep, the comforter, does not come,
for I cannot die nor live without you anymore.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, pp. 716-7)

Poetries desiring awareness need, as the rest of us, to engage the (tropic) power of being able to imagine a future, to imagine difference; they need equally to engage those forms of analysis which offer the hope of apprehending the decidedness of things and of uncovering illusions in which choices may appear to have been made. Poetries illustrate the fact that in the beyond of hope, if there is one, what survives is, as in in Ottó Orbán's poem (cited in full in chapter I), those bones which stick up from the earth like swords (1993, p. 18).

Reflexive practice is not an end but a process in which transcendence does not succeed in getting beyond. It trips over itself laughing. And with a laughter directed

146
always at itself, a laughter which digs at and under the tyranny of selves and of deciding, the tyrannies of knowing and being, a laughter which dispels all hauntings. The subject of this practice is unceasing, evanescent – an indeterminate and becoming self. It is, as in Anna Swir’s poem "The Sea and the Man", one which stands, at least for this purpose, out of nature, because:

You will not tame this sea
either by humility or rapture.
But you can laugh
in its face.

Laughter
was invented by those
who live briefly
as a burst of laughter.

The eternal sea
will never learn to laugh.

(Milosz, 1996, p. 47)

Neither does one succeed in not looking at one’s self, one’s practices, one’s means. There is, for instance, an ironic and I think cheerfully self-defeating turn against reflection, in Paul Hoover’s poem "Poems we can Understand":

If a monkey drives a car
down a colonnade facing the sea
and the palm trees to the left are tin
we don’t understand it.

We want poems we can understand.
We want a god to lead us,
renaming the flowers and trees,
color-coding the scene,

doing bird calls for the guests.
We want poems we can understand,
no sullen drunks making passes
next to an armadillo, no complex nothingness

amounting to a song,
no running in and out of walls
on the dry tongue of a mouse,
no bludgeoness, no girl, no sea that moves

with all deliberate speed, beside itself
and blue as water, inside itself and still,
no lizards on the table becoming absolute hands.
We want poetry we can understand,

the fingerprint’s on mother’s dress,
pain of martyrs, scientists.
Please, no rabbit taking a rabbit
out of a yellow hat, no tattooed back

facing miles of desert, no wind.
We don’t understand it.
If the body of foreigners inhabits the community of words then equally the converse of this is true. Reflexive practice is what opens onto an ethics of writing as presence, of the community in which words participate to make themselves and us. Thus Levinas writes "The event proper to expression consists in bearing witness to oneself, and guaranteeing this witness." (1969, p. 201)

If we are able to claim poetry as an indirection of consciousness then its metabolusness cannot help but be a consciousness of that indirection. Far from being, as it is popularly conceived, a dwelling high above consciousness and its everyday productions, poetry labours consciousness with what appear to be erratic motions. Ever shifting, rooting out norms, whole movements, mere directions, all postures of the unanalysed life; poetry presents as a perversity always deserving rejection and always bringing its own methods on its head. Perhaps it is where Ashberry ends the first section of his poem "The Skaters":

Placed squarely in front of his dilemma, on all fours before the lamentable spectacle of the unknown.
Yet knowing where men are coming from. It is this, to hold the candle up to the album.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 177)

Poetry, that form of words which seems in and of itself least likely to lead anywhere, offers through its powers and means of indirection, a way out of the trap of consciousness. The naturalness of the forms of indirection which poetry cannot help adopting, provide us not with a beyond or an outside of thought, but with movements through it, different from those which reasoned writing or speech allow. Poetry's may be just the sort of inside-out thinking required to set right an upside down world; to find that lack of identity of the present with itself, which allows the play of ambivalence to battle the permanence judgement arrogates to itself; which offers a future as choice and not merely as given.
hic et nunc

Unemployed at last!
- a different order of persistence

to be inward of the world that is
and not begin proclaiming

I am a snail
through the text of the world
not far ahead the silver shows
too easy and too slow to follow

see in my lacks what I must move
not knowing

between momentum and loss
not a wink

see the man
not standing there
rain not falling

still seeming trees
hang up their sap
on with their trick
sky tending

what animal that doesn't know us
cringes, flees or feigns away?
feels my fear

no nature in law
then karma is our right to hope:
a good side of vengeance
making us good
against the here and now

beyond dayslengthen
  happy with the wind is taller
pinned to their vectors
  bright eyes along
up when the solos

the wall's eye
having missed what was waited for

  against these few bob
the fact of the forest

the last queue for wages
  against the feat of doing away with
  infinite things

privilege surviving
waking to toxins

earth wheels under
  this act past distance

  too much with signs
and forgetting to spell

pursued in unseen old favours

  what an age the built is
  where the forest was
  cattle were
  now we don't know

there's stick figure, mailbox
a door in this field
  where shadows
  half catch

  we only know what's like our words
and only cause we've made it so
and them
  and so ourselves

lost in and to the lines
which are as speech cut from air
(yet to face sentence)
all judged before the breath came in

nothing outside of a game in the grammar

nothing without the body's full throw

hall of the righteous
resounding with self
fighting for the carcass numen
the prophecy of sweat
o forms of beauty I abandon
eye upon a seeing self

deixis is difficult
a kind of permanent cliché

how things are
and meant to be
less escapable than duty

transgress me
I dare you

in everyone's language
are adequacies given passion
slips and catches
means and breaks
something unfailing this poverty stands for
the young in each
the old lean said
ever knowing what ails

greatly sufficing
truth and nature
to stand outside
the day of just hours
we this hollow

something there is
that never resolves

we who have written
began as one book
4. Tropology

What is your meaning, Zeno? Do you maintain that if being is many, it must be both like and unlike, and that this is impossible, for neither can the like be unlike, nor the unlike like — is that your position?

Plato's Parmenides (1952, p. 487)

Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning.

Derrida (1978, p. 11)

Tropic is the shadow from which all realistic discourse tries to flee. This flight, however, is futile; for tropics is the process by which all discourse constitutes the objects which it pretends only to describe realistically and to analyse objectively.

Hayden White (1978, p. 2)

Heraclitus and Parmenides have from the outset defined the parameters of tropology, as structure with which to represent and apprehend the world. These parameters are respectively that everything changes and that nothing changes.76

In everyday life these positions often amount to unconscious and unanalysed assumptions of temperament. The contention of Heraclitus and Parmenides is replayed throughout the history of reflection on language, in Saussure's arbitrary and motivated divide and now at the heart of postmodern doxa, where the world is equally doomed into difference and sameness (entropy and inertia). On the one hand are hyper-reality, hybridity and ever-increasing complexity marking the proliferation of the real; on the other, simulacra, tautology, banality and the silencing of opposition associated with the exclusivity of languages posited by Lyotard's differend.

76 The attribution is certainly clearer in the case of Heraclitus than in that of Parmenides. Heraclitus' reported fragments (mainly preserved through Plato and Aristotle) include the following which provide strong evidence for the position he is purported to have adopted: "And some say not that some existing things are moving, and not others, but that all things are in motion all the time, but that this escapes our perception." "Heraclitus somewhere says that all things are in process and that nothing stays still, and likening existing things to the stream of a river he says that you would not step twice into the same river" (Kirk and Raven, 1975, p. 197). We should note here that Heraclitus' follower, Cratylus, made the stronger claim that one could not step into the same stream once. In the case of Parmenides the principal fragments suggestive of the idea attributed to him, that nothing changes, are as follows: "Nor is it divisible, since it is all alike; nor is there more here and less there, which would prevent it from cleaving together, but it is all full of what is. So it is all continuous; for what is clings close to what is." "Yet look at things which, though far off, are firmly present to thy mind; for thou shalt not cut off what is from clinging to what is, neither scattering itself everywhere in order nor crowding together" (Kirk and Raven, 1975, p. 275).
The debate over *physis* and *nomos* (nature and convention) in the Cratylus signals the beginning of a debate about the great undecidables of signification:

*Hermogenes.* I should explain to you, Socrates, that our friend Cratylus here has been arguing about names; he says that they are natural and not conventional; not a portion of the human voice which men agree to use; but that there is a truth or correctness in them, which is the same for Hellenes as for barbarians. (1952, p. 85)

It is in the spirit of this debate that we witness the ongoing battle of counter-accusations between those who can see no reification in the conceptual world they inhabit; and those who see themselves as dwellers in shifts of context, placeless moments which have constantly to be re-historicised, if only in order to take account of the fact of their being apprehended. For Paul Ricoeur, in *The Rule of Metaphor*, the *physis-nomos* relationship bears on another, of particular significance for poetics, the division between *mimēsis* and *mythos*:

All *mimēsis*, even creative - nay, especially creative – *mimēsis*, takes place within the horizons of a being-in-the-world which it makes present to the precise extent that the *mimēsis* raises it to the level of *muthos*. The truth of imagination, poetry's power to make contact with being as such – this is what I personally see in Aristotle's *mimēsis*. *Lexis* is rooted in *mimēsis*, and through *mimēsis* metaphor's deviations from normal *lexis* belong to the great enterprise of "saying what is." (1979, p. 43)

For Ricoeur, it is metaphor which, among the tropes, has the power to realise from the connection of *mythos* and *mimēsis*, a redescriptions of reality:

metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality. By linking fiction and redescription in this way we restore the full depth of meaning to Aristotle's discovery in the *Poetics*, which was that the *poēsis* of language arises out of the connection between *muthos* and *mimēsis*. (1979, p. 7)

Ultimately metaphor and signification co-incide in (what appears to be) a characteristically human obsession with naming the thing as other, with finding equivalence (and therefore difference) at any cost. At the core of signification – and despite whatever conditions of motivation or of arbitrariness may obtain – there is a necessary (and always necessarily unstable, always threatened) assumption of equivalence, which unites signifier and the signified in the sign. And at once there is an assumption of difference which sets signs beside, as well as against, each other.

If this atomistic core is always asserting itself and the principle of the correspondence of words with reality (the principle, that is, of representation) over the chaotic myriad of relations which disrupt its situation; then we need from the outset to commit ourselves to an investigation which commences from the imbrication of sign and context. This investigation has significance not only for a world of signs but for the subjectivity which commits reality by signs, thus for the prospects of human community. The fact that differenters are possible proves that there must be a community aside of such gulfs.

Overlapping and besideness of things are soils from which tropes spring. The tropics are everywhere because all things and all means of apprehension are becoming. Yet the everywhere-ness of things, of process, of all that we are able to apprehend and abstract into our communities, indicates what must be taken for the facts of community. It is the fate of speech and of writing to live in the cleft and to live out the contradiction between being and becoming.
The disciplinary fortunes of metaphor and the tropes in general have undergone some impressive reversals. Metaphor has become the abiding obsession of the disciplinary range the twentieth century exercises in lieu of philology. If there is any point of coincidence in the linguistic turn of recent decades in the social sciences, then it is in metaphor (or tropology more broadly conceived) and signification.

It has been and continues to be argued that metaphoric or tropic processes are at work in the nature of the linguistic sign (especially in its conventionality), in translation of any sort (language to language, code to code) and, as Steiner generalises from this last example, in understanding itself (which always involves the apprehension of one thing in terms of another). If at work in understanding then such processes are implicated in teaching and learning, in government or any form of social organisation which involves representation (as has fascinated Rousseau, Derrida and Kristeva, among others), in language change and creolisation, processes by which languages become and evolve. Metaphor, as process of equivalence making, likewise tropology as (broader) process encompassing all modalities of semantic alterity (to borrow Steiner’s word for the capacity to say otherwise [1992, p. 234]), are argued to be essential. An understanding of these processes and their role in the making of meaning describes all that unites the interests of science, pedagogy, philosophy, linguistics; in short, of all territories bounded by the limits of thought and language.

The divine art of combinations, that which Aristotle tells us cannot be learned, turns out to be the field most theorised, that which bears, from all directions, the burden of wishing to be understood. Burgeoning interest in the ubiquity of a tropic dimension to the imbrication of processes of signification in processes of context may be attributed to, as we said at the outset, a quarrel of temperaments, such as that played out between positions on likeness and unlikeness in the Parmenides. On the one hand we can argue that names are a sign of the likeness of things, that which we call metaphors are only the recognition of such likeness, the acknowledgment that is, of unities which language approximates. In other words metaphors are to be taken literally. Things essentially are equivalent to each other. A is the same as B.

On the other hand it can be claimed that everything is unique, that no two things are exactly alike (a tautology). Or as Walter Pater suggests: “It is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike” (in Preminger et al., 1993, p. 761). This is an idea which Wittgenstein tests in his essay, “The First Person”, by imagining a world (of clones perhaps) in which human bodies look alike. Under such circumstances Wittgenstein writes “although it would be possible to give the bodies names, we should perhaps be as little inclined to do so as we are to give names to the chairs of our dining-room set” (1994, p. 192). The logical conclusion of Pater’s line of reasoning is to say that the process of signification in language is unavoidably metaphoric. Calling different things (let us say two different dogs) by the same name, is a kind of metaphoric shorthand enabling communication to take place. Common nouns (such as we use in commanding “Here, dog!” or “Down, dog!”) are, on this reading, metaphors. In fact each dog is unique and the only way to be perfectly literal would be to give each dog a different name, something we do do, and in so doing, reflect the limits of usefulness of the generalisation entailed in the use of common nouns. Even in the age of the simulacrum, surrounded with so much intended identical likeness, we are apt for instance to anthropomorphise (or zoomorphise) the vehicles we drive. We are less likely however to give a pen or a pencil a unique name, relying in such cases on the common noun as a basis of likeness. And in the process we assume transference of meaning among a group of objects (arguably at least partly a synecdochic relation, one in which the set is named by reference to its members). We could claim from here (after Jakobson) that the paradigmatic tendency of language (e.g. the lexicon) is inescapably metaphoric,
therefore reductionist (everything falls into categories); the syntagmatic a resolving to
heave forward despite the stillness which settles everywhere that words are uttered and
resonate.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Blight", written in 1847, locates a poetry in the dilemma
between essences and names:

Give me truths;
For I am weary of the surfaces,
And die of inanition. If I knew
Only the herbs and simples of the wood,
Rue, cinquefoil, gill, vervain and agrimony,
Blue-vetch and trillium, hawkweed, sassafras,
Milkwreeds and murky brakes, quaint pipes and sundew,
And rare and virtuous roots, which in these woods
Draw untold juices from the common earth,
Untold, unknown, and I could surely spell
Their fragrance, and their chemistry apply
By sweet affinities to human flesh,
Driving the foe and stablishing the friend, –
O, that were much, and I could be a part
Of the round day, related to the sun
And planted world, and full executor
Of their imperfect functions.
But these young scholars, who invade our hills,
Bold as the engineer who fells the wood,
And travelling often in the cut he makes,
Love not the flower they pluck, and know it not,
And all their botany is Latin names.
The old men studied magic in the flowers,
And human fortunes in astronomy,
And an omnipotence in chemistry,
Preferring things to names, for these were men,
Were unitarians of the united world,
And, wheresoever their clear eye-beams fell,
They caught the footsteps of the SAME. Our eyes
Are armed, but we are strangers to the stars,
And strangers to the mystic beast and bird,
And strangers to the plant and to the mine.
The injured elements say, "Not in us";
And night and day, ocean and continent,
Fire, plant and mineral say, "Not in us";
And haughtily return us stare for stare.
For we invade them impiously for gain;
We devastate them unreligiously,
And coldly ask their pottage, not their love.
Therefore they shove us from them, yield to us
Only what to our griping toil is due;
But the sweet affluence of love and song,
The rich results of the divine consents
Of man and earth, of world beloved and lover,
The nectar and ambrosia, are withheld;
And in the midst of spoils and slaves, we thieves
And pirates of the universe, shut out
Daily to a more thin and outward rind,
Turn pale and starve. Therefore, to our sick eyes,
The stunted trees look sick, the summer short,
Clouds shade the sun, which will not tan our hay,
And nothing thrives to reach its natural term;
And life, shorn of its venerable length,
Even at its greatest space is a defeat,
And dies in anger that it was a dupe;
And in its highest noon and wantonness,
Is early frugal like a beggar's child;
Even in the hot pursuit of the best aims
And prizes of ambition, checks its hand,
Like Alpine cataracts frozen as they leaped,
Chilled with a miserly comparison
Of the toy's purchase with the length of life.

(in Heaney and Hughes, 1997, pp. 321-2)

By means of the image of "cataracts frozen as they leaped" Emerson draws our attention to the freezing of meaning on which the forward progression of signs depends.

Empirical science and the everyday exigencies of common sense, assuming the viability of categories of classification and their predication, drive reflection towards a compromise between the (essentialist and nominalist) positions outlined above. The world is, as Duns Scotus observed, full of different things and the metaphoric process (as it inheres in the process of signification) is the seeing and making of sameness among things. Perhaps we should say it is making in the guise of seeing because we need to concede that it is words which structure what world we can see. This making of sameness constitutes in any case a struggle within language, which we know in Saussurean terms as system of differences. These differences and samenesses, which we have in words, and are not given by nature, must be the measure of each other. If we base our poetics (and our view of the reality of language in speech) in part on the invalidity of hard and fast distinctions between denotation and connotation (taking our model as consciousness and its absence), then we abandon the necessity of a de-troped norm from which to measure existence, perception, interaction. For this we must substitute an account which conforms to and corresponds with the apparently infinite variability of the language/s we do, without the necessity of much conscious reflection, manage to negotiate, as a matter of habit in the course of living socially.

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Our account begins from a point of view which offers metaphor the centre stage among the tropes. It will be perhaps as well then at this point to distinguish it from the field of which it is offered as the example most generally to mind, especially since, as we will see, its action is in some respects, the opposite of that of the tropes otherwise. Metaphor's etymology, from the Greek, as carrying across, serves conveniently for the whole of the field it represents, covering as it may the sum of all relationships and movements which go to shape meaning and thus the world as meaning shapes it. A rhetoric then is a system of abstraction by which tropes are identified, named, explained, usually for the purpose of producing or improving or critiquing particular genres of discourse. We will briefly visit the historical fortunes of the tropes and rhetoric and metaphor but we may as well begin by establishing the minimum conditions for the last of these.

Metaphor always involves the making of an equivalence. This can be far-fetched or commonsensical, argued for or taken for granted. In metaphor a name is always transferred to an object other than that to which it was originally applied. Thus qualities or substance are attributed elsewhere than they were known before the analogy was made. In this sense metaphor always entails a kind of theft or borrowing; it takes from somewhere and distributes elsewhere, or perhaps it swaps. This theft or borrowing implies metaphor in a process of representation. By metaphor aspects of the world are represented in terms of other aspects and in this sense made the same. When metaphor
puts one term in the place of another, we accept (unless we wish to argue) that the substituting term takes the other's place. Again a kind of theft or lending of place. Representation, in turn implies possession because by representation one thing stands in the place of another, as a kind of proxy. This taking the place of another implies for metaphor a kind of proprietorial relationship. Lastly, metaphor, as distinct from simile, is a process which makes itself invisible. Metaphor hides the terms of its analogy, appealing not to observation or judgement on the part of the hearer but rather to obviousness or self-evidence. We will see that discourse flows by way of metaphor and that disputing either that flow or any particular metaphor is only achieved by way of a disturbance of the flow, one which may well be achieved through the use of an antagonistic metaphor.

It is tempting to say at this point that metaphor robs words of their authenticity, that it makes them no longer what they are. This would be to assume that words are less authentic once metaphor has dealt with or represented them. It would also assume that words have an original and purely denotative sense. In fact if we are to ask whence words derive their authenticity, we will certainly trace this, etymologically or otherwise, through, if not metaphor, then some other trope or progression of tropes. So we can say that metaphor redistributes authenticity, in shaking up the acts which determine what is, in keeping context, not only on the rails but moving. What makes metaphor a power for authenticity is the way in which it covers its tracks. The clearest example of this is in dead metaphor where it is obvious to us that we need to make an effort to uncover the original action. Metaphor, as we have said, draws our attention away from its means. It draws us, as it were against its own grain, into the ongoing flow of discourse. By eliding the terms of comparison which it establishes metaphor makes fait accompli.

At this point, having implicated metaphor in the process of saying (thus making) sameness, it is important to distinguish metaphor and repetition in these terms: metaphor is the condition in which other terms are made equal. It is, as such, a making same and thus enables repetition because it provides terms which are able to be repeated. Metaphor and repetition may be seen then as symmetrical parts of a process. Repeating appears to make more of the same but actually makes either a copy or a new instance, that is a contextually altered occurrence, of the already said. In so doing it alters the context which alters it. As Ashbery writes in his (1991) poem "Flow Chart": "one is doomed,/ repeating oneself, never to repeat oneself, you know what I mean?" (in Hoover, 1994, p. 183). Insisting, as metaphor does, on the equivalence of terms which are not the same (in order to treat them as if they were), has the effect of altering the relation of those terms to context. In other words, the process of making terms the same cannot help but make difference in the context of those terms. In the lyric a refrain works to separate events as the re-assertion of a context, which while common to those events, is altered in its significance by them. Or we could say that the grounding of the chorus is disturbed by a forward unfolding in the verses, at least until the closure of a final refrain.

The foregoing account should serve to indicate that, among the tropes, metaphor represents a particular semantic strategy. Because it deals with the prospects for difference, the question of the importance of tropology to poetics touches the possibility of freedom in all discourse as it unfolds the future. Opposed orthodoxies have argued for and against the importance to poetry of metaphor, without abandoning the normative foil of a denotative semiotic. According to Housman — in an essay, "The Name and Nature of Poetry" — the aim of which seems to be mainly to demolish the pretensions to the name, of the English poetry of most centuries — "simile and metaphor" are "things inessential to poetry" (1971, p. 353). The metaphysical poets, Housman disparages, were "prized the more in proportion as they became farther fetched." But for Wallace Stevens on the other hand: "It is only au pays de la métaphore qu'on est poète" (in Scully, 1966, p. 158).

The problem with hoping for a poetry characterised by clarity and directness is that it either misreads and is therefore out of touch with, or suggests a departure from, the
nature of ordinary living speech, which is highly tropic. It is out of the supposedly opposed intentions of the poets and the philosophers that Plato is able to justify his exclusion of poets from the Republic. Philosophers work towards the truth, poets work away from it. The work of poets is distortion and Aristotle will tell us that metaphor is the principal instrument for the working of that distortion. Despite recent attempts (notably by Paul Ricoeur in his effort to balance the positions on metaphor explored in the Rhetoric and the Poetics) to rehabilitate Aristotle on this issue, it is to him that we owe our conception of the tropes as a departure from and decorative addition to ordinary modes of language. In the Rhetoric: "The arts of language... are fanciful and meant to charm the hearer" (1952, p. 654).

Aristotle’s metaphor proposes a separation of language from reality and the world and a separation of form from content. These Platonic relationships are difficult not to tangle with relations Plato has established between the ideal and the real on the one hand and the real and art on the other. We note that Plato needs the metaphoric construction of the cave to get this across, that Aristotle needs his metaphor "bare facts" (Rhetoric, 1952, p. 654) in order to explain the contrast between the tropic and normal discourse. The tropic dimension of everyday thought and everyday speech, of the most straightforward frames in which these are conducted, is what the "plain" thinkers and speakers everywhere manage not to see.

Platonic and Aristotelian idealism establish the prescription of a norm, from which metaphor is defined as departing and, in so doing, committing us to dangers. But this norm and this departure are not borne out in the method of the text asserting them. There are examples flourished: Homeric, Hesiodic. The point, for Aristotle is that metaphor is a crafted thing: "Diction becomes distinguished and non-prosaic by the use of unfamiliar terms, i.e. strange words, metaphors, lengthened forms, and everything that deviates from the ordinary modes of speech" (1952, p. 694). Metaphors are made, not sought, and they are translatable, they have literal equivalents: "one has only to put the ordinary words in their place to see the truth of what we are saying" (1952, p. 694). For Aristotle contextual appropriacy, rather than meaning, determines which, of the literal or the metaphoric term, is to be used. Thus immanence conceals itself.

The decline of that science of tropes we know as rhetoric, in which Aristotle’s metaphor has already begun to be subsumed by its others (by the Middle Ages, Geoffrey of Vinsauf will account for sixty-three ornaments), is characterised by the apologetics of Cicero. These suggest that we should seek permission for our metaphors, reprimand them or ourselves if they get out of hand. The list of what-to-do is gradually replaced by a much longer list of what-not-to-do. More out of hand than any usage, is the battle to name and order the whole of the tropic field: the field of ornament, of deviation. The decline of rhetoric may be traced in the same movement as the proliferation of tropes, its return in the re-ascendancy of one. Quintilian warns us:

This is a subject which has given rise to interminable disputes among the teachers of literature who have quarrelled no less violently with the philosophers than among themselves over the problem of the genera and species into which tropes may be divided, their number and their correct classification. (1921, p. 301)

But for Quintilian metaphor takes on what could best be described as a metonymic pragmatism or convenience. Metaphor is a process of using the nearest available means of getting one’s meaning across, a description Dumarsais will take up in his formulation of metaphor as a borrowed home.77 For all of the classical world after Aristotle, metaphor dethroned occupies a place that is essentially suspect, associated with poetry

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77 Both ideas are echoed in Levi-Strauss’ concept of bricolage – improvisation or making do with where we are and what happens to be at hand.
and the subversion of proper meaning, of the norms and practices established in the Rhetoric and in subsequent works on the same subject. The place to which it is consigned is the decorator's workshop – part of the deceiving armoury of the poets, a place where tropes proliferate with the centuries.

Christian Platonism's key conceit – that of God writing the world – privileges tropic modes of thought, composition and interpretation as ways of approximating God's meaning. Hence Dante's modest proclamation of his four intended levels of meaning in the Divine Comedy. For Dante in allegory is the potential to find truth which has the aspect of falsehood. Thus begins the moral rehabilitation of the tropes. Metaphysical poetry, marrying as it does wit and invention, science and its effects, new conceptions of the world with a public appreciation of divine works, cannot help but centre its inventiveness and argument in tropes. Donne's "The Extasie" introduces the theme of interanimation which will later be of interest to a romantic conception of metaphor. In that poem it is love which, between souls, implies them in a particular tropic strategy, one with consequences for consciousness, for corporeality and for what is essentially human:

When love, with one another so
Interanimates two soules,
That abluer soule, which thence doth flow,
Defects of lonelinesse controules.
Wee then, who are this new soule, know,
Of what we are compisosed and made,
For th'Atomies of which we grow,
Are soules, whom no change can invade.
But O alas, so long, so farre
Our bodies why doe we forbeare?
They are ours, though they are not wee, Wee are
The intelligences, they the sphære.
We owe them thankes, because they thus,
Did us, to us, at first convoy,
Yeelded their forces, sense, to us,
Nor are drosse to us, but allay.
On man heaven's influence works not so,
But that it first imprints the ayre,
So soule into the soule may flow,
Though it to body first repaire.
As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like soules as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtile knot, which makes us man:

(Grierson, 1921, pp. 17-18)

While the influence of Ramus, in subsuming Invention, Disposition and Memory in Dialectic, rather than as previously in Rhetoric, can be seen as allowing a more logical basis for poetic invention, it reinforces the decorative limits which the classical world had imposed on tropology. In completing the classical project (to be interrupted briefly in the Shakespearian age) of isolating the tropes from speech, Ramus establishes the privilege and authority of writing over speech. As Perry Miller notes, rhetoric after Ramus becomes the "sugar on the pill of logic" (1954, p. 315). Which sugaring process we may see as culminating in Doctor Johnson's definition of metaphor, in his 1755 dictionary, as

78 Sempre a quel ver ch'ha faccia di menzogna
De' uom chiuder le labbra fin ch'el puote.
(Inferno, 1984, Canto XVI, l. 124-5)
"the application of a word to an use which, in its original import, it cannot be put" (1983, n.p.). The decline of rhetoric continues.

Metaphor is quietly subsumed by catachresis. It is a species of mistaken speech. To the mind of the Enlightenment language ornaments thought. For Hobbes the poem is judgement plus fancy, in which latter category metaphor is included. Content and substance are naturally far from metaphor – that which deviously ornaments the ornament. Literary art is sealed off from every day speech and metaphor is the manner of what sets it apart.

Insofar as it is the Romantics who realise a central function for the process of equivalence in the carrying across of meaning, their influence has never been fully escaped. Their Platonism, if we may allow Shelley to represent them, is accepting the assumption of a masochistic organismism, the logical conclusion of which is their own banishment at the hands of philosophy:

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the best and happiest minds... It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. (1910, p. 355)

Poetry, according to Shelley, is "to make immortal" and "arrest the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunions of life" (1910, p. 355). Monkeying with the Immortals, we remember, is what landed poetry in the dog house to begin with. Discourses should be constructed as living creatures but the poet (as Plato constructs him) desires to separate his language from that of the people. The poet disrupts the organic order in which discourses breed. The view of poetic language which Plato assumes and Aristotle develops is one of self promotion. It credits poets with an elitist derogation of everyday language, with in effect the (unspoken) creation of a lesser, ordinary discourse brought into being by the fact of their own elevated diction.

Having come this far along such a track we concede poetry (and especially poetic myth), in its reliance on metaphor, as an art of deliberate misequation (an unmaking of the world as is), an artifice by which the world is confused and denatured. If Shelley and Herder and Rousseau all wish to proclaim poetry the nature and origin of language (an idea dating to Lucretius), then poetry must owe this privileged position to metaphor. In our century Heidegger preserves this status of firstness in language for poetry:

language is not only and not primarily an audible and written expression of what is to be communicated... language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time... Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance... Such saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open as. Projecting is the release of a throw by which unconcealedness

79 We are aware here of the specific, narrower uses, with which some theorists, for instance Derrida, have associated catachresis:

Catachresis is not divergence from a literal meaning – in the sense of opposition to a word's proper meaning – but rather its and its word's extension to a place where there is no other sign (as in "leg of a chair" or "wing of a building"), which extension then itself becomes a necessary norm. Catachresis can thus be viewed either as the extension of literal language toward trope, or as the entry of a trope (close to but more "basic" than metaphor) into "literal" language. (Derrida cited in Preminger et al, 1993, p. 410)
submits and infuses itself into what is as such... Projective saying is poetry... Poetry is the saying of the un concealedness of what is. (1971, pp. 73-4); (cf. Charles Olson's *projective act*, "which is the artist's act in the larger field of objects" and which leads to dimensions "larger than the man" [in Allen, 1960, p. 395].)

In the second chapter of "The Essay on the Origin of Languages" Rousseau frames his original discourse in terms of a deviation from a plainer text:

The speech of the first men is represented to us as (if they had been) Geometers' languages, whereas we can see they were Poets' languages. ... Just as the first motives that moved man to speak were passions, his first expressions were Tropes. Figurative language arose first, proper (or literal) meaning was found last. Things were called by their true name only once they were seen in their true form. At first men spoke only poetry; only much later did it occur to anyone to reason. (1990, pp. 245-6)

Rousseau does not succeed in extricating himself from the ontological tangle entailed in reordering norm and deviation; in placing, in the terms Derrida will develop, the supplement at, or instead of, the source:

Now, I sense the reader stopping me here, and asking how an expression can be figurative before it has a proper (literal) meaning, since the figure consists solely in the transposing of meaning. I grant that; but in order to understand me, it is necessary to substitute the idea which the passion presents to us for the word we are transposing; for words are transposed only because ideas also are; otherwise figurative language would signify nothing. (1990, p. 246)

Derrida comments on this trap:

*To speak before knowing how to speak,* such is the limit towards which Rousseau obstinately guides his repetition of origin. This limit is indeed that of nonsupplementarity but as there must already be language there, the supplement must announce itself without having been produced, lack and absence must have begun without beginning. (1976, p. 247)

If we are left with the contradiction that first language is a deviation from a literal speech yet to come into being, the fundamental incompatibility to which Rousseau and Romanticism draw attention is not between reason and the imagination but between the ideal and everyday reality. Thus is unveiled the ontological basis of the hermeneutic circle in which we are led by homeostasis: things must be before themselves in order that they be known as such. The means by which a present order of oral society keeps its genealogy intact is structurally akin to the means by which the language of a language or the canon of its literature maintains the impression of a permanence prior to the means which enable it. It is the Platonic insistence on reality as the shadow of an idea in the mind of God which haunts the prospects for a rapprochement between poetry and philosophy. This insistence, itself depending on a tropic movement (shadow, cave), denies by fiat the force of such a movement as it relies on and thus the tropic nature of everyday (i.e. nonliterary) discourse; it denies these in favour of *mimesis*: in favour, that is, of the assumption that the conflation of reality and literality is not only possible but best. In so doing Platonism and its inheritors lay the basis for the symptomatisation of tropes

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80 Derrida is led to describe the temporal condition of Rousseau's "*ideal language of origin*" as "the unstable, inaccessible, mythic limit between that *already* and this *not-yet*: time of a language *being born*, just as there was a time for 'society being born.' Neither before nor after the origin." (1976 p. 244)

Derrida places his "writing" in the position which poetry was given in Book X of the *Republic*: the place of the persecuted, of the imitative, of the lie.
(characteristic of the decline of rhetoric) for what in Platonic terms comes to be viewed as a pathology of language in the form of poetry.

In denying the continuity between Plato and Aristotle the Romantics undo their unifying, esemplastic method at its proclaimed source. This is all in the hope (if we again allow Shelley to represent them) of sneaking back into the Republic, as the servant of philosophy, of the well ordered state of the well ordered mind. They must choose though the servants' entrance or else disguise themselves as gods. All other ways are sealed:

let us assure our sweet friend and the sister arts of imitation, that if she will only prove her title to exist in a well-ordered State we shall be delighted to receive her - we are very conscious of her charms; but we may not on that account betray the truth. (Republic X, 607, 1952, p. 434)

Hence the invitation to the Defences: "Shall I propose, then, that she be allowed to return from exile, but upon this condition only - that she make a defence of herself in lyrical or some other metre?" (1952, p. 434)

Recourse to Vico's virtual invention of cultural relativity is the way out of this impasse (of symptomatisation/exile). For Vico metaphors are fables which give passion to insensate things and it is in ignorance that man makes himself the rule of the universe (1984, p 129). It is by the authentic exercise of the tropes and not by understanding of them that man anthropomorphises and takes on his environment. In Chapter II of the Book on "Poetic Wisdom" Vico writes:

this imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by not understanding them (homo non intelligendo fit omnia)... for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them. (1984, p. 130)

Vico sees poetry as the first language to succeed the graphic and the gestural - the language, that is, of barbarism. Vico's poetic logic reveals history as a progression through the tropes: ages of metonymy (the gods), of synecdoche (heroes), of metaphor (men) and in the age to succeed these (of philosophy) a movement towards the literal. For Vico the poetic word is a character or mythographic word and every metaphor a fable in brief. In this rehabilitative scheme, for Vico metaphor is a mode of existence, that which is at the heart of "the made".

Thus its ascendancy among the tropes is restored - metaphor returns to its Aristotelian pre-eminence. The decline goes on around it unabated but one trope is exalted.

**Imperial virus**

...for as long as the metaphorical sense of the notion of structure is not acknowledged as such, that is to say interrogated and even destroyed as concerns its figurative quality so that the nonspatiality or original spatiality designated by it may be revived, one runs the risk, through a kind of sliding as unnoticed as it is efficacious, of confusing meaning with its geometric, morphological, or, in the best of cases, cinematic model. One risks being interested in the figure itself to the detriment of the play going on within it metaphorically.

Derrida (1978, p. 16)
It is Coleridge who wishes to "destroy the old antithesis of Words and Things: elevating as it were Words into Things and living Things too" (in Hawkes, 1972, p. 53). Metaphor is the means of this destruction. Metaphor: the trope which equates, in equating reduces. Metaphor erases the signs of its process, says "this is" and never "consider this", never "consider where you are, or what you're part of or what is next to you". Metaphor is the only possible solution for the organicist’s problem of recovering from language's plurality, the fusing of all into a unity, thus to recover an image of nature. In this process metaphor serves and becomes the embodiment of universalising experience, where the many are reduced to dependence on the one. In short, under the romantic aegis, metaphor becomes the imperialist's conscience-quietening bedtime story. This is borne out in Coleridge's essay on The Tempest, which is claimed as a success because "it addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty" and as "independent of all historical facts and associations" (1987, p. 268).

The story of how the West won, has always already won, is the touchstone of post-colonial writing, from Aimé Césare (Une Tempête) to Forbidden Planet. Its positions remain inescapably those long reified by imperial culture, which is able to continue and complete the process of colonisation through consent today, even and especially after its military and territorial sway is officially dismantled, even after colonial colours have been drained from the map. It is precisely this desire to make contextless its truths on which imperialism depends, which metaphor by virtue of that movement in which it erases the signs of its presence, is unrivalled in its potential to assist.

Prospero is a proto-type, not only for the industrial-imperial age's sovereignty over nature, but for the omniscience of the esemplastic process in which the romantic subject seeks to rejoin the blissful state of nature. We live nostalgically in a restored state of bliss, the model of which in the case of Miranda cannot actually be remembered, just as - and here is the logical corollary and the lesson by which time is shown to heal all wounds - Ferdinand is the beneficiary of a crime of which he cannot have known. The crime of dispossession which allows Prospero's survival also facilitates Ferdinand's fortuitous shipwreck, his Herculean trials, his prizes and inheritance: Miranda, a dukedom. Innocence is a virtue which optimism always manages to recover. The visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the sons is interrupted, or displaced, by the magical intervention of humanist scientific spirit, which knows by empirical observation that the native is naturally bad and needs to be wrathfully kept in check.

It is Prospero's magical omniscience - having the wind on his side (i.e. Ariel) he is everywhere - which renders imperialism as everywhereness, which makes the everywhere in-dwelling. Prospero is the first thought cop, his island a panopticon, where the prisoners are subject to such potent illusions that, though completely controlled, they are able to imagine themselves fatally alone. The Tempest we may see thus, in the terms of Coleridge's reading, as European imperialism's first apology. It is the defence of a certain sort of poetry: that of the universalising trope, that which makes (in a synechdochic move) the experience of the other a part of my experience. Metaphor makes the text inescapable, ensures that there is no outside. It establishes, as inevitable necessity, the anonymity of the colonial adventure of the last half millennium. If this is a species of the infinite then it is so merely in asserting that the world and its inhabitants are infinitely able to be possessed, able in fact to be wholly contained, which is to say the opposite of infinite.

Metaphor in all its centrality is the nemesis of a romantic theory of the language arts, because under all of those spirited hopes of the imagination lies the esemplastic, the reduction which ultimately amounts not to a neutral mimesis but to an imitation in which a plentitude (of nature, of the ideal) is reduced to a sterile monism. The view from the outside of humanism to which we are now entitled may see this nemesis as the logical conclusion of the effect of the Christian-Hebraic mind on Platonist tradition. Shelley's image of poetry as "a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the
scabbard that would contain it" (1910, p. 341) stands ironically with his numerous other efforts at a definition.

I.A. Richards, like Vico and Coleridge, assumes the centrality of metaphor's role in language. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* begins with the assumption that meanings are universally relative and absolutely context dependent. For Richards meaning is never fixed or stable but only ever acquired in use. Rather than dressing thought, as the Augustans had argued, language causes a reality to exist. It is by words we mean.

Richards derides the idea that words or ideas can ever have one true meaning, resorting to an illustration which follows on conveniently from the consequences of *The Tempest*: "an idea or a notion when unencumbered and undisguised, is no easier to get hold of than one of those oiled and naked thieves who infest the railway carriages of India" (1936, p. 5). This presents a vivid metaphor for the condition of (the) empire in the thirties; and one which should give subaltern and post-colonial approaches purchase. Radical context dependence, which Richards advocates, suggests not only the permanent inadequacy of the dictionary (a theme which Eco will take up in his comparison with the encyclopedia in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*) but that through a process of transference, language and reality are in a constant and mutual state of self creation, i.e. that metaphor, or rather the tropes in general, are the way that language works.

Richards' "interaction theory" may thus be viewed as a formalisation of Coleridge's famous phrase defining poetry as the interanimation of words. Richards' student, William Empson, in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, elaborates a mystery which we can view as elaborating Coleridge's interanimation idea:

What often happens when a piece of writing is felt to offer hidden riches is that one phrase after another lights up and appears at the heart of it; one part after another catches fire. (1995, p. 11)

Poetry, in exploiting the ambiguity which gives rise to metaphor, in fact exploits, in terms of the argument developed by Empson and Richards, the essential character of language. Gunnar Ekelöf formulates poetry's role in terms suggestive of a simultaneous interanimation on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes:

One word has its meaning and another has its own, but when they are brought together something strange happens to them: they have an in-between connotation at the same time as they retain their individual meanings... Poetry is this very tension-filled relationship between the words, between the lines, between meanings. (in Rothenberg, 1995, p. 701)

In the frame with which Saussure inaugurates the structuralist project, we may say that poetry insists, through metaphor, upon drawing attention to the equivalence of the signifier and the signified in the sign.

For Richards metaphor extends language and therefore expands reality. But we need to ask whose language and whose reality? Richards' language and reality of choice, though acknowledging the rascal, are not those of the oiled, naked and thieving Caliban or Indian. The Indian's reality may be just the sort over which the reality of metaphor expands.

How can such others begin the process of undoing the caricature they have been given of themselves? How can they picture or represent themselves in words which are such as to lack their own picture? As we saw in the case of both Jindyworobak and Aboriginal poetry (in chapter 3) the words may be lacking which express such a lack. Might not such words evolve where the people interact with the idiom which denies their
view? If words to this effect were forthcoming, however, to whom would they be addressed? Would they not be addressed to those subjects who first made a likeness where lacking words to cross a gulf? Lyotard writes:

In the différend, something cries out in respect to a name. Something demands to be put into phrases and suffers from the wrong of this impossibility. This affect comprises the silence, the feeling, that is an exclamation; but because it has to, it also makes an appeal, through its ellipses, to possible phrases. Humans who believe that they use language as an instrument of communication and decision learn, through the feeling of pain that accompanies the silence of interdiction, that they are conscripted into language. (1988, p. 13)

Lyotard argues that this "conscription" entails the recognition that "what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist" (1988, p. 13). Must it not be asked of so convenient and portable a formula how universal, how universalising its pretensions are?

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Jakobson's famous formulation, "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination" (1975, p. 27), also betrays an imperial design in the privileging of one trope. We note that this projection is asymmetrical, unidirectional. It is the principle of the axis of selection, that is, the principle of equivalence which is projected into the axis of combination. Jakobson himself is aware of this imbalance, and mentions it in concluding his famous paper "Two Aspects of Language and Two types of Aphasic Disturbance" (1956):

The actual bipolarity of has been artificially replaced in these studies by an amputated, unipolar scheme which, strikingly enough, coincides with one of the two aphasic patterns, namely with the contiguity disorder.

The implication here is that elsewhere the relation which Jakobson expresses as the poetic function might be reversible. Certainly Jakobson is keen to claim a broad range of applicability for the duality he has generalised from Saussure's syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes. The axis of selection, the metaphoric, Jakobson associates with poetry, with identification and symbolism in Freud; the axis of combination with the novel and with Freud's metonymic and synecdochic (primary) processes of displacement and condensation. Poeties are further divided along the lines of this split: the lyric belonging to metaphor, the epic to metonymy. For Jakobson, these two aspects of language are in evidence everywhere: "A competition between both devices, metaphor and metonymy, is manifest in any symbolic process be it intrapersonal or social" (1971, p. 94).

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A brief excursion among its others reveals metaphor as the definite and dominant modality by which experience is related and imposed. Metaphor imposes a bi-polar map on experience: the world it permits conceives everything in terms of an opposition between the literal and its other. This is the method by which it captures and prohibits change (by proclaiming it), or, as Deleuze tells us in his essay "Minor Literature: Kafka", this is the sense in which: "Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor" (1993, p. 158). But because of the affinity of metonymy for the forward unfolding of discourse, because of the next-to-ness of words in speech, even in the most mundane of its activities, metaphor's regulation slips and breaks down; words never cease in the work of modifying each other and the reality they bear. We recognise both the fact of this instability and the imagination of a denotative centre to the expression of reality in such everyday phrases such as "almost literally", afterthoughts such as "I meant that.
The logic of equivalence, which proclaims itself absolute (by never proclaiming itself), is unstable, collapses naturally (under the pressure of an ambivalent logic – that which we have associated with poetics) into degrees, modalities of uncertainty, versions of the real. It collapses into a pattern of relations other than equivalence, that not-an-ensemble of relations in which we must include metaphor when we approximate the structure of meaning in the form of a tropylogy. And as well the logic of equivalence slips away under the syntagmatic pressure metonymy implies because the spoken chain leaves equivalence behind, bringing only its haunting, as it unfolds the future.

If metaphor is the unavoidable enabler of speech then it is at once that in which we are already spoken. In *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson tell us that "The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture" (1980, p. 22). The universality of this claim (albeit a claim of cultural relativity) has been challenged on several bases. Naomi Quinn, in her paper "The Cultural Basis of Metaphor" takes issue with the centrality which Lakoff and Johnson assert for metaphor and with the heuristic value they assign it: the idea that metaphor virtually constitutes understanding. Quinn challenges Lakoff and Johnson on conceptual as well as cultural grounds in a critique notable for the absence of any interest in specific cultural/linguistic or class, race or lectal difference. While agreeing that metaphor does play a key role in the "way we comprehend and draw inferences about abstract concepts" (Fernandez, 1991, p. 64) and recognizing the validity of an enquiry into centrality of metaphor's role in language and thought, Quinn suggests that "metaphors, far from constituting understanding, are ordinarily selected to fit a pre-existing and culturally shared model" (Fernandez, 1991, p. 60).

In a difference of opinion which grows increasingly reminiscent of those over chickens and eggs, Quinn argues that "particular metaphors are selected by speakers, and are favoured by these speakers, just because they provide satisfying mappings onto already existing cultural understandings" (Fernandez, 1991, p. 60). We can leave the ontological question as to the priority of metaphor or cultural models and satisfy ourselves with a question as to whether the dispute is not a consequence of the inadequacy of a reduction of all strategies of meaning to the operation of one process, which is doomed to be escaped by whatever it is claimed to contain.

Lakoff and Johnson have been able to establish a catalogue of buried yet immanent assumptions in everyday language. They show how a metaphor such as "argument is war" is able to structure experience and shape our attitude to polemics, this particular metaphor revealing a symptom of a reliance on aggression for getting things done intellectually – a reliance characteristic of English language parliaments, journalism, corporate structure and often academic discourse. Lakoff and Johnson show that there is a scale from the physical to the cultural which participates in the grounding of our conceptual system. The interanimation of different conceptual frameworks (e.g. spatial, social and emotional) allows these to make sense of each other. Lakoff and Johnson show that metaphors have the power to define reality and that "people in power get to impose their metaphors" (1980, p. 157). Dehumanising metaphors such as "labour is a resource" allow "the exploitation of human beings", something which "is most obvious in countries which boast of 'a virtually inexhaustible supply of cheap labour'" (1980, p. 237). It is not only the exploitation of fellow language users/victims which is facilitated by metaphor. The development metaphors of growth economics, the bigger, brighter, better model of the world, are all sustained by one simple metaphor of quantity:

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81 This is the conventional exordium Ricoeur cites for the Majorca storytellers (1979, p. 224).
"more is better", the best illustration of which is the sway of that one particular and ever increasing quantity, money.

Lakoff and Johnson's theorising touches on poetry in two ways. Firstly they are concerned with a distinction between conventional and unconventional metaphors, the latter we may conceive of in linguistic or literary frames, as highlighting or foregrounding. Unconventional metaphors, characteristic of some poetries, they argue, evoke but frustrate conventional ones. We might say that they make them foreign to us. Secondly they suggest that metaphors deal with or mask contradictions:

Successful functioning in our daily lives seems to require a constant shifting of metaphors. The use of many metaphors that are inconsistent with one another seems necessary for us if we are to comprehend the details of our daily existence. ...any consistent set of metaphors will most likely hide indefinitely many aspects of reality - aspects that can be highlighted only by other metaphors that are inconsistent with it. (1980, p. 221)

Metaphor, in other words, is a motion in which reality is contested. If more generally we might say that the tropes are in speech the play of cathexis or the means by which affect reason with words, then the logic of equivalence, which makes itself absolute, also makes itself unstable, collapses naturally into degrees and into the arms of its others. A logic of equivalence falls into those gulfs, the differends, which it works to conceal.

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Against such odds, metaphor conscripts its consent, sends us all off to war. Whatever territory it appears to threaten it has always already invaded. Metaphor is a haunting which lies in all words, consciousness of which is dispelled in the forward unfolding of words in new meaning. Wherever we go in the worlds which words make we find this dormant spore of means, which hides its own ubiquity in that of words.

Metaphor appears to open onto a field with no limits but what is limitless is its mediation and the making of equivalences. Metaphor is the trick of denotation turned on itself in the violence and mistakenness of naming, that which makes the world apprehendable in the process of making the world.

Metaphor begins with difference but comes to identity through the esemplastic process. The action of metaphor is, in the terms Lyotard has articulated, that which is of and which conceals differends. Metaphor is such a move because it is a refusal to engage modality. It says that one thing is another, for instance is says that you are me, meaning of course that you are a part of me, that you are under me or the spell of my thinking. How can metaphor get around this synechdochic slide which it seems to imply? Metaphor makes us one in a decision ready-made for us. It co-opts and it reifies assertions of equivalence, which govern in no one's name.

Metaphor, as fetishised copula, amounts to living in the illusion of choice which can be described as choosing to not choose. The universe which metaphor cannot help but construct, seems in short a denial of the volition in which community is made possible. And yet it can be argued that it is precisely out of the burial of awareness (of difference) which metaphor enables and constitutes, that community is enabled, being itself the denial of the volition which allows it. Metaphor provides the commonality of illusion which metonymy will unfold from in dialogue. Metaphor, a best example of the burial of awareness, becomes the trope which enables community by enabling the sharing of defining and unexamined assumptions within a group. As Durham and Fernandez argue in their paper, "Tropical Dominions":

metaphors predicate an internal structure to uncertainly understood domains, and that this structure is mainly conventional; it rests upon a joint recognition of the
correspondence between those domains. Metonymies operate within those
domains and can operate upon such conventions. Unlike metaphors, while they
are not creative of new understandings and new worldviews, they can be
creatively manipulative of old ones. (Fernandez, p. 206)

Metonymy appears in a permanently oppositional role even if we believe (with Benjamin
Hrushovski, below) that it is only through metonymy that metaphoric change becomes
possible.

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Under the sway of the universalising and reductive process of analogy there is a
movement towards the limits of iteration. This is because metaphor depends on the
invisibility of the already said in order to establish the naming plot at the heart of all
saying. The seemingly permanent ascendance of metaphor among the tropes, and
particularly of that unidirectional version of it we associate with I.A.Richards and Max
Black, may characterise the manner in which the world has come to be fully possessed.

We have already associated metaphor with possession, it remains perhaps to spell
out the nature of the risk this association constitutes for the world. We should distinguish
here between two forms of possession which equally inhere, we might say blur, in the
metaphoric process. One of these looks forward, as myth does, from a present as given,
as ever thus and expects to have the world on these terms. The other possession is that
most fundamental form of haunting in which our words and the world they indicate are
known as having passed through millions of mouths and ears into our own. It is in the
first of these senses that we speak of our tenure over land, of our ownership. It is in the
second sense that we speak of belonging to a place. At the risk of an over-simplification,
the former seems to be associated with the waking of those alert to opportunity and the
latter with the dreaming of those from whom the land is stolen; the former with the
reasons of presence, the latter with the nature if not the means of loss. In a reversal of the
polarity generally accepted between civilisation (as that which is capable of reflection on
itself) and primitivity (as that which is not), it appears that those who listen to their
dreams know themselves and their place as possessed, those who ignore their dreaming
see themselves only as possessors. In the colonial and post-colonial context, possession
is a safe haven for the dispossessed, even for the self-dispossessed. For one thing, by
means of it, by the process of dispossessing, they create for themselves company in the
form of more dispossessed. But in doing so they neither see what it is that possesses
them, nor how they themselves may have been had.

What poetry apprehends of itself, of all speech and of all writing, to the extent that
it avails itself of a consciousness of tropic processes, is the means through which, as
indirection, it makes its truth in the impossibility of discovering that fiction which lies
outside its borders. What haunts poetry is that the laughter which founds its difference
was of a moment and is not to be retrieved. Poetry has an affinity for the particularity of
such moments but is stuck in the trap of idealising by virtue of the fact that, as all
literature, it must lie out of the world in order to make possible a world which has not
been; in order, that is, that the world may find its way into the future which haunts it.
Tropology and grammar are the means by which this is achieved, the means by which we
make a world ours in having ourselves become, in having become ourselves.

The confusion of metaphor's rule is of limits repressed in favour of the same set
of symptoms refusing to recognise themselves. Wallace Stevens writes that there is no
such thing as a metaphor of metaphor (Scully, 1966, p. 158). But if we accept with Paul
Freidrich that "our immediate situation is the whole field of tropes" (Fernandez, 1991,
p. 26) then what else can there be? Metaphor is the beginning of a metabusiness to
which it is subjected by all reflexive processes. Hence the desire to say what metaphor is
is doomed to make more metaphor. In like manner any effort to effort to critically engage
metaphor as a trope among others may be undermined merely in the attempt at definition.
Such is its viral action. What metaphor touches, cannot be easily untainted. Ricoeur states the contradiction in which the symptom is manifest: "The paradox is this: there is no discourse of metaphor that is not stated within a metaphorically engendered philosophical framework" (1979, p. 287). But if metaphor stands where it has made itself invisible then who has the power to seek its symptoms, to see where a differend once was? The power of for instance Barthes' *mythologies* is in their reflexivity. What Barthes seeks symptoms of, in the work of that title, is his own myths, his own making. But is not even a reflexive practice doomed to turn back on a stillness which does not undo forgetting, and which is only ever an imagination of a certain past, one possible only in the here and now? Ong’s homeostasis finally defeats itself unless we believe that the tablets of writing must stand forever.

Equivalence sets no limit to its mediation. Through the spread of the metaphorical principle, if Rousseau and the Romantics are to be believed, speech has fallen into the earth's most silent and hidden corners. The metaphoricity of speech is the virulence of humanity and it is humanity's most virulent strains which have carried their speech into those corners, wiping out other (and perhaps less metaphoric) speech strains in their way.

Metaphor, masked, makes itself our last casket, unlockable centre emptied as we arrive, but with the promise of having always been full. It is the last of the mansions of My Father's house, which as with the rest, has no outside.

Metaphor is the clothes we wear at our burying.

What haunts every prospect of signification is its extreme manifestation, the sway of one process to one end, this individualising of all things, this making them mine by which my things ironically become anyone's, this stillness of possession which is to be metonymically swept away.

My music for nothing

The contribution of Freud, which Lacan develops, establishes the internal and external economies of mind in which Jakobson is able to posit the metaphor/metonymy divide as one viable from psychoanalysis to anthropology. It is from Jakobson's elaboration of Freud's primary processes of condensation and displacement that Lacan is able to develop his theses on metaphor and metonymy, on language, desire and their implication in the unconscious economy:

in an inquiry into the structure of dreams, the decisive question is whether the symbols and the temporal sequences used are based on contiguity (Freud's "metonymic" displacement and synecdochic "condensation") or on similarity (Freud's "identification and symbolism"). (1971, p. 95)

Lacan shifts Jakobson's frame to associate metaphor with condensation and metonymy with displacement. From the point of view of psychoanalytic practice Lacan associates metaphor with symptom and metonymy with desire. Lacan's desire as metonymy is always after the next thing, that which is beyond (or offers the illusion of being beyond) whatever object now is in reach. This condition of ceaseless shifting, of never being sated, this drivenness, may be permanently contrasted with the definite equivalence (or the illusion of it) of metaphor, which bears with it the appearance of satisfaction, of arrival, *jouissance*, of the ideal forever frustrated by the real.
In the Lacanian schema the function of metaphor is repression because it allows the fixing of content so that a signifier acts more or less permanently in the position of the signified. This repression in other words freezes the potentially infinite chain of association which the metonymic action of desire enables. The repression of the primal scene entailed in the paternal metaphor establishes the Law-of-the-Father in the prohibition of incest.

The metonymic process in which language unfolds and by which it changes, is one of glissement, "the incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier" (1980, p. 154). The process of metaphor serves to stall the diachronic and syntagmatic reality of language (i.e., its horizontality) in favour of a verticality where choices appear but as always already decided. Metaphor, as we have noted, is the mind of language already made up. It is the mirage of choice which plays a vital role in the structuring of experience, which marks not only the entry of subjects into language, but the never-ending process of acculturation entailed in subjectivity. For Lacan the relationship of the unconscious to language is, as we have seen, a one-way street: "what the psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious is the whole structure of language" (1980, p. 147). Equally, "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" (1980, p. 172).

The role of metaphoric repression in this relationship is creative. The crossing of the bar entailed in the metaphoric process of signification amounts to a libidinal "solution" (if never a fully satisfying one) to the problem of ontological lack (and the lack of stability in the relation between signifier and signified) which motivates the metonymic operation of desire in language and in the unconscious. It is difficult not to see why, as was argued by Laplanche and Leclaire in 1960 (cited in Anzieu, 1990, p. 49), we should not see language as being structured as the unconscious. Or why perhaps we should not see the relationship as reversible and continuous: that language and the unconscious (why not claim all degrees and styles of consciousness?) are in a continual process of structuring each other.

Lacan defines metaphor as "one word for another" (1980, p. 157). For Lacan metaphor is "a profusion in which the giver has disappeared along with his gift... only in order to rise again in what surrounds the figure of speech in which he was annihilated." Metaphor’s invasive aspect is critical, for Lacan, to the creative processes with which it is associated:

The creative spark of metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualised. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connection with the rest of the chain. (1980, p. 157)

Metaphor establishes the pattern of symbolic equivalences in which the Law-of-the-Father is promulgated. For Lacan, we noted, it "emerges at the precise point at which sense emerges from non-sense" (1980, p. 158). Metonymy by contrast is characterised by that "veering off" of signification in which the censor is evaded by primary processes.

Thus is established, in the face of all sorts of inconsistencies and unanswered questions, a pattern of homology among the sign, the process of signification, the operation of one trope, metaphor; as well the relation of the unconscious to the conscious life, of primary to secondary processes. That circular unfolding forward of myth, which requires as we have seen in the terms articulated by Barthes and Bakhtin, a paradigmatic stalling in favour of an imagined and necessarily irretrievable moment (that of the mythic past), is the metaphoric moment, the moment in which possibility is reduced to the already chosen. The arrangements of desire are completed in favour of this tangible symptom, this arrival. It is significant that Barthes has identified in the structure of myth, as second order system of signification, the same pattern which Lacan attributes to the operation of metaphor.
Would any myth and any murder establishing the law have the same effects and methods? From the point of view of our here and now we must trace the symptoms metonymically back through a chain in which no causation is to be trusted. Accepting the paternal metaphor, for instance, from the point of view of the post-colonial, the frame and centring Shakespeare offers in The Tempest means accepting the primal repression and Law-of-the-Father this entails. It is the form of forgetting essential to the plot of imperialism.

Thus Caliban enters with a bottle, his fervour to exchange one master for another: "How does thy honour? Let me lick thy shoe" (III, ii, 1983, p. 1556). When Ariel invisibly entertains the conspirators Trinculo says: "This is the tune of our catch played by the picture of nobody." Then follows Caliban's famous celebration of sleep and dreaming:

The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again.

To these words Stephano replies "This will prove a brave kingdom to me, where I shall have my music for nothing" (1983, p. 1558). It is the island itself which seems to sing, in and of itself, to the conspirators who would have possession of it. The ease of that catch to which they imagine themselves entitled depends on the ready-made of a natural world which appears as uncrowded by human agency. "My music for nothing" serves as a convenient metaphor for the condition which metaphor supplies in the process of arbitrarily fixing a signification, for stalling the metonymic process of speech and of plot unfolding. Metaphor, as myth, entails the forgetting of a present context in favour of a sufficient explanation which fixes the past in the present of a ready-made sign.

The creativity of metaphor/condensation, of relations of similarity, which we must identify in a power to produce "fresh parallels where those already present cannot find their way" (Freud, 1980, p. 431), amounts to an imperial centre in a subjectivity, the fragmentation of which, is from the point of view of such processes, an invitation to conquest; that is, to a resolution (however temporary) in the form of a new parallel, a fresh emergence of sense. Against this Lyotard's exhortation to bear witness to differends (1988, p. 13) may be taken as the effort (at least partly of memory) to preserve a difference and distance which existed before a metaphor intervened to conceal itself as an event of signification.

Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban do not have their music for nothing, it is not from nowhere. It is not the work, as it seems to them, of some nature lacking human agency. It is rather the direct result of there being a centre to the subjectivity around which the island is run. It would be a symptom for them, could they read it, of their being the island's catch. Circles are run around these (and other) conspirators by means of an invisible but omniscient authority. Their pseudo-hubris is to be paid for in bodily pains inflicted from this centre. Yet there is throughout the play a fascination with the idea of a place outside of systems of value and of authority. Such a place appears, through a kind of sorcery which avails the European mind freed of the distractions of home, easily to be mastered. The real value agenda in The Tempest may be to do with fascination for the idea of a place outside of money relations. In such a place, much as in the case of Rousseau's supplement at the source, the present value of such relations is not forgotten just because they are for the moment deprived of efficacy. This is not merely evidenced in the well worn dolour/dollar running between Gonzalo and Sebastian but in the fact that the wager Sebastian and Antonio make as to which of Gonzalo or Adrian crows first, is, lacking any coin, for the prize of laughter. These money-minded court conspirators suspect of others their own absurd motives of gain; that Gonzalo for instance wishes falsely to pocket the island (II, i). What Sebastian and Antonio fail to see is that they are in the grip of an incorruptible power, one, if magical, yet exercised as a natural right.
Only Prospero, the ring master, is aware of what happens at once in each of the compartments in which he has isolated activity of the island – the island which is his by virtue of the power of his presence. Prospero’s view in other words is metonymic – he sees (panoptically) the next-to-ness of what he allows to unfold around him (this in contrast with his lax administration in Milan, during the time prior to his dukedom being usurped, when his powers were more inwardly aimed). Prospero’s action in the plot however is metaphorical: he controls by transforming states of consciousness at play around him. All over and around the island, in places deliberately isolated, are characters waking and sleeping, in thrall or free, amazed or in possession of their senses, all at Prospero’s whim. In Prospero’s dream resistances conflate: Caliban is monster, savage, plotter, rapist, bastard, ungrateful prole, recalcitrant pupil and prisoner. To acknowledge ourselves in that part is to accept the place metaphor gives the worser part, the other it discards (that thing of darkness I acknowledge mine).

To continue to speak of the Tempest, and to think in its terms, is to acknowledge that we remain under the sway of this one trope for naming the world – is to remain under the spell of Prospero’s dream. When Ngugi wa Thiong’o critiques “the distorted image of themselves and their history as reflected and interpreted in European imperialist literature”, we need to ask, as we ask of Aimé Césaire and of négritude, whether the world hears one more voice validating – even in the moment of declaring its total opposition – the narrative of imperialism: “They (African schoolchildren) see how Prospero sees Caliban and not how Caliban sees Prospero” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 1981, p. 36). The island may be an unstable invention, a place necessary only to the action inscribed on it, but there is no getting away from the fact that our view of the events in The Tempest is Prospero’s (hence the necessity for Césaire and others of rewriting our point of view).

It is as easy, despite Prospero’s closing coda, to read the play as a triumph of humanist or pagan as of Christian law, or of any possible mapping of these over each other. What is undeniable is that Prospero’s triumph is a European one, that all of the stages of Caliban’s subjection are in the exercise of a white man’s powers.

In a humanist reading Prospero’s “powers overthrown” amounts to a bourgeois freedom from religion and from servitude: i.e., the bourgeois imagination of Europe’s freedom from itself: which is not only difficult for us to recognise as any sort of freedom, but which as an imaginary moment marks the beginning of the rest of the world’s enthrallment to that imagination and the myths by which it sustains itself.

When Prospero commands Ariel “Then tell the elements to be free and fare you well”, we take this as a relinquishing of mastery and of the island. It is merely an indication that the island is, for the moment, surplus to requirement. Its status thus is that of a reminder of where power lies and a threat that it might, once invoked, be resumed at any time. In The Sea and the Mirror, Auden’s dramatic commentary on The Tempest, Caliban declares to the audience: “Imprisoned by you, in the mood doubtful, loaded, by you, with distressing embarrassments, we are, we submit, in no position to set anyone free” (1968, p. 225). The centuries between Shakespeare’s and ours show that islands such as that in The Tempest were revisited, reclaimed, re-mastered. To argue such facts as too allegorical or surplus to our critical purposes with the play, is to argue against those contingencies which make it a post-colonial touchstone. It is to pretend that we have no hindsight in reading.

If The Tempest or its setting is a cypher it is a bourgeois and imperialist one. All acquisitive eyes see it freshly and justify themselves in its image. George Lamming writes in The Pleasures of Exile:

We shall never explode Prospero’s old myth until we christen Language afresh; until we show Language as the product of human endeavour; until we make
available to all the result of certain enterprises undertaken by men who are still regarded as the unfortunate descendants of languageless and deformed slaves. (1984, pp. 118-9)

The universalising spirit welcomes us into the sufficiency of my culture. History and all of its vehicles are equally spoils for the victor. We are left to wonder what the last words were before we disappeared. As Stuart Hall writes: "Where Africa was a case of the unspoken, Europe was a case of that which is endlessly speaking – and speaking us" (cited in Williams and Chrisman, 1993, p 399).

There is no easy way to escape or reverse these conditions of subjectivity and the means by which our own position as spectators is mediated. Hall, writing also of western subjects, claims that we should view our identity, not as an already accomplished fact, but as a production "which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (in Williams and Chrisman, 1993, p. 392). The problem with this only-way-out of a pre-determined identity is that it needs to counter a textuality in which identities are pre-assigned and for all time, as canonic truths. The haunting to which The Tempest subjects us is one of unbearable and inescapable equivalence, of one set of eyes with which to see everything of the coming world we now inhabit.

What does it mean then for Auden, as Shakespeare's inheritor, to put these last words in Caliban's mouth?:

Not that we have improved; everything, the massacres, the whippings, the lies, the twaddle, and all their carbon copies are still present, more obviously than ever; nothing has been reconstructed; our shame, our fear, our incorrigible staginess, all wish and no resolve, are still, and more intensely than ever, all we have; only now it is not in spite of them but with them that we are blessed by that Wholly Other Life from which we are separated by an essential emphatic gulf of which our contrived fissures of mirror and proscenium arch – we understand them at last – are feebly figurative signs, so that all our meanings are reversed and it is precisely in its negative image of Judgement that we can positively envisage Mercy; it is just here among the ruins and the bones, that we may rejoice in the perfected Work which is not ours. (1968, p. 250)

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The theme of the interdependence of metaphor and metonymy (or we could word this, given the vantage from which this problem is usually attacked, the dependence of metaphor on metonymy) is one explored by Benjamin Hrushovski, especially in his 1984 paper, "Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference". Hrushovski shows that what literary art, in fact what all successfully self-conscious uses of language manage to achieve, is the management of the simultaneous invasion which each of the axes of the Saussurean/Jakobsonian formulation is launching on the territory of the other. Hrushovski's definition of metaphor is as:

one form of diverted concreteness: instead of giving the reader the concrete details of what it means to feel... the poem strikes the reader with concrete, sensuous details in a secondary domain. (1984, p. 19)

Hrushovski's "frame of reference" approach is a convenient way out of some problems of rank fixation (dealing with tropic phenomena only for instance at the rank of word or sentence) from which the study of tropes has suffered. Rather than allow metaphor to be forced within any particular boundaries as a "fixed unit", syntactically limited, Hrushovski sees metaphor participating in "open-ended" relations:
we must observe metaphors in literature not as static, discrete units, but as
dynamic patterns, changing in the text continuum, context-sensitive, relating to
specific (fictional or real) frames of reference and dependent on interpretations.
(1984, p. 7)

Of particular interest are Hrushovski's acknowledgment of the necessity of indeterminacy
("no piece of reality can be represented in language in all its detail" [1984, p. 13]) and
exploration of the reversibility of relations between frames of reference. Indeterminacy
and reversibility are themselves mutually dependent aspects of the dynamic pattern
Hrushovski describes:

one cannot really speak about precise and specific meanings... the hesitant
language of our interpretation... depends on this need... to name the mutual
filtering and mutual fermenting of two unrelated situations. (1984, pp. 17-18)

Whatever manner of blurring or polysemic intention we deal with, it is, in
Hrushovski's picture, the interaction of metaphor and metonymy, and not the agency of
one of these which makes the effect possible. There are implications of these musings for
a theory of signification and the dynamism of the sign. I draw attention to an homology
between the relations Hrushovski conceives in the principle of metaphor and the
Saussurean/Lacanian model of the sign: "The principle of metaphor requires two frames
related like parallel lines that never meet; the two 'realities' are not continuous with each
other in the fictional world of the poem" (1984, p. 18).

Again we see that metaphor/myth entails a freezing at the bar of the relation
between signifier and signified, which metonymy unceasingly reforms in glissement.
For Grosz the interdependence of metaphor and metonymy which Hrushovski documents
is implicit in Lacan's reading of Jakobson:

If the metaphoric process generates the signified from the chain of signifiers, and
the metonymic process ensures that each signifier has multiple connections and
associations which relate it always to other signifiers and thus give it meaning,
then it becomes clear these two processes must work hand-in-hand. They are
not readily separable but could be seen as two elements of the one process.
(1990, p. 103)

Colonial and postcolonial experience of the libidinal economy (i.e., the experience
of alterity in its most spatial manifestation) is such that it should lead us to suspect the
motives and motions of power in relations that are insistently unidirectional and which
serve to freeze the glissement in which language allows the parts of the sign to change
hands, in which the spoken chain (that ceaseless horizontality) presses on. Looking at
The Tempest from Caliban's point of view alters neither the fact of his position in relation
to Prospero, nor of his provenance in relation to a Shakespearian world view. The role of
metaphor in western (as opposed to other) thought is well illustrated in Dorothy Lee's
observations of its contrast in "Linguistic Reflection on Wintu Thought":

Recurring through all this is the attitude of humility and respect towards reality,
towards nature and society. I cannot find an adequate English term to apply to a
habit of thought that is so alien to our culture. We are aggressive towards reality.
We say "This is bread"; we do not say, as the Wintu, "I call this bread" or I feel
or taste or see it to be bread. The Wintu never starkly says this; if he speaks of
reality that is not within his own restricting experience, he does not affirm it, he
only implies it. If he speaks of his experience he does not express it as
categorically true. (1944, p. 187)

Lee concludes her paper citing the testimony of an old Wintu woman:
The white people never cared for the land or deer or bear. When we Indians kill meat we eat it all up. When we dig roots we make little holes... We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the white people plow up the ground, pull up the trees, kill everything... The spirit of the land hates them. They blast out the trees and stir up to its depths. They saw up the trees. That hurts them. The Indians never hurt anything. (1944, p. 187)

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Analogy's insistence amounts, as Homi Bhabha points out, to a universalising tendency unable to take account of cultural specificity:

The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin, and turns that loss into the language of metaphor. Metaphor, as the etymology suggests, transfers the meaning of home and belonging, across the "middle passage" or the central European steppes, across those distances, and cultural differences, that span the imagined community of the nation people. (1990, p. 291)

For Bhabha, metonymy, on the other hand symptomatises the text, reads through it the forces that traverse it. In The Empire Writes Back Ashcroft et al argue:

It is the "absence" which occupies the gap between the contiguous inter/faces of the "official" language of the text and the cultural difference brought to it. Thus the alterity in that metonymic juncture establishes a silence beyond which the Otherness of the text cannot be traversed by the colonial language. (1989, p. 54)

Metonymy symptomatises. Metaphor universalises. Metaphor erases absence and difference, metonymy consists of nothing else. Ashcroft et al write "consequently the gap of silence enfolds that space between the simultaneous abrogation of language as normative standard and the appropriation of language as cultural mode in the post colonial text" (1989, p. 75).

The fact of such a resistance hardly means that the imperial tendency of metaphor has been or is likely to be brought to a halt. Armed with its romantic eye for the likeness in difference the chameleon process of same-making goes on, able to transform anything. Metaphor, the reductive process by which everywhere is represented, denies its own ubiquity by the simplest of moves: without naming there is no argument of presence and no argument of names. Thus metaphor rules panoptically without any sense of a rhetorical presence. What we see as its manifestations are aberrations, instances where we glimpse the machine. By and large metaphor is the perfect servant-spectre (to conflate Derrida's Marx with Barthes): as perfectly invisible as it is ubiquitous.

Where can we go but down the path metaphor leads? Where does the Wintu's tentativity lead? According to its legion of orthodox adherents, metaphor is the magic and to oppose metaphor (it is everywhere implied) is to oppose a life force, the process by which we come into being, by which being becomes; to oppose metaphor is to embrace death before death translates us.

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But metaphor, it should be remembered, embraces death along with the rest. The death of words lies in the already-said which entails the naming at the heart of all saying. This is a game such that we do not distinguish words from things but only words from words. With words we make ourselves at home, achieving in one stroke that consciousness and authenticity which mislead and undermine each other. Metaphor, as naming, the means by which I make other things mine, is the manner in which, by the process of language, we domesticate ourselves. It is a reversible and ultimately reflexive process because, in the terms of Heidegger's I am what I say, we
are what becomes of the words we make. To the extent that we succeed in engaging the reflexive work of unearthing sense from its context of means, we see, with Lacan, that metaphor is symptomatic.

This reversal, in which we present as the chosen of those words we choose follows from the terms in which Richards has stated his interaction theory of metaphor. It is the same as we have encountered with Jakobson and which Hrushovski tackles in insisting on the interaction of metaphor and metonymy in literary art. The assumption of Black's and of Richards's construction of metaphor is that of a normatively one-way interaction, when it is in fact the possibility of a reversible relation which is implied by Coleridge's "interanimation" and which is allowed by Empson's formulation cited above\(^{82}\). Of course it can be argued that this reversibility is not the work of metaphor, but of other tropes, metalepsis and antistrophe (species of reversing). These are the basis of much Socratic irony, and metalepsis is specifically the act for which Socrates cannot be pardoned when he sees his judges as the accused, and when he subjects the gods of Athens to the same scrutiny his philosophy offers other objects. Lyotard discusses these tropes in their relation to various Socratic dialogues in *The Differend* and cites Genette's contention, in relation to metalepsis, that "it is the crossing of a shifting but sacred frontier between two worlds, the world in which one tells, the world of which one tells" (1988, p. 25).

Reversibility is a primary theme in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, for whom *flesh* designates a non-coincidence and demonstrates a reflexivity, a folding in on itself, which recreates subjectivity and objectuality for us as a continuum. Seeing and seen, touching and touched are reversible positions which amount to "double sensation". To see is to be seen\(^ {83}\) becomes a condition of embodiment (and of un-foreignness). If this reversibility is, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, "always imminent and never realised in fact" (1969, p. 147) then it entails the dissymmetrical prospect of being made permanently foreign -- a condition we could describe as alienation.

If this is the condition of the speaking subject then it is so because language, too, participates in the reversibility in which subject and object open to each other, because the chiasm which binds and separates one from the other, is necessarily a site of difference. Merleau-Ponty echoes Valéry in writing that "language is everything since it is the voice of no one, since it is the very voice of the things, the waves and the forests" (1969, p. 155).

To speak with this voice of no one,\(^ {84}\) I would argue, amounts to the condition of becoming foreign, the only condition we can call universal. But when words are always en route, however they disguise themselves, it must seriously be asked how the voice of no one is to be distinguished from the panoptic voice of third-person omniscience. Clearly there is this risk in any effort to represent such a voice. With the rarely successful, if partial, exception of the event we know as neologism, our words were always someone else's and it is as the borrowed home of millions of those someone elses

\(^{82}\) And at least implied by Richards' "transaction between contexts" (1965, p. 94) even if the general thrust of the tenor-vehicle arrangement, which refers to "underlying ideas" and "principal subjects" (1936, p. 97), suggests a particular directionality. Note that this author at times works to undermine the distinction.

\(^{83}\) Compare this with the position which Derrida reaches in "apparition of the inapparent": "Vertiginous asymmetry: the technique for having visions, for seeing ghosts is in truth a technique to make oneself seen by ghosts" (1994, p. 134).

\(^{84}\) Cf. the role Barthes imagines for such a voice in the "The Death of the Author" where he argues that "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (1977, p. 142).
that such words have become ours. The *voice of no one* is then a kind of haunting. It is no one's because it cannot be retrieved, because it only goes forward, dissolving in echoes, remaking itself. The world of selves may unfold in words but this unfolding makes irrelevant, as Valéry has said for writers, whatever intention may have been behind an utterance. Likewise we do not arrive at the intention behind words by claiming to know their grammar or etymology, by claiming the privilege of access to langue. The life of words is in their betweeness, their having not arrived. We do this fact no disservice by noting a plurality of betweeness, and by noting that where words haven't arrived is all over the place: between languages and codes, between subjects and objects, between and in subjects themselves.

In effect Merleau-Ponty locates the puzzles of consciousness and tropology inside each other:

The meaning is not on the phrase like the butter on the bread, like a second layer of "psychic reality" spread over the sound: it is the totality of what is said, the integral of all the differentiations of the verbal chain; it is given with the words for those who have ears to hear. And conversely the whole landscape is overrun with words as with an invasion, it is henceforth but a variant of speech before our eyes, and to speak of its "style" is in our view to form a metaphor. (1969, p. 155)

This commitment to *parole*, to the instantiation of language both as and in speech, requires of philosophy a commitment to meaning which is located nowhere but in words:

In a sense the whole of philosophy, as Husserl says, consists in restoring a power to signify, a birth of meaning or a wild meaning, an expression of experience by experience, which in particular clarifies the special domain of language. (1969, p. 155)

If this exhortation to arrive at "wild meaning" not as "the butter on the bread" but as a "totality", motivates us in the direction of a tropology with explanatory power to clarify "this special domain", then we should remember that for Merleau-Ponty, out of all this, reversibility "is the ultimate truth" (1969, p. 155).

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Abandoning the comfort of any idealised abstraction from which to measure the instances of words, we seek resort to a decentred tropology, able to take account contextually of all instances of speech and of all realisations of meaning. If the sign is, as Bhaskar reminds us, always multi-accidental, then it is in such universalising as we encounter in spatial metaphor that the process of the sign is stalled. Here, the world is as words have it, and would be ceaselessly reproduced as a *sameness*, were it not for a disconcerted action of the not-a-totality we approach in the naming of tropes, and under the sign of that totality: tropology. Is this not the ultimate irony of the tropic or of any effort to abstract from its use the means by which language behaves? The world is made still by what is no stillness and so the world is not made still at all. The world is indeed as words have it but neither word nor world have ceased becoming. If words were to cease unfolding and rather be apprehended only in the paradigmatic manner of the dictionary, then would they not fail to be reproduced at all? Such words as could be fixed in meaning would be unreal and of no use. The "no one's voice" in them would be the disembodiment of a prescription which could have no sense to make. Merleau-Ponty's *voice of no one* is rather everyone's in the sense that we, all of us, have no other voice from which to find our own. It is no one's in the sense that it cannot be attributed. It is the spectre of langue, the spectre of a competence which can live nowhere but in the instances of speech. If all of our words are thus framed, as motions unapprehendable but which seek to survive their context, then perhaps poetry is, where philosophy fails to be, that discourse which draws attention to these facts. It is that discourse which can never
finish playing with itself and never stop calling itself names. The manner of motion which consciousness requires of poetry is among the tropes. This motion which we have referred to as an indirection, a journey everywhere and a return from everywhere, is the authenticity of poetry.

Tropology has to deal with the fact that words are contingent: upon each other, upon the effects of intentions which cannot completely be predicted. It has to deal with the fact that words unfold unknowably in time. The service it is able to provide poetry (or anyone else) is a demonstration of the limits of knowledge: in the manner, for instance of Ashberry's "The One Thing That Can Save America":

It is the lumps and trials
That tell us whether we shall be known
And whether our fate can be exemplary, like a star.
All the rest is waiting
For a letter that never arrives,
Day after day, the exasperation
Until finally you have ripped it open not knowing what it is,
The two envelope halves lying on a plate.
The message was wise and seemingly
Dictated a long time ago.
Its truth is timeless, but its time has still
Not arrived, telling of danger, and the mostly limited
Steps that can be taken against danger
Now and in the future, in cool yards,
In quiet small houses in the country,
Our country, in fenced areas, in cool shady streets.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 179)

The country, our country where truth is timeless? This, our truth is known only in terms of an ancient message, still not arrived. In the journey which is assumed of us, where we are doomed to travel as foreigners and into our own foreignness, where the only prospect of naturalisation is in death (with or without the exemplary star status), in that journey which always ends in the one proportion mastering all others, there may be a vehicle which passes a landscape through which we pass, but these two mislead us with a reversibility which Lewis Carroll characterised as that of Fortunatus' purse: where the inside is outside and vice versa. This is a journey which leads us in every direction, not any circle but a tricked infinity of signs, which con themselves with standing still. Such a track tucks under and over itself – where home is away, departing, returning – all the one gesture which we have no privilege of seeing. One is always already home. Because the track always has another side but I am always on that other side because there is only one. This journey wrecks the air in which words are spoken, breath taken for next. And so perhaps also illustrates the metonymic reversibility of metaphor (that what is equal to is also next to), perhaps foreshadows the implication of all tropes in all others.

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The idea of an unrequitable return has concerned us. But does not the eternal return of which the Stoics and Nietzsche wrote subsist, however we disguise it, in the most mundane and quotidian movements of the body? Freud writes in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" of repetition which normal people experience in their lives as a "pursuing fate" (1952, p. 645). But fate pursues us, as much in the words of no one which make themselves ours, as in those cataclysms in which our ends are foreshadowed and finally reached; as much in the diurnal round of instinctual repetition (our own and the world's) as in the paths we make our own. Day and night, waking and sleeping provide the model, if not the basis, for psychic reality; that reality, the tropic aspect of the
making of which, arises in the guise of a mistakenness, because it is doomed never fully to approximate, not what it imitates of nature but the context it must alter by the fact and in the moment of utterance. That mistakenness is haunted precisely in the moment of laughter, because it is in that moment of dispelling we acknowledge our failure to remain as we were. What we release in laughter, itself instinctual repetition, is the sense of ourselves as absolute continuities. It is in that release that we know ourselves haunted. This is the mystery of laughter, that the nub of the joke cannot be explained. Consciousness and authenticity hold equal stakes in the moment of laughter, because in laughter at the same time we come to know and to take up a position which lies out of knowledge. The world shifts where laughter erupts on its surface-as-given, which is the world indefinitely repeated, as we note laughter, as part of the world, must be. Laughter thus is the overriding of the automatic by the spontaneous. As such it only comes to be as a repetition which has tricked itself with the guise of something new.

Ultimate Trope

But metaphor is never innocent. It orients research and fixes results.

Derrida (1978, p. 17)

If there are two theories of metaphor – the Aristotelian and the Romantic, then the latter functions as the Manichean heresy of the former. It fails to escape what it considers to be the demeaning idea of the artist as copyist and of mythos as deviation. It claims (via metaphor) godlike powers of creativity but humbly approaches the artisan’s entrance to the city. No wonder its documents need to be scrutinised.

Symbolism, an ambiguous art, was an attempt to get around this trap by making signification open-ended and polyvalent, or rather by hoping to make the process of signification infinite by virtue of the act of declaring it so. Thus the throw of the dice which will abolish chance. Thus also Mallarmé’s contention that the poet’s only duty is "the Orphic explanation of the earth" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 48).

Modernism’s a/politics of metaphor, prefigured in Pound’s Imagism, are those of self-interest and self-congratulation, these on behalf of a transcendent consciousness, one which occupies a position privileged by the method of art. In Pound’s case, the attack on usury, for instance in Canto 51, is foreshadowed in Lustra:

Go, my songs, to the lonely and unsatisfied,
Go also to the nerve-racked, go to the enslaved-by-convention,
Bear to them my contempt for their oppressors.
Go as a great wave of cool water,
Bear my contempt of oppressors.

Speak against unconscious oppression,
Speak against the tyranny of the unimaginative,
Speak against bonds.
Go to the bourgeois who is dying of her ennui,
Go to the women in suburbs.
Go to the hideously wedded,
Go to them whose failure is concealed,
Go to the unluckily mated,
Go to the bought wife,
Go to the woman entailed.

Go to those who have delicate lust,
Go to those whose delicate desires are thwarted,
Go like a blight upon the dullness of the world;
Go with your edge against this,
Strengthen the subtle cords,
Bring confidence upon the algae and the tentacles of the soul.

(1948, pp. 96-7)

In Fernando Pessoa’s "The Startling Reality of Things" (under the heteronym of Albert Caeiro), at the behest of the avowedly disinvesting persona, we find a modernist effort to absolve one’s self and the world of ethical motions, in favour of the stasis of being:

The startling reality of things
Is my discovery every single day.
Everything is what it is,
And it’s hard to explain to anyone how much this delights me
And suffices me.

To be whole, it is enough simply to exist.

I’ve written a good many poems.
I shall write a good many more, naturally.
Each of my poems speaks of this,
And yet all my poems are different,
Because each thing that exists is one way of saying this.

Sometimes I start looking at a stone.
I don’t start thinking, Does it have feeling?
I don’t fuss about calling it my sister.
But I get pleasure out of its being a stone,
Enjoying it because it feels nothing,
Enjoying it because it’s not at all related to me.

Occasionally I hear the wind blow,
And I find that just hearing the wind blow makes it worth having been born.

I don’t know what others reading this will think;
But I find it must be good since it’s what I think without effort,
With no idea that other people are listening to me think;
Because I think it without thoughts,
Because I say it as my words say it.

I was once called a materialist poet
And was surprised because I didn’t imagine
I could be called anything at all.
I’m not even a poet: I see.
If what I write has any merit, it’s not in me;
The merit is there, in my verses.
All this is absolutely independent of my will.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, pp 147-8)

In Heuretics Ulmer writes “The modernist gesture was to mistake for universal something that was particular, local, idiomatic” (1994, p. 82). It could well be argued that the particular here mistaken for a universal was precisely the habit of universalising, one which in the terms noted from Sangari (in chapter 2) was wholly consonant with the imperial pretensions of the governments and policies which avant-guardists generally kept
aloof from. The carrying across in which Modernism is most interested, is of cultural capital, and if it involves a sneer permanently directed at the bourgeoisie then this is on behalf of a spirit of accumulation which may be qualitatively different, but which is just as interested in names and their relative status. Modernism irony more often than not amounts to a universalising reductionism decentring belief in, and the continuity of, civilisation but not significantly challenging the egoistic heroism of the authorial "I" (consider Pessoa's poem above) – an outcome in political terms not dissimilar from that of Romanticism – one offering in other words a rationale for the continued expansion of empire (for the absence of limits for the process of analogy). We may acknowledge the line dividing the Modern from the Post-Modern in the Hiroshima event, which, coming as the culmination of centuries of imperial clashes, demonstrates the limits to empire by showing the effects of western science as absolutely universal.

For the "I" of the modernist text however, decay, disillusion, any sort of pessimism or marginality may serve as a monument to the clever isolation and strangeness of the author, in his imperial adventure. The aphorisms Wallace Stevens delivers in Adagia demonstrate modernism's acceptance of the necessity of a method, however naughty it may manage to seem, which always leaves metaphor squarely at the centre which defines the interests and contentions of poetry as monolith. Examples are: "Metaphor creates a new reality from which the original appears to be unreal. Reality is a cliche from which we escape by metaphor. In the long run truth does not matter" (Selections from Adagia, in Scully, 1966 p. 158). The imperial centre established by a text like The Waste Land depends for all its ironies and displays of violence, on a canon sense of its own place and on intellectual powers among which metaphor reigns supreme. Surrealism and Dada, likewise in their attempts to parody Modernism, may have literalised some of its metaphors, may have taken some of its tenets to their logical conclusion; but it is an open question whether, and to what degree, they displaced the metaphor making subjectivity of the poet.

While not wishing needlessly to conflate those positions which have defined themselves or been defined as, respectively: aestheticism, art for art's sake, modernism, bourgeois art, etc., it is clear that in each case, from the point of view of tropology, it is metaphor which has offered the centring which provides the pivot from which a place outside of the mainstream is articulated. Such a place often comes to light only in the moment of its co-option, in any case providing the proof of the liberality of its democratic context in its enabling, as a species of the Barthesian inoculation. The easier it becomes to publish Ulysses, the less its publication matters.

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Formalists like Schklosvkti, in positing an automatic, everyday speech and a de-automatising, de-familiarising aesthetic function (likewise the Russian Futurists with their zaum: transnational language), revert to a pre-Romantic Aristotelian framework. Their work makes metaphor an aesthetic process apart from everyday language, different from it, opposed to it, and inevitably a self-marginalising aesthetic elitism. In "Plane 8" of Zangezi Khlebnikov writes of "alphabet war makers" and exhorts "Let the all-seeing sounds of a universal language Whirl away the mists of time. / That language is light". But what is the "star-language" here proposed like? In "A Song in Star-Language":

Within a haze of green KHA, two figures,  
The EI of their clothes as they move,  
A GO of clouds above the games they play,  
The VE of a crowd that circles an unseen fire  

After much more in this vein, Zangezi asks, echoing Nietzsche's last line in Ecce Homo:

Have you heard me? Have you heard all I've said, heard my speech that frees you from the fetters of words? Speech is an edifice built out of blocks of space.
Particles of speech. Parts of movement. Words do not exist; there are only movements in space and their parts – points and areas.

You are now set free from your ancestral chains. The hammer of my voice has shattered them; your frenzied struggle against those chains has ended.

(1990, pp. 202-5)

Thank you Zangezi, and thank you, Velimir! This world transformed by saying so, the ultimate in wishful thinking, depends on a fantasy of an outside of words, one delivered in and surviving for our scrutiny in words. Perhaps in Khlebnikov's Futurism we find the nth degree of a non-reflexive writing, this coinciding with a faith in the unconsciousness of metaphor. Reminding us of the impersonality on which Eliot insists as constitutive of "the emotion of art" (1951, p. 22), Khlebnikov writes that poems about the assembly line may well be written "by someone from beyond the factory walls" because "artistic creativity" is to be considered "the greatest possible deviation of the string of thought from the axis of the creator's life, as a flight from the self" (1990, p. 154).

The Formalists will argue that what they are trying to get at, what poetry should get to, is the essential, precisely that which.THE everyday by virtue of its automatisation misses out on. Hence Schklovskii's making the stone stony (1991, p. 6). In other words it is language, not art, which has lost touch with its essential nature. The Formalists were more concerned with the nature of art than with the nature of metaphor or of the tropes or of language. Nevertheless their aesthetic implies, in the context of the wider community of language, a secondary role for processes of transformation in general, and thus for poetry and for art itself, which by the Formalists' own admission rely so much for their success on the ability to make strange.

* *

If we are to ask of the twentieth century's theorists of tropology, whether they have facilitated or merely acknowledged metaphor's simultaneous invasion of all disciplines, in so doing we broach a broader question for the prospect of reflexive awareness: how disinterested can observation be, when we know it must pre-suppose a method, which though demanding, cannot in fact maintain, a view of itself?

With or without unsubstantiable arguments as to beginnings and ends, the tropic has an immanent significance in discourse which poetics must face because the everyday language from which or against the background of which poetics draw their material, is tropic. There is no human context in which words are allowed to merely denote. To do so they would have to come from and to go nowhere. The vilest, the loftiest, the most common and the most extraordinary of dictions all shape and are shaped by a (necessarily tropic) movement through context.

The sense in which poetics are claimed to be able to tell new stories or make old ones unrecognisable has really to do with the transformative character of language in its dynamic relation to context. The efficacy of the lie can be argued to begin with the process of signification.

As is the case with all tropes, what reflection on metaphor reveals is the disguising of ends as means: whatever appears objectively to be the manner in which things work turns out to be indistinguishable from the model in the likeness of which practices are fashioned and forced to tend. The conception of the two poles (metaphor and metonymy) provides a good example of how a working model sets the limits of our enquiry. As long as we see language as arising within these limits, our interest will lie with the aspect more easily apprehended. It will always be easier to apprehend the process of analogy than it will the dissolution or transcendence of that process, the surpassing of which, in the spoken chain, constitutes the evanescence of language.
But there are not only two tropes. (To say there are two is to name metaphor the winner because metaphor is the means by which unities are synthesised. Metaphor has hold of waking and the word already.) In Ivan Elagin's poem "Amnesty":

The man is still alive  
Who shot my father  
In Kiev in the summer of '38.

Probably, he's pensioned now,  
Lives quietly,  
And has given up his old job.

And if he has died,  
Probably that one is still alive  
Who just before the shooting  
With a stout wire  
Bound his arms  
Behind his back.

Probably, he too is pensioned off.

And if he is dead,  
Then probably  
The one who questioned him still lives.  
And that one no doubt  
Has an extra good pension.

Perhaps the guard  
Who took my father to be shot  
Is still alive.

If I should want now  
I could return to my native land.  
For I have been told  
That all these people  
Have actually pardoned me.

(in Todd and Heyward, 1994, pp. 674-5)

Irony is a specific result of interaction between the paradigmatic and syntagmatic poles. It is the point at which the ceaseless shifting forward of context is perceived as revealing the truth (the moment of reification of the conventional upon which signification depends) as a lie, and one which need not be, as Dante claimed for metaphor, "a beautiful lie". What was true for a last frame is no longer in this. Indeed, irony, which for Vico is "fashioned of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the face of truth" (1984, p. 131), has been claimed as the ultimate tropic frame available to our reckoning. In his essay on laughter Bergson writes:

A situation is invariably comic when it belongs simultaneously to two independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time. (1956, p. 123)

Irony, as what allows the play of two apparently independent interpretations of the same phenomena, must on this account bear a close relation to laughter. Irony shows a difference between truths which cannot yet co-exist. It shows the place where de-cathecting is required because reason cannot resolve getting beyond such a place. Irony is an antidote for the rigidity of habit implied in those metaphors we live by. The
laughter it dissolves into ensues from a collision of worlds which allows a world to go on.

Ironic's next-frame status does not at all privilege it with a view over the other tropes (such as metaphor claims) but rather establishes its position as metaphor's nemesis or as metaphor soured. It is the trope in which metonymy has its way with the word, where next-to-ness and the spoken chain (that progress wherein the play of tropes is made possible) is able to overwhelm the stasis and reification of the sign claiming, in all innocence, to be finished and fixed for all time. It is in these terms that we may explain the type of universality which irony enjoys. For Kierkegaard "no authentic human life" is possible without it (The Concept of Irony, 1966, p. 338). In the words of Anatole France "the world without irony would be like a forest without birds" (cited in Muecke, 1969, p. 235). Birds are an apposite image for irony because they reveal the appearance of ubiquity as dependent on an ability rapidly to displace itself. Deleuze writes of irony that it is:

itself a multiplicity – or rather the art of multiplicities: the art of grasping the Ideas and the problems they incarnate in things, and of grasping things as incarnations, as cases of solution for the problems of Ideas. (1994, p. 182)

For Linda Hutcheon, as for Deleuze, irony is a trope of multiplicity, involving "an oscillating yet simultaneous perception of plural and different meanings" (1994, p 66). The ironic moment is that necessarily subversive, necessarily repressed interval in which the Law and the murder enabling it are able to be uncovered. By irony, the paradox of a presence which lies over absence is revealed. Irony, is among other things an opening for laughter in the face of the Law. Bakhtin writes of the form of irony that it is "in general conditioned by a social conflict: It is the encounter in one voice of two incarnate value judgements and their interference with each other" (1994, p. 172). Freud deals with what he describes as a similar phenomenon in slips of the tongue, in his lectures on the psychology of errors in the General Introduction to Psychoanalysis:

Well, we seem to have solved the riddle of errors with comparatively little trouble! They are not accidents; they are serious mental acts; they have their meaning; they arise through the concurrence – perhaps better, the mutual interference of two different intentions. (1952, p. 460)

If irony is characteristic of the dialogic unfolding of subjectivities of speech, in which alterity reveals a mistakenness in the form that what is true for me is not true for you, then it is at the heart of the reversibilities which infest the Rabelaisian carnival over which Bakhtin enthralls. The carnival reveals the ironic spectacle of the life force at its own throat, of the body swallowing itself. And the a/logical corollary of this irony, ambivalence made trope, is laughter which in the case of Rabelais, for Bakhtin, comes as a symphony:

Thus, in the image of tripe life and death, birth, excrement and food are all drawn together and tied in one grotesque knot; this is the centre of bodily topography in which the upper and lower stratum penetrate each other. This grotesque image was a favourite expression of the ambivalence of the material bodily lower stratum, which destroys and generates, swallows and is swallowed. The "swing" of grotesque realism, the play of the upper with the lower sphere, is strikingly set into motion; the top and the bottom, heaven and earth, merge in that image. We shall further see the remarkable symphony of laughter derived by Rabelais from the ambivalent and varied meaning of the word tripe in the first chapters of Gargantua (the feast of the cattle slaughter, the palaver of the potulent, the birth of Gargantua). (1994, p. 215)
For Kristeva, in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, the significance of laughter in relation to practice is located at the identical moment of ambivalence which we may regard as irony's habitation:

There is one inevitable moment in the movement (where neither true nor false, their truth consists in the ability to participate in the process of contradiction) that recognizes the symbolic prohibition and makes it dialectical: *laughter*. Practice, as we have defined it, posits prohibitions, the ego, "meaning" etc., and makes them dialectical, and *laughter* is the operation that attests to this mechanism. (1984, p. 222)

Ironic is no more or less than the confounding of being with becoming – that proverbial pulling out of the rug which marks the action, not only of time, but of the play of tropes, upon the still figure of signification. (It can be argued that the contextual variability of discourse is such that irony is an inevitable consequence of the distance between addressee and addressee [Hutcheon, 1994, p. 57].) The credence such assumptions have been given explains in part the arguments which have been forwarded for another master student interested in the tropes: catastrophe. But such a contest is necessarily an illusion in the sense that the mastering of any one trope over others will be metaphor's victory and will necessarily amount to a defeat of, to use Foucault's formulation, whatever is multiple, whatever is different, whatever flows, whatever is mobile, whatever is nomadic (in Deleuze and Guattari, 1977, p. xiii).

Therefore we should say of irony, if we concede its transcendental character, not as Friedrich, that it is the most powerful or persuasive, but rather that it is the ultimate, the latest of tropes: the trope for the ultimate climate, for the last Europe, of which A.D. Hope has famously written:

The river of her immense stupidity...

Flooods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth.
In them at last the ultimate men arrive
Whose boast is not: "we live" but "we survive",
A type who will inhabit the dying earth.

(1977, p. 13)

Irony is the ghost trope, disguised in the figure of a jolly swagman, the opening of a resonance (of an ancient cathexis everywhere repressed). The (peculiarly if not exclusively) Australian trope has always been irony (best climate, worst whingers; oldest race, fastest genocide; worst intentions, best outcomes; tallest poppies, longest scythes) and it is here that Australia anticipates the world because irony is the trope for the ultimate age, that which is after the modern, that which can only be named ironically (that is, in the knowledge of a presence and self-consciousness which defeats itself). And, as B. Austin-Smith writes, irony has "replaced patriotism as the last refuge of scoundrels, for it means never having to say you meant it" (cited in Hutcheon, 1994, p. 176). The *eiron* is the underdog. J.H. Miller writes: "Irony is the mode of language which cannot be mastered. It cannot be used as an instrument of mastery. It always masters the one who tries to master it or to take power with it" (1982, p. 106).

But irony, bivalent as metaphor, entails judgement and also its hiding, and is therefore a mirror of the ideological, which depends on the same process (judging and hiding the judgement). In this way the edge which irony presents is always a boundary shifting in struggle between what Bakhtin calls evaluative accents. Laughter falls on one side or the other, is never merely evenhanded because the joke is never at no one's or at anyone's expense. Laughter always has the quality of an uncovering. Even when it masks fear or oppression it does so by releasing a little knowledge of these into the world. It does so, that is to say, as an inoculation. The difference between the
concealment of judgement which metaphor entails and that on which irony depends, is that in the latter case it comes with an exhortation to discover the judgement which is concealed and thereby to discover those others who are the objects of judgement. Irony, in other words, is a trope which establishes the fact of opposition. What it uncovers is a differend. It encourages me to see, to the extent that I see at all, who is for and who is against me. The ironiser's acts are, to this extent, relatively overt and conscious. They are likewise inauthentic because we can rely on no sincerity from them, rather we must assume that they are, in the spirit of acting, devised self-consciously to achieve an effect. The eloquence and authority of such an effect is judged by its survival from the context of writing to the context of reading. Relying on the erosion of verities irony cannot succeed in establishing its own 'truths' for long.

Irony is the trope which encompasses carnival ambivalence, links fate to chance and always has, however briefly, the last laugh. Bright and dark, always cutting away at whatever is solid under, irony is the only tropic escape from the tyranny by which metaphor continuously stalls the metonymic progression of the play of tropes. It is metaphor turned, the trope of undoing, of the self said backwards to dissolve. And what should the self dissolve in but laughter? Irony, shall we call it the under-trope, is the trope of laughter. Bergson writes:

All that is serious in life comes from our freedom... What, then, is requisite to transform all this into a comedy? Merely to fancy that our seeming freedom conceals the strings of a dancing-jack, and that we are, as the poet says,

... humble marionettes
The wires of which are pulled by Fate.

So there is not a real, a serious or even a dramatic scene that fancy cannot render comic by simply calling forth this image. Nor is there a game for which a wider field lies open. (1956, pp. 112-2)

The moment of laughter, however it may have been contrived by particular parties, remains the model of spontaneity, and so the transcendence which it carries must be an authentic one. It is, as Nietzsche says of the feelings more generally, something unable to be promised (Human, All too Human, 1994, p. 54). In laughter we become ourselves by getting beyond our selves. It is through laughter that the tropes, and especially this one with which it is most closely associated, make experience authentic. The play of tropes we may see as the exercise of freedom, our own or someone else's, both equally doomed to oblivion, through iteration, through forgetting or the overlap of these. Laughter neither is nor results directly from the processes of iteration or forgetting; it comes rather from a consciousness of these. But does our freedom not depend on the rest of laughter, a laughter which needs remorselessly to be directed to its own source? It is laughter thus which shows where volition has gone out of the world. In this schema, must irony not function, if not actually as the return of the repressed, at least as the conscience's reminder of it? In a classic study, The Compass of Irony, Douglas Muecke concludes:

We live in a world which imposes on us many contradictory pressures. Stability is a deep human need, but in seeking stability we run the risk of being imprisoned in the rigidity of a closed system, political, moral or intellectual. We need the reinvigoration that change brings but not a drifting from one novelty to another. We cannot wish never to feel or always to be swept by emotions. We wish to be objective but we cannot treat men as objects. We behave instinctively when we should be rational and rationally when instinct would serve us better. Those who close their eyes to the ambivalences of the human condition – the proponents and adherents of systems, the sentimental idealists, the hard-headed realists, the panacea-mongering technologists – will naturally find an enemy in the ironist and accuse him of flippancy, nihilism or sitting on the fence. (1969, p. 247)
Muecke claims that although some ironists may be guilty of such faults "the ironist's virtue is mental alertness and agility. His business is to make life unbearable for troglodytes, to keep open house for ideas, and to go on asking questions." (1969, p. 247)

What we learn from considering irony's position among the tropes is the inherent instability and absolute context dependency of tropic relations. It is the work of irony, which provides for the play of tropes generally an opening onto freedom. It is the ironist's duty to effect a kind of theft of meaning (cf. the perruque of de Certeau in Chapter 8 of this work) whereby sense is diverted to the purposes of a critique, to the dissent in which freedom is maintained in prospect.

*Richard Rorty in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* writes of the history of metaphor as history of the arts and sciences, as intellectual history (1989, pp. 16-17). He asserts that the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical is between familiar and unfamiliar sorts of noises and marks. In this way we can say that the tropes' progress is the key to haunting, canonicity and understanding how community is possible. The tropes are the means by which we make familiar what is otherwise and vice versa, they are to follow Nietzsche, the means by which we enlist and are enlisted in truth's mobile host. What makes poetry vital as a harbinger of art and of processes we think of as creative is that it articulates in words the ambivalence of the artwork. This ambivalence serves as the artwork's pseudo-truth, the truth to context which the survival of the work allows as communication between us and its origin.

The work of dividing up meaning, or the strategies by which it is made and apprehended, chosen and decided, is symptomatic of the discovery that as the subject is, so are its techniques: the subject of innumerable fissures, the classification and hierarchisation of which are only provisionally able to be agreed to. It is in such provisional agreements that our meta-business is carried on (if not over), that business by which we engage the field of tropes. The track we follow, which I have named the Möbius Track, for its unseen iterative propensity, leads through a landscape which is wholly tropic and wholly subjective, a landscape in which we are driven by the ambivalence of desire, ever onward to rejoin our selves we cannot see.

Our problem, as has been suggested, is a pre-Socratic one, as original as any. The question of transformations is the same as the question of origins and subject to the identical absence of limits. Probably the best offering of the classical world towards a prolegomenon of tropology is not in Aristotle or any subsequent manual of rhetoric, but rather in the *Parnenides*, where the young Socrates is privileged to hear (and to recount for us) the puzzles presented by Zeno and by Parmenides, which bear upon being and becoming, singularity and multiplicity, the ambivalent and the infinite. What the *Parnenides* above all deals with is the logic of impossible relations among metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. The one of Parmenides (in Socrates' recollection at least) participates in the impossibility of all tropic relations at once. Thus we may treat it as a first account of infinite semiosis (cf. the unlimited semiosis of Peirce or Eco). Specific problems discussed in this text include those of participation in the multitude, the co-existence of the many and the one (1952, p. 487), the infinite regression of ideas and the consequent difficulty in affirming these to be absolute (1952, p. 489). Parmenides presents the paradox that "being always involves one, and one being; so that one is always disappearing and becoming two" (1952, p. 496).

We are asked whether the one is "of necessity both at motion and rest?" (1952, p. 498), whether it is both "like and unlike itself and others" (1952, p. 499), how far "the one touches or does not touch itself and others?" The one, it is asserted, is both inside and outside of itself, is greater and less than and equal to itself (1952, p. 501).
The one is both older and younger than itself and others (1952, p. 502), was, is and will be becoming (1952, p. 504). At the heart of all this speculation lies the question of the nature of alterity and our access to an experience of it:

And they are each other than one another, as being plural and not singular; for if one is not they cannot be singular but every particle of them is infinite in number; and even if a person takes that which appears to be the smallest fraction, this, which seemed to be one, in a moment evanesces into many, as in a dream, and from being the smallest becomes very great, in comparison with the fractions into which it is split up? (1952, p. 510)

What is demonstrated above all, through the exhaustive reasoning of the Parmenides, is the inherent slipperiness of logical and rhetorical relations, the fact of their being in a state of continual transformation (it is asked whether anything changing exists); the fact, in short, of their becoming each other. We may see in this glissement among the tropic relations themselves, the curtailing of the rule of any one of them. What should still interest poetry’s word-workers in these speculations is that they touch on the structure of the impossible and thus point us in the direction of Kristeva’s ambivalent logic. The argument of the Parmenides culminates in the claims that “every single thing appears to be infinite” and “if one is not then nothing is” (1952, p. 511). Everything to here turns on the question of the nature of abstraction and the possibility of representation; the possibility, that is, that there is through words, some access to the truth which words establish. Such is the enquiry which still entitles the interdisciplinary space which poetry centres.

For any poetry, before the question of experiment or invention or the lack of these need arise, the obvious fact to begin from is the raw material of everyday speech and experience in which the poetic plays no apparent or necessary role. By everyday we might as well mean a speech which fails to interrogate itself as to its possibility, to this extent an unreflexive speech — and one in which poetry must seek the abstractions which provide it with a centre of gravity.

The boundary between the tropic and the iterative is, in the everyday as in poetry, what was for Plato’s Parmenides that curious nature we call “the moment lying between rest and motion” (1952, p. 505). It is a border collapsed to a point, abstraction the victim of gravity: the point of reversal, where, in Bakhtin’s terms, the centripetal is exchanged for centrifugal movement. Likewise it is a convergence of moment and place, both ineffable, evanescent; neither of which can maintain a name or a clear view. That moment, that place, that hic et nunc of practice, is one equally of haunting as of laughter, either way transgressive (as Kristeva’s key moment). It is the place of Lucretius’ clinamen, the swerve of the atoms, of Mallarmé’s dice throw. It opens onto the foreigner’s space and time: the moment in which one is situated as not knowing a way.

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At the heart of every truth, some trope stakes its claim. The tropic is the place where claims converge. If we say that its metabusiness is out of the order of nature because it demands the exercise of consciousness, it can be replied that consciousness, however recent Nietzsche regards it, essentially is in our nature. Tropology is only limited by the synchronic reality of a finitude of terms and processes, by the extent to which it is subject to its own metabusiness. In its diachronic aspect it (and signification in general) cannot be envisaged outside of abstract or ideal formulations. Tropology’s virtual lack of limits is matched with the seamlessness of context. We write to see the puzzle. This is, I will argue, in the nature of a writing cure: we write in order to be understood and we write with the words we are given. We exercise consciousness in order that we may know who we really are, even if in this process we are prevented from being ourselves.
The history of tropology since antiquity has seen a restoration of metaphor to the dominant position it held for Aristotle. We have witnessed the return of metaphor as a movement which always privileges one proportion, one operation — that of equivalence — over all others. Work of J.A. Richards, Empson and Jakobson (among many others) bears out the central role of tropic processes in the life of language, and its resonances in literature. Lakoff and Johnson, in demonstrating the metaphorical structure of everyday thought and culture, show that metaphors act to mask or divert attention from contradictions. That metaphorical exemplasm to which the Romantics referred is the making one of the divided self, of the body in fragments, of the self of which David Antin asks: "who speaks for me when i speak? do i have a/ quorum?" (in Hoover, 1994, p. 246).

Getting around the tyranny of equivalence in A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari write of a plane of consistency which is "the abolition of all metaphor" because "all that consists is Real" (1987, p. 69). For Deleuze and Guattari "each individual is an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities." They write of a "plane of immanence or univocality as opposed to analogy" (1987, p. 254). They urge us:

to eliminate all that is resemblance and analogy but also "to put everything into it": eliminate everything that exceeds the moment, but put in everything that it includes — and the moment is not the instantaneous, it is the haecceity into which one slips and that slips into other haecceities by transparency. To be present at the dawn of the world. (1987, p. 280)

The denial of volition constituted by metaphor is, fortunately, a perpetually self defeating denial, as Merleau-Ponty has pointed out:

Advent is a promise of events. The domination of the many by the one... like that domination which we have encountered in the use of the perceiving body, does not consummate succession in an eternity. On the contrary, it insists upon succession; it needs it at the same time that it establishes its signification. (1964, p. 70)

A poetry need not fall into the trap of accepting the rule of one trope. The limitlessness of tropology assumes an impossible absence of order, of boundaries, in which all participants and all processes come to be able to stand in all possible relationships with all others. Such an absence of limits entails the collaboration of imagination with the ordered world of limits and bounds. It is their (and our) forward unfolding. The character we may associate with this process is that of Lévi-Strauss' bricoleur. Bricolage, for Lévi-Strauss entails a continual reconstruction from earlier materials, where the bricoleur:

derives his poetry from the fact that he does not confine himself to accomplishment and execution: he "speaks" not only with things, but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities. (1972, p. 21)

In Socrates' dialogue with Gorgias, rhetoric is demeaned as the ignoble ghost or counterfeit part of politics (1952, p. 260), the unreal of the world in making. What poetries recognise (and find themselves banished for) is that it is out of the unreal, as mediated by the dis/embodiment of words, that humanity is able to compose its part of the real. It is not a question of such a circuit standing out of context, of words being somehow aside from the world. It is rather the case that this loop constitutes the becoming of our habitation to the extent that we are capable of any consciousness of or in this. A limitless tropology inscribes the manner and scope of poetry's indirection.
And we should emphasise that this is where we stand, this is the space in which we move. Or as Paul Friedrich formulates it: "Our immediate situation is the whole field of tropes" (1991, p. 26). Poetry is becoming a metabusiness because, being between words and the world, it must stand in the way of its own and all making. Its affinity is, to this extent, whatever rules may haunt it, outside of conformity to the ever-thus of the given as-is. Metabusiness, betweenness of words and world, names itself in the undecidable gap between making and understanding that world in which there is no choice but to become.
shed of words

wish ourselves dry
condemned to hard words I till no whim
follow fears

turn the tap
or tap the keys
what do I consent to?

building a pond
makes a big fish of me

dead of night toils in
how knee is bent
on the tiles
tuning down

floor sweeps me
how I'm wiped and washed
day gets on with

bright the eye
muses on what alters it
and alters what it muses on

o how I sparkle
how's my sheen?

day by desk
clatter of mind

all these macabre attempts at me
build a place to be lost
made flesh from thinking

*  
the life of the hands
and the culture of light
doomed to all outset

the past is a lesson not to put up with
from words decay in words entombed
marching forth to scare off battle

a pebble holds me in its palm
this skin round and water smooths clean
the old impossible
because

bruises of being
are in us for good

my perfect house
the wind is clear

once in a world
the clock has made solid

shrinks down with old timbers
dredged barnacle depths
telling
deep in the rain
places my voice was

once you've a wall
and the wind starts to worry

Here's to the old impediments!
in everywhere at once
a home

and all upon my humbling
weather flew
as it were worn
first palace rises
  stone to hold air
  head up
  under the chalk moon
    yearning
  winch turning here
  and here’s my licence

  fact over dumb fact
peel back again

  I want to celebrate abstraction
show how the story of us makes it
  where the lonely truths come home

I throw a raft to fix assumption
drowning both

*

the first room is weightless
  goes on where we conjure
fallen by clutches
    too hard out of moods

the good flog themselves wicked,
  the wicked assist

gone under for a premonition

one room is just sky
  and falling further

for infinitely longer than you’d think

  one full of feathers
  one of lost hates
  which having detached themselves
  seek freely

  for the will or the soul
  or the spirit, the self
    – your name, it’s up for grabs

one for flinching
  a hand always raised
fear to stand under

one is all excrement
preserved as if wrath piled
the old gods in there
smeared with ours and their own
fixed on the bottle, each moment grown lighter

not so much heaven
as one is for stars
the earth in another
too close, too catching

where we end is one room
containing the sea
which is thrashing
outreaches itself
into and is all erasure

a skinny old man
tells how to get here
shows us the key and the sink and the broom
under the mattress scores belief
easy on the ink

wash and we wash
and the weed is up over

flows from us
walls and the falling

the future won't budge
there's none of that here

heroes in mildew
stop still as trees
listen for us

each in the other's
patterns prey on

the dark of insect lives
light clamour

194
5. Identity/Alterity

Self-assertive man lives by staking his will. He lives essentially by risking his nature in the vibration of money and the currency of values. As this constant trader and middle-man, man is the "merchant". He weighs and measures constantly, yet he does not know the real weight of things. Nor does he ever know what in himself is truly weighty and preponderous.

Heidegger in "What are poets for?" (1971, p.135)

...speech repeats and goes beyond
Merleau-Ponty (1974, p. 43)

Two tendencies characterise the play of signification. These are the tropic and the iterative. Following Ricoeur's reworking of the Aristotelian schema we may connect the first of these with mythos, the second with mimesis. As characteristics of natural language we may also associate them with the biological universal Darwin established in the play of mutation and replication.

Of the two tendencies one is, as language is, limitless and mutable, however fixed and finite an inventory of sounds may appear to be. It is ambivalent, transgressive - a movement in which everything is bound to become, in which imagination and awareness engage actively in the practice of passing their limits, becoming impossible and mistaken. The carnival of tropes is of transgression because it entails a passage out of proportions. There is the anarchy of luck in it.

On the other hand there is money (or civilisation) - nearly universal system of order, which concerns itself exclusively with the possible, which reverses the direction of speech/signification so that the signifier becomes that which is desired. Marx, in "The Grundrisse" associates money with "the most developed conditions of society":

Money may exist, and did exist historically, before capital existed, before banks existed, etc... By no means does it wade its way through all economic relations. For example, in the Roman Empire, at its highest point of development, the foundation remained taxes and payments in kind. The money system actually completely developed there only in the army. And it never took over the whole of labour. (1972, p. 239)

In Capital Marx associates the origin of money with nomadic life:

Nomad races are the first to develop the money form, because all their worldly goods consist of moveable objects and are therefore directly alienable; and because their mode of life, by continually bringing them into contact with foreign communities, solicits the exchange of products. (1952, p. 40)
How is it though that these nomads are known, remembered? With whom do they make their exchanges? It is a civilised and literate mind which had, and which remembers, this commerce or its myth.

Civilisation is what grows up around the marketplace. Wherever the market succeeds, what it builds itself is civilisation. It is fanciful to think that culture somehow stands out of these processes. Culture, the material condition of humanity's making, exists, certainly before, but not aside from, the market (where there is one). Thus we note that the barbarians may, by dint of their iron or steel, conquer in all directions, but they are only civilised (and thus disappear as barbarians) to the extent that they succeed in participating in a market. Likewise the empire crumbles or is co-opted into someone else's empire where it cannot maintain such participation. It is unimportant what manner of market describes the parameters of a world. What is important to civilisation is that its coin (or more primitive institutions of exchange) be respected and accorded priority of value over other productions.

Currency and idiom circulate, conflate. Words are traded and by means of this trade their value and the value of everything named is established, diverted, recovered, dissolved. In Chapter 3 metaphor, as the condition in which other items are made equal, was named as the viral trope. Exempting itself from the absence of order a tropology perhaps fails to account for, metaphor covers its tracks to enter into a silent partnership with iteration. Metaphor provides the exchange in which terms are able to be repeated and in which signs are fashioned from equivalence. Under the homogenising rule of such an exchange all tropes, including metaphor, are liable to collapse into fresh equivalences.

Through the ubiquity of a system of equivalences (except among "primitives" of fantasy or in an irretrievable past) irreversible reversal is effected. Desire for the signifier is what enables the becoming ubiquitous of money. Currency is the result and perpetuation of a monomania which reduces all cultural variability to the choices offered in the marketplace. This is the inexorable direction of growth and development — against which it has to be admitted that there is no absolute choice — because to be outside of the system of values in which choices are made is to be without orientation towards the idea of our own consciousness. The colour of choice is what tells us that history has brought us here. To not choose history or to seek instead its plural is to play a game which the game of choice has every prospect of eventually co-opting.

Literatures, and particularly poetries, having been associated with the outside of society\textsuperscript{85}, have likewise cherished a position aside of the market. Bourdieu has described the literary field as:

\begin{quote}
the economic world reversed; that is the fundamental law of this specific universe, that of disinterestedness, which establishes a negative correlation between temporal (notably financial) success and properly artistic value, is the inverse of the law of economic exchange. The artistic field is a universe of belief. Cultural production distinguishes itself from the production of the most common objects in that it must produce not only the object in its materiality, but also the value of this object, that is, the recognition of artistic legitimacy. This is inseparable from the production of the artist or writer as artist or writer, in other words, as a creator of value. (1993, p. 164)
\end{quote}

Bourdieu goes on to note that, as "the dominated among the dominant" writers and artists participate in fields which lack only one characteristic of the dominant class, that being money." The relationship between literature and the market, their canonic implication in

\textsuperscript{85} Cf. Simon During's contention that literature is nationalism's other (in Bhabha, 1990, pp. 138-153 passim).
each other, and the implications of these for the community of poetry writing will be taken up in Chapter 7.

*

If we associate the tropic with the surplus of meaning we call overdetermination, then the iterative is opposed – not as the conflation or convergence of meaning, the gathering of diverse semes to the one place, but rather as a sense of the one sign (the copula), beaten infinitely thin (beaten senseless) until it is found everywhere at once (reminiscent of Mallarmé’s worn coin passed silently from hand to hand). Thus it is infinitely devalued. The original terms it mediated are irretrievable and indeterminate. Thus it partakes in a flow in which nothing spoken enjoys the privilege of remaining the same. In "The Algorithm and the Mystery of Language" Merleau-Ponty announces:

Signification bursts out above the signs and yet it is their only vibration, the way a cry carries outside and makes present to everyone the very breathing and pain of the man crying out... this experience of an event which suddenly becomes hollow, losing its opacity, revealing a transparency, and becoming forever a meaning is a constant in culture and speech. (1973, p. 121)

For Merleau-Ponty it is in speech that the ambivalent character of signification resides and is engendered, and the originality of the order of knowledge vis-a-vis the perceptual order "is only possible if we describe the operation of speech as a repetition, a reconquest of the world-thesis". Speech in this sense represents an engagement beyond that of the iteration of perception, which "opens us to a world already constituted and can only reconstitute it" (1974, p. 124). Speech then is the manner of making the world which refers beyond the inference of that world with which perception makes do. Yet it refers to a world which is outside of that saying which the world inhabits in making possible. Thus it makes possible a world, as practice, with only the aid of the already-said. It is in this sense that speech repeats and goes beyond.

Freud in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" discusses, inter alia, the relationship between repetition and instinct, positing a primeval creature which, given the opportunity, would have indefinitely repeated the same course of existence. The gloomy conclusion drawn from this example is that because "everything living dies from causes within itself" we are able to say that "the goal of all life is death" (1952, p. 652). This is just the kind of contradiction that gives rise to religion, and religion as poetry has means of dealing with it. In Stevie Smith's poem "My Heart Goes Out":

My heart goes out to my Creator in love
Who gave me Death, as end and remedy.
All living creatures come to quiet Death
For him to eat up their activity
And give them nothing, which is what they want although
When they are living they do not think so.

(1985, p. 368)

In *The Anxiety of Influence* Bloom suggests that:

"every poet begins (however "unconsciously") by rebelling more strongly against the consciousness of death's necessity than all other men and women do... "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", in Freud's famous phrase, is a dark area in any psychic context, but peculiarly dark in the realms of poetry, which must give pleasure. (1973, p. 11)

Bloom's chapter on Kenosis in *The Anxiety of Influence* – a work which aims "to de-idealise our accepted accounts of how one poet helps to form another" (1973, p. 5)
... is devoted to issues of repetition and discontinuity, dwelling on these interests in the works of Freud, Lacan, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger. Bloom begins with Freud's "unheimlich", or 'unhomely' as the 'uncanny'' (1973, p. 77). In fact it is by means of the reversibility of context and signification, by means of their containing each other, that neither of these is able merely to repeat itself as it is. The "Fort-Da" game of which Freud writes in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" seems to the observer to demonstrate the child's tireless propensity to be re-animated by the same phenomenon. For Freud it demonstrates "a remarkable cultural achievement – the foregoing of the satisfaction of an instinct" (1952, p. 642). It is by the means of such a foregoing that one comes to live out the love of return as entailing departure. The pattern of culture which Freud here establishes, of pains lived in a game as pleasure, suggests all manners of eternal return: of the relation of culture to society, of dreaming to waking life.

Ironically, the unheimlich of Freud which interests Bloom, marks an effort toward an instinctual return to an earlier home. Such is the love of haunting embraced by avowed devotees of the canon. "Critics," Bloom confides "in their secret hearts, love continuities, but he who lives with continuity alone cannot be a poet. The God of poets is not Apollo, who lives in the rhythm of recurrence" (1973, p. 78). First of Bloom's "revisionary ratios", "mispriosis" is claimed as "individually a sin against continuity" (1973, p. 78). In fact Bloom claims that "most of what we call poetry – since the Enlightenment anyway – is this questing for fire, that is for, discontinuity." Bloom expresses his version of the link between psychoanalysis and criticism in the following terms: "I am predicating that these revisionary ratios have the same function in intra-poetic relations that defense mechanisms have in our psychic life" (1973, p. 88). Thus is justified Bloom's central theses: that "every poem is a misinterpretation of a parent poem" (1973, p. 94) and that poetry is "a disciplined perverseness" (1973, p. 95). We may view criticism then largely as the exercise of the repetition compulsion, work which justifies itself as the discovery of what has been repeated, in order to determine what is new. The canon then is that sanctification of which Deleuze writes when he asks "what good is moral law if it does not sanctify reiteration?" (1994, p. 4).

* The figure of return which interests Deleuze is the Möbius strip, or its corollary in the sewn-together wrong-way-round handkerchiefs of Fortunatus in Lewis Carroll's "Sylvie and Bruno" (the outside of which contains the inside and vice versa):

It is, however, still by skirting the surface or the border, that one passes to the other side, by virtue of the strip. The continuity between reverse and right side replaces all the levels of depth; and the surface effects in one and the same Event,

86 Martin Joos, in "The Five Clocks" touches on the relationship between repetition and literary textuality:

If a man who reads Hamlet a hundred times is a more faithful devotee of literature than one who reads Hamlet ten times, then the narratives of baseball games claim one of the largest bodies of rereaders intensely devoted to literature; for they insist that the texts must read so nearly alike that one who has let slip a few random facts will glance at the date to make sure it isn't yesterday's paper. It is clear that one profits thrillingly from the thousandth departure from the same text... Baseball is a highly literary game. Its rereader, knowing that the players need not be superlative athletes as in tennis or soccer, feels no bar to identifying with them – a necessity of literature.

(1967, p. 57)
which would hold for all events, bring to language becoming and its paradoxes. (1993, p. 48)

This return in the form of a skin which confounds depth and which at once envelops the whole world is immediately evocative both of the betweeness which relates self and other (thus necessarily of the role of language in alterity), and of becoming, as haecceity, a thwarted hereness and nowness, the absence of any moment of arrival.

Iterate quantities are those which have been fashioned from equivalences. They are, that is, samenesses made in the process of signification: the result of the action of the iterative tendency of this process. There are, that is, in this conception, no samenesses (or differences) prior to or other than through signification. The tropic and the iterative are not things extra- or pre-linguistic but rather the characteristics and results of the ceaseless unfolding of our selves we know as speech.

As discursive positions we may associate the tropic with questioning, engagement, with a horizontal spread of vistas unfolding faster than they are able to be mapped, and with an ambivalence which worries any cartographic intention; the iterative on the other hand may be associated with the acceptance of answers and bivalent reasoning, of the trap between yes and no, the verticality of the office building (which allows no error, yet into which error creeps) containing the labours of counting and of copying the map already made.

But these are not merely discursive positions which are able to stand apart from each other, proclaiming themselves in permanent autonomy. The tropic and the iterative never cease and never succeed in the process of subsuming each other; equally they never cease for their efforts to depend on each other. Each is the other's inhabitant. Each is, as in the case of Fortunatus' purse, in the impossible position of being inside and outside of what it contains and what contains it.

Money in Marx and Elsewhere

No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money. Dr Johnson (cited in Bloom, 1994, p. 24)

In "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", Marx sings of the ghosts that go into our making:

men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and borrowed language. (1978, p. 595)

For Marx the immediate analogy which presents for this process is that of language, the language of the learner who moves freely in a new idiom only to the extent that he (if
momentarily) forgets his mother tongue; whose freedom, to this extent, depends on his becoming foreign:

In like manner the beginner who has learnt a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated the spirit of the new language and can produce freely in it only when he moves in it without remembering the old and forgets it in his ancestral tongue. (1978, p. 595)

The danger of the freedom of that process I have described as limitless tropology, is that its openness is necessarily a prey to what it allows. Open logics are at risk of falling under the sway of closure, no less if that form of closure is one which erases itself in the act of declaring all things equal to its acts. In his discussion of commodity fetishism in *Capital*, Marx declares:

Money is a crystal formed of necessity in the course of the exchanges, whereby different products of labour are practically equated to one another and thus by practice converted into commodities. (1952, p. 39)

A commodity is "A born leveller and cynic... always ready to exchange not only soul, but body, with any and every other commodity " (1952, p. 38). The equalisation of all forms of labour is enabled by the abstraction of these from their inequalities, and through exchange labour's products acquire, as values, one uniform social status which is independent of their utility (1952, p. 32).

Commodities participate in a social action which establishes as value a system of universal equivalence. Thus the link between alienation and the commodification of labour demonstrates that it is precisely through participation in a universal system of exchange that bodies are bound (just as are catexes in the libidinal economy) to become foreign to themselves. In Marx the inhuman power created by, but separating, individuals is ultimately reflexive: a self-alienation. What the psychoanalytic project casts doubt over is whether the strangeness to the self which might be heightened under a particular mode of production or social order is not the inevitable consequence of the (universal) separation from an originary community in flesh (of the mother). Phenomenology likewise leads us to doubt that the between of languages can be more or less than the between of selves. But in the processes of alienation, of becoming foreign, the language of participants and the economy in which they participate are not separate realities able to be observed by different methods, each independent of the other. They are, rather, each implicated in and obscuring the social reality in which the other is forced to live:

Value, therefore does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language. (1952, p. 32)

Nothing haunts Marx more desperately than the reversal of human dignity which is effected in the formulae of those bourgeois hieroglyphics which enable the commodification of labour. The function of the bourgeois hieroglyphics is to hypostasise the mode of production we know as capitalism, at once if not to erase then to render invisible the signs by which this effect was achieved; to write itself out of the picture in order to make itself a picture of nature.

When the bodily form of a commodity is crystallised into the money form, "the intermediate steps of the process vanish in the result and leave no trace behind".
What appears to happen is not that gold becomes money, in consequence of all other commodities expressing their values in it, but, on the contrary, that all other commodities universally express their values in gold, because it is money. (1952, p. 42)

The riddle and the magic which Marx perceives in money are forms of the riddle and the magic which we have seen as characteristic of metaphor, the trope in which all proportions and relations tend to one, and in which the signs of this process of reduction are erased as a matter of course, leaving what remains as the "natural" fact of equivalence. Rendering fundamental such facts, Merleau-Ponty in Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language argues a similarity between the abstract structural significance of money and the phoneme: "The phoneme is neither a physical reality, nor a psychological reality, but a value with an abstract and fictive importance comparable to that of money" (1979, p. 30). In the case of money, for Marx the naturalness of this fact is in the category of "arbitrary fictions sanctioned by the so-called universal consent of mankind" (1952, p. 41). Lyotard writes: "The means capital employs to diminish the différend is what Marx calls Gleichgültigkeit, or the indifference of money. This 'equivalent value' conceals surplus value in the same way that equality hides différends" (1989, p 356)

*

Peirce has formulated the meaning of representation in the following terms:

The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. In fact, it is nothing but the representation itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing never can be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphonous. So there is an infinite regression here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series. (in Silverman, 1983, p. 15)

The limitlessness of tropology is that which Peirce and Eco have attributed to semiosis: it is a function of the process, and as well the accomplished fact, of signification. The field of tropes, and its disagreement of logics, is the ambivalent core at the heart of meaning. The community of tropes leads us in the direction of a network where glissement entails that all signs realise in themselves a potential in and of all others87 - a perfectly reflexive signification. In this imagined maze all hope of denotation is lost in the undecidable flux of subjectivities. Power works through this flux, gathering, discarding, concealing its ends. In "Rites of Participation", Robert Duncan hopes from such a flux for a community of others, as a totality that would undo the exclusions characteristic of a Platonic polity:

our ideal of vital being, rises not in our identification in a hierarchy of higher forms but in our identification with the universe. To compose such a symposium of the whole, such a totality, all the old orders must be included. The female, the proletariat, the foreign; the animal and vegetative; the unconscious and the unknown; the criminal and failure - all that has been outcast and vagabond must return to be admitted in the creation of what we consider we are. (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 740)

It is easy to take this exhortation ironically. We make in our own tongue and in our own image the words which show our borders. The outside was always included, was always necessary to the definition of what we are. What would threaten that definition is an

87 An arrangement reminiscent of the one Thomas Aquinas attributed to the soul as a being "whose nature it is to meet with all other beings" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 12).
inclusion which meant that we conceived of ourselves by means of no others. What kind of civilisation could imagine itself as having no before, no outside? Rome? China through the ages? America today? Even the UN maintains its solidarities by isolating pariah states. Would not such an anti-civilisation as Duncan imagines, likewise Zeno’s lost Republic (see chapter 1), frame itself as a return to nature, something which Freud informs us in "The Future of an Illusion" would be self-defeating?

But how ungrateful, how short-sighted after all, to strive for the abolition of civilisation! What would then remain would be a state of nature, and that would be far harder to bear. It is true that nature would not demand any restrictions of instinct from us, she would let us do as we liked; but she has her own particularly effective method of restricting us. She destroys us — coldly, cruelly, relentlessly, as it seems to us, and possibly through the very things that occasioned our satisfaction. It was precisely because of the dangers with which nature threatens us that we came together and created civilization, which is also, among other things, intended to make our communal life possible. For the principle task of civilization, its actual raison d’être, is to defend us against nature. (1991, p. 194)

Barbarism is never a return to a state of nature but rather an acquiescence or impotence to act in the face of a characterisation on the part of others, one which depends on their access to an image of others through a distorting glass. Barbarism is a failure to have oneself constituted as other than other.

*

What metaphor shows us, where we see it, is the buried copula of representation (place where a differend was) which lies, in Sausurtean terms, in the relationship between signer and signified. In the action of metaphor the copula becomes a surface pretending to be a mirror: everything which falls into it we feel to be the same. Language, for Language poet Bob Perelman, "is a diorama, with the mortal speaker/licking the divine glass to taste/the quasi-divine intervention of answerable syntax" (in Hoover, 1994, p. 500). But it is a diorama of ourselves, and our privilege of the view of it neither absolves whatever crimes have enabled that view nor renders that view clear of a position. These implicate, these interanimate each other. Later in this poem "Things" Perelman asks:

And who is this "they"
who have terrorized all sentient let's not say "beings"
with the plurality of their buildings
the notions in their texts set up
to test you and me (proud little ones & twos)?

Who are they who so greely
evade address, preferring instead
to throng the stadiums and airwaves
and glacial showrooms with their incessant
economic comeon/putdowns of the you/I person/psychopath state-
squashed figurines
with our looks that could kill and in fact
do kill but never them

Likewise word and thing (to hark back to Coleridge) never cease in the work of enfolding and becoming each other, so that the death of metaphor must always entail the birth of new signification. Gary Snyder exhorts us in "Riprap":

Lay down these words
Before your mind like rocks.
placed solid, by hands
In choice of place, set
Before the body of the mind
in space and time:
Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall
rip rap of things:
Cobble of milky way,
straying planets,
These poems, people,
lost ponies with
Dragging saddles –
and rocky surefoot trails.
The worlds like an endless
four-dimensional
Game of Go.
ants and pebbles
In the thin loam, each rock a word
a creek-washed stone
Granite: ingrained
with torment of fire and weight
Crystal and sediment linked hot
all change, in thoughts,
As well as things.

(in Allen, 1960, p. 308)

Jakobson tells us that "similarity in language connects the symbols of a
metallanguage with the symbols of the language referred to" and that "similarity [the
metaphoric pole] connects a metaphorical term with the term for which it is substituted",
concluding that this dualism "appears to be of primal significance and consequence for all
verbal behaviour and for human behaviour in general" (1971, p. 94). What metaphor
cannot help but do with the similarity between itself and signification, this abuse in
Aristotelian terms, is to universalise. If money presents us now with the nth degree of
the universalising process then this can only be possible because a logic of equivalence
itself lies hidden at the core of what is able to be said. Charles North writes "Money
is/\ The only metaphor" (in Hoover, 1994, p. 398). In her essay "Scattered Speculations
on the Question of Value", Spivak writes that "money is a vanishing moment facilitating
the exchange of two commodities" (1988, p. 159).

Metaphor begins with difference but comes to identity. The freedom which the
play of tropes opens onto is of a chaos tied to the underlying order of signification (most
eloquently expressed in the rule of one trope). Terence Turner writes " Tropic meaning is
...essentially dialectical (the essential principle of all dialectic being the mutual
relativization and indetermination of parts and wholes)" (in Fernandez, 1991,
p. 150). That freedom in which speech folds forward dialectically, whether it rejoins
itself or where it has not gone, remains within the sphere of the tropic. In their
paper "Tropical Dominions", Durham and Fernandez describe the evolutionary
epistemology of the play of tropes, demonstrating not only the interdependence of
tropes, but their instability and tendency to turn into each other (in Fernandez, 1991,
p 208). Metonymy they note is the trope "most suitable for either asserting or challenging
established hierarchies and conventions – for asserting and challenging worldviews"

The relationship between metaphor and metonymy is, as that between the tropic
and the iterative, one centred on difference. The tropic makes difference, the iterative is
made from difference. Metonymy asserts difference (in proximity), metaphor abolishes
distances in order to fashion equivalences. In his paper "Constitutive Graphonomy",
Bill Ashcroft writes of the gulf of silence or metonymic gap "installed by strategies of
language variance which signify its difference." For Ashcroft it is the immense distance between reader and author in the text crossing cultures "which undermines the privilege of both subject and object and opens meaning to a relational dialectic which 'emancipates' it." Ashcroft however sees this emancipation as limited by the absence he describes as metonymic gap. This absence installs cultural difference rather than identity "because identity itself is the function of a network of differences rather than an essence." Meaning is initiated in "a horizon of relationships circumscribed by that silence which ultimately resists complete interpretation." In these circumstances it is silence and the metonymic assertion of difference "which resists the absorption of post-colonial literature into a universalist paradigm" (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p 299). In Aimé Césaire's (1947) Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natale, those outside the circle of culture which Europe inscribes in naming its others, are identified as:

Nous vomissons de négrier
Nous vénérions des Calabars
quoi? Se boucher les oreilles?
Nous, soufflés à crever le roulis, de risées, de brume humée!
Pardon tourbillon partenaires!88

(1956, p. 99)

Jimi Rand's (80's) West Indian British poem "A Black Man's Song" depicts another kind of failure for panopticism:

If you look
in the mirror,
what will you see?
You may see black,
you may see white;
but you won't see me,
no siree not me.

(in Berry, 1984, p. 115)

If it is metonymy which resists co-option into an alien universe (and which also drives the critique of the universe one is in), we may yet see community as enabled by the intimacy and complicity (Cohen, 1979, passim) implied in the production and reception of metaphor: "One person's making of a metaphor, readily grasped by another, can become an instrument of consensus and thus community between them" (in Fernandez, 1991, p. 196).

In the terms we have noted in Chapter 3 above, it is metaphor which in Bernstein's model constitutes the code restriction which privileges members of a speech community. As makers of meaning and as readers of it, we inhabit a community of signs which depends for its life on the capacity of these to transform and iterate each other. Words and context are always in a new place, finding new neighbours, made something else, always otherwise contained, elsewhere opposed, newly implicated. The ground of judgement shifts under them and they are a part of that shifting.

88 We the vomit of slavers
we the venery of the Calabars
what? that we should stuff our ears?
We, made dead drunk with the ship's rolling,
with jeers, with the sea-fog inhaled!
Forgive us, whirlpool our accomplice.
Poetry's role, as indirection of consciousness, is neither to lead nor to follow these processes, but to demonstrate the making of differences which these entail. Its (impossible) work, that which separates it from any discourse which stands over or makes sense of it, is to make itself innocent of all intentions and judgements. The paradox of poetry's role is that it is to become, as language does not cease to begin to be, invisible to (and secret from) its lack of purposes. This is the manner in which, through the exercise of consciousness, poetry works to recover the authenticity of speech.

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In his essay on "The Method of Leonardo" (and in his later annotations) Valéry discusses in the most general terms the heuristic utility of aesthetics. In the original text he notes:

Most people see with their intellects much more than with their eyes. Instead of coloured spaces, they become aware of concepts. Something whitish, cubical, erect, its planes broken by the sparkle of glass, is immediately a house for them — the House! — a complex idea, a combination of abstract qualities.

In the margin beside this Valéry writes that artists are useful because:

they preserve the subtlety and instability of sensory impressions. A modern artist has to exhaust two thirds of his time trying to see what is visible — and above all, trying not to see what is invisible. Philosophers often pay a high price for striving to do the opposite. (1956, p. 49)

On the next page of this text two marginal notes stand out: "A work of art should always teach us that we had not seen what we see" and "The deeper education consists in unlearning one's first education" (1956, p. 50). For Valéry the processes of art are far from excluding the iterative tendency of signification:

it is the perception of repetition that makes a work of art intelligible. Until one has grasped, not the content, but the principle of (and the balance between) variety and diversity various works may appear boring or ugly or confusing.

For Valéry "the characteristic repetitions of a mind" are in those words which "ring within us among all others, like overtones of our deepest nature" (cited in Block and Salinger, 1960, p. 39). This is the nature of the interpellation which poetry is able to entail: It is able to call you with your own words (cf. the voice of no one), to call you to yourself (a transcendence made possible by the immanence of others in my speech): "Discourse is thus the experience of something absolutely foreign, a pure 'knowledge' or 'experience', a traumatism of astonishment" (Levinas, 1969, p. 73). Ekelöf writes:

I speak to you
I speak of you
From deep within myself
I know that you do not answer
When so many are crying out to you!
All I ask is permission
To stand here waiting
And that you will give me a sign
From within myself of yourself!

(1971, p. 22)

Is this prayer? Is prayer as inescapable as this, as the subjective facts of language? Is poetry's "divinity" such as to short-circuit resort to the Deity? Poetry, as noted, is set aside from other aesthetic expressions by having to share its material and substance with
the everyday materials and substances of speech. What sets poetry aside from everyday speech on the one hand and from a theory of it on the other, is that it need not claim in the course of its reflexivity to have transcended the conditions of its possibility. It may thus yet remain authentic to them.

Language and Civilisation

What are we waiting for, assembled in the public square?
Cavafy (Expecting the Barbarians, 1948, p. 18)

Language as system is dialogic, multi-accentual, reversible, a limitless form of semiosis, unable to be stopped by its own methods. In his poem, "Cliff Notes" Perelman draws out some of its disaffinities with money, sketching in the process what could be described as a history of Western civilised mind and its investments:

Because the languages are enclosed and heated
each one private a separate way
of undressing in front of the word window
faces squashing up against it
city trees and personal rituals of sanitation
washing the body free of any monetary transaction

The parts of the machine take off their words and die away
in a description read to the senses
by the leftovers on TV that no one would think of eating
even in the very act of swallowing.

It's these "very acts" that we must
Pay attention to the flatness of the screen now!
For it's this very flatness
that the frailly projected containment of the humanized body
is designed to be pinned to
by, naturally, forces outside our control.

It can't be the knobs' fault because this is back before knobs.
Rock ledges, laurel fumes, sacred fainting spells
later on in the very pictures written, this is back before the alphabet
the pictures of the rocks in the savant's eye
he's chained to those pictures by the sententious wriggle
of the buttocks two classes down, whose owner
can hardly speak, can't multiply, and stands there waiting for Plato
to have Socrates tell him it's only rhetoric.

But, as we know from Aristotle, Plato doesn't know any plots
he can only give orders, dipping himself diffidently into the
material signifier at the same time as the ripples
he thinks he's thinking into their roundness come
back to haunt him in the form of crude jokes
about his square calves at unpretentious dinners.
In fact, he looks a little like that table he's always
using as an example.
Next come the Romans, and with them we first see the sky
artificial creation of scarcity of meaning
spread out over the proletariat as a visible economic ether.
You can look, but it costs.

We can still see traces
of the tracts where they lived
and can still understand their language
which consisted entirely of dirty jokes about money.
It's easy to clear away the froth of biology
with a few commands
to reveal the naked postcard of ageless windwashed marble
posing for recorded history.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 499)

Money as system is unidirectional, monologic, irreversible ("you bought it in good
faith") and able (along with everything else) to be brought to an end at its own hands and
by its inexorable method, such as Ginsberg has spelled out in the second section of
"Howl":

What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls and ate up their
brains and imagination?...
Moloch whose building are judgement!... Moloch the vast stone of war!...
Moloch whose blood is running money!... Moloch whose fate is a cloud of
sexless hydrogen! (in Allen, 1960, p. 189)

The tendency of money is to find its equivalence everywhere. Money is
interested in everything it cannot touch. It is in this sense that Simmel, in The
Philosophy of Money regarded it as a lowest common denominator (1978, passim).
Money provides a common measure for all things and thus usurps the position (or
simplifies it) which Protagoras had allotted to man. A part of Romanticism, and
subsequently of the myth of art for art’s sake, is in the reversal of this interest in touching
what is hidden, the hope of nature as a haven from the machinery of money. In
identifying the metaphoric principle as overriding others in organising language and its
aesthetic manifestations, Romanticism, by means of its retreat from those material
conditions in which its (economic) possibility is inscribed, lays the trap of its own
marginalisation, paves the way for the accelerated dominance of metaphor and money (cf.
Ong, 1988, pp. 158, 161 on the unconscious alliance of the Romantic Movement with
technology). It succeeds in asserting universal values over those of industrial civilisation
but when Romanticism is dead and buried it is industrial civilisation which is becoming
universal. And as we see the value of money survives, in fact is concentrated, in the
post-industrial world.

The position which Simmel allows money, as a principle and at once medium of
equivalence does not furnish money with the neutrality these positions might imply.
Money remains in many respects and for many of its devotees, an end in itself, and thus a
reductive essentialism. For Simmel money’s philosophical significance is as practical
image and embodiment of the formula of all being, in accord with which meanings are
determined through the mutual relations of things. Despite (or because of) this, Simmel
wishes to associate money with the freedom of an infinity of contents. Money, in
contrast with the situation implied by barter, allows the same value to obtain in relation to
a multiplicity of things. What for Simmel entails the freedom of an infinity, in the
Marxian frame implies an inescapable presence, that of the fetishisation of commodities
which culminates in that crystal formed of necessity, in what we have discussed as the
tyrranny of equivalence. For Marx:
It is not money that renders commodities commensurable. Just the contrary. It is because all commodities, as values, are realized human labour, and therefore incommensurable, that their values can be measured by one and the same special commodity, and the latter be converted into the common measure of their values, i.e., into money. (1952, p. 42)

It is in this process that "the endless series of equations has now become the form peculiar to the relative value of the money commodity" (1952, p. 42). If we make explicit a link with the metaphoric process, then we observe that this, in every way co-optive, mechanism (it hopes for instance to co-opt the syntagmatic and render it a chain of equivalences) for proclaiming the same (and at once concealing sameness, that is, the intention of making same), only satisfies the claims of infinitude on the basis of being able to assert that all things are as all others; that is, in coming to the immediate limits of equivalence, and in denying the metonymic progression on which, in speech, the forward movement of signs depends.

For Simmel, whose first premise is that reality and value are "mutually independent categories through which our conceptions become images of the world", money is at once "the autonomous manifestation of the exchange relation which transforms desired objects into economic objects" and "a reification of the general form of existence according to which things derive their significance from their relationship to each other." It is further "the most extreme example of a means becoming an end" (1978, pp. vi-viii).

That money which is an "embodiment of the formula of all being" may be read in this light as a perpetual slippage among the parts of the sign and refusal to succumb to the metonymic action in which speech and the unconscious both make a way forward out of the judgement which the stillness of words imposes. Refusing to be located, it is at once or in irrevocably rapid succession, the signified, the signifier and the bar over which these implicate each other. Money is not a floating signifier. No one chooses its equivalence because it insists on an equivalence which could suddenly at any moment assert itself anywhere.

Money is a floating within the sign. It is the application of the viral action of metaphor to the process of signification itself. And to the extent that this process makes itself identical as value with, as all else, that of the discursive unfolding forward of the spoken chain (or its equivalents), it even entails the sort of projection which Jakobson had in mind in formulating the poetic function. (We can always imagine what else our money is worth.) Money is the brake of the same applied to all forward unfolding. For the civilised today it is that quantity without which nothing happens.

It is in its contradictory aspect, as reductionist stasis, as movement among infinities, that money embodies for us the crisis in postmodern doxa on the topic of the world's prospective direction. Money, to the extent that we are able to extract from it the "pure form" which Simmel attributed to it, endangers everything with the prospect of a collapse into the one moment of judgement and the one system of measurement. Those (recalcitrant) things which are unable to be rendered in terms of an equivalence with money diminish in significance, those things which find monetary equivalence, proliferate — but their proliferation while essentially iterative remains susceptible to tropic pressures — i.e. capable of transformation. Money (as final link in the chain by which the commodity comes to be fetishised) is what reduces all selves to an alien currency. It is the mill grinding alterity from us in the name of growth.

In the chapter of The Differend titled "The Sign of History", Lyotard asks, "Marxism has not come to an end, but how does it continue?" He writes of the class against which wrong is generally directed, that:
The wrong is expressed through the silence of feeling, through suffering. The wrong results from the fact that all phrase universes and all their linkages are or can be subordinated to the sole finality of capital... and judged accordingly. Because this finality seizes upon or can seize upon all phrases, it makes a claim to universality. The wrong done to phrases by capital would then be a universal one. Even if the wrong is not universal... the silent feeling that signals a differend remains to be listened to. Responsibility to thought requires it. This is the way in which Marxism has not come to an end, as the feeling of the differend. (1988, p. 171)

That which cannot be spoken, a differend, likewise is deprived of currency, and money as such is a manner of stillness which words always touch and yet never dispel. Ersatz of all affects, money must keep aside of the heart, must build the roof over, a fence for all neighbouring.

The trick of advertising – those words and images in the service of money – is to harness ambivalent logic in the cause of bi-valency (in the cause, that is, of decision in favour of a product). Advertising locates itself in what Robert McGahey argues as the betweenness of the Orphic moment (1994, passim) – a position between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Such a position is transgressive because it is across the border from either of its governing logics. Sándor Weöres writes of this ambivalent moment in "Orpheus Killed":

I lie in a cold shaded courtyard, I am dead.
I am sobbing over my body, so many women, men.
Grief rolls from the drum and I start dancing. Who killed me, why?
    I drift round the market, in palaces,
in taverns, among the flute-players, till in drink
I can say to the drunk: Look at me, I am
your hearts: engaged to death for the sake
of beggars and the blind.

Stone I am and metal I am
on a slave's cross. The corpse is staring wide-eyed,
grief rolls from the drum and I dance, I am everything
and I am nothing: oh, look at me. I am everyone
and I am no one: stone and metal, many shapes,
on a slave's cross. Why did the priests kill me?
Did I slight their temple?
    Dismembered I lie in the wasteland,
What urn is there for my white dust? Why
did the women tear me? Do they want my dead love?

Wolves of the famished earth prowl all round me,
decay rains rolling down and I start dancing.
Cain I am and saint I am: kneel at my feet.
Leper I am and clean I am: touch me. Body
moves, weak joints crack, cold tears trickle, he
sweats, sweats. Mindless I am and wise I am,
ask no questions, understand in silence. Dead I am
and alive I am, a dumb face. A wax-face
sacrifice turns skyward, ringed by staring horror, grief
rolls from the drum and I dance.

No asking back
the body stretched on the cross. I lie harvested in the wasteland,
no asking back the grain laid up in barns.
Death's drum rolls, I whirl in the dance forever,
the song flooding the valley refreshed by my blood,
my secret endless life entangled in the groves of death.

(1970, pp. 44-5)

If the orphic moment is for Weöres a "secret life entangled in the groves of death" then perhaps money performs the opposite function: that of a secret death entangled in the groves of life.

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For Lacan the repression which takes the form of metaphor freezes the processes of language (the diachronic) in a moment’s reality, in the forgetting this repression entails. Metaphor in these terms may be seen as symptom of the process of becoming arbitrary of the sign. Such an insight is implied in the observation that metaphor is always the path to dead metaphor. Metaphor is the habitation of the virus, equivalence, which makes arbitrary (de-motivates), which turns on its own flesh, to make iterate of tropic quantities.

In A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari, enquire into the possibility of forgoing the notion of the sign itself, "for the primacy of the signifier over language guarantees the primacy of language over all strata even more effectively than the simple expansion of the sign in all directions" (1987, p. 65). Of the signifier they write (reminding us of Derrida’s supplement at the source) "it is Redundancy, it is the Redundant. Hence its incredible despotism, and its success" (1987, p. 66). As I have argued, if the dynamism of the sign is of making difference, it is equally of asserting equivalence. The sign is an involuntary act of memory the destiny of which is to be forgotten. Equivalence is that despotic process by which the world is named and by which money is able to find its measure everywhere.

The measure of all things

Dull repetition is the rust of sacred verses.

the Dhammapada, (Buddha’s teachings, p. 48, 1995)

89 And in Difference and Repetition, challenging what he sees as the Platonic inheritance which a philosophy of repetition opposes in representation, Deleuze speculates as to whether the simulacrum is the sign:

When the identity of things dissolves, being escapes to attain univocity, and begins to revolve around the different. That which is or returns has no prior constituted identity: things are reduced to the difference which fragments them, and to all the differences which are implicated in it and through which they pass. In this sense the simulacrum and the symbol are one; in other words, the simulacrum is the sign insofar as the sign interiorises the conditions of its own repetition. (1994, p. 67)

Should we rather interrogate, as Derrida does in Specters of Marx, the prospect of simulacra of simulacra?

On both sides, a specular reflection endlessly sends the simulacrum away, that is, defers up to the abyss the encounter with a living body, with the real, living, actual event, with revolution itself, the revolution properly speaking, in person. (1994, p. 118)
Money gathers in. Language casts to the corners where gossip divides, from which money and civilisation perpetually generate the exchange which lures us back—forever in the name of the same. In Capital, Marx writes: "The currency of money is the constant and monotonous repetition of the same process" (1952, p. 53).

Money is that counting over us which scars all dreams, gives all the one colour. The tropic presents as an ensemble of processes, all of which are always in motion and which tend to be reversible. The money/token relationship is by contrast irreversible. Despite all of the hype to the contrary you cannot generally have your money back. Money is a system in which the increasing size and complexity of the total structure is compensated for by an ever decreasing total number of elements which lie outside the system. The supermarket expands, the money supply expands, except for the odd economic hiccup. Not only are there more and more things to buy and more and more people to buy them but the world outside of this buying and selling appears ever more impoverished. Desire and the real co-incide at the point where the supermarket and the territory it serves become co-extensive. In the face of this logic subjects must play or fall further behind.

The processes of language and civilisation are fundamentally opposed despite in both cases being centrally tropic, and despite having been, in all stages of the development of the latter, mutually interdependent. The tradition of an opposition between culture and nature depends on this more fundamental binarism: language, despite its subjecting to prescriptions, unfolds itself unconsciously and as a means; civilisation, whatever else it entails, is a consciousness of itself and a law of prescription, a means performing as an end. Civilisation is a claim to have always already completed itself. Civilisation is the vast amorphousness of the mind inured to judgement, the mind exercising its rights of judgement, over the world of others and over its own alterity. It is the measuring mind of law and its pay is in reasons and reasonableness. Civilisation is the set of buildings, of marvels and the moral fibre which supports them: it is the synchronic moment—an arrival which is always to be superseded. (There is always a next phase, a new civilisation which depends on the old and on its decay.) So that we may say that the finishedness which composes civilisation is always prospective and retrospective. It is always in plan and the subject of revision. The only people in these sunny spheres are artist's impressions, survivors of the neutron bomb. To the extent that we are civilised, it is what we and the ancients share—the fact that we are finished, made still, already named (an enoncé).

Civilisation imagines itself as the perfect continuity, in which time is heaped in Freud's parable, in "Civilisation and its Discontents" (1952, pp. 768-9), of all the cities of Rome coexisting in the one time. It was and is however impossible without the barbaric interruptions of the tongue. The illusion on which civilisation depends, but cannot live by, is that of having tamed words to its purposes, such as law (even of precedents) requires.

The logic which civilises is opposed not only to indigenous thought (that thought which remains local, and in so doing is liable to conquest) but also to its permanent and definitive outside: barbarism. An imperial centre depends on its perception of a barbaric outside. Romans and Huns, Crusaders and Moslems, Americans and Iraqis: the pattern of civilised centre and outside threat is one endlessly iterated in those histories which have been of civilisations.

Let us then distinguish three states of society which are foreign to each other: indigenous, imperial, barbaric. Let us acknowledge that our access to knowledges of these, by virtue of our status as readers, must be at least partly imperial. The empire can write, can name, counts its possessions, can see its outside; in fact must do, as we know, in order to see itself. Though it by no means needs to acknowledge this fact. (It might be unhealthy for it to.)
Indigeneity and barbarism are the two motions by which empire measures its other(s)⁹⁰. We note that while, by and large, ancient empires turned indigenes into barbarians or citizens (i.e. homogenised them as other or ours), the effect of modern empires has been just the reverse: the generalised barbarism of the outside by which Europe, wary of creating citizens, framed itself, was gradually tamed (if not domesticated) into a (museum) collection of doomed indigenities. In their collectivity, though, the outside of the metropolitan culture was (and perhaps still is) available to the idea of barbarism. Perhaps we should say that modern European cultures pragmatically adopted both ways of regarding their inferior others, so that they could be both "primitive" and a threat, whichever suited at the time.

The United States revives the ancient model of subsuming alterities as an evil outside (of democracy, freedom, the rule of equivalence, of rights), as if their conquest and assimilation (to good) were remembered somewhere in the future. The justification of this is, convincingly enough, that of having accepted all others within its borders and its law (thus providing an ethical universe which contains the world). Interestingly this is a logic not dissimilar from that which Montaigne's cannibals are alleged to employ when they are captured and about to become a meal:

I have a song made by one of these prisoners wherein he bids them "come all and dine upon him and welcome, for they shall withal eat their own fathers and grandfathers, whose flesh has served to feed and nourish him. These muscles" says he "this flesh and these veins are your own: poor silly souls as you are, you little think that the substance of your ancestors' limbs is here yet; notice what you eat and you will find in it the taste of your own flesh": in which song there is to be observed an invention that nothing relishes of the barbarian.

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The question for or beyond memory now is whether we can re/construct anything of the barbarian position. Unless we credit them with no memory and with no consciousness of what was beyond them, the Huns must surely have seen themselves as the between of empires rather than as the outside of one. They carried the vast distances without writing, without cultivation and, as the Mongols later would, controlled territory far vaster than those of the Chinese or Roman empires they moved between. It is Gibbon who emphasises for the Huns their continuity (as vast as the wastes they tamed in traversing) with Mongols of the next millennium and with Herodotus' Scythians of the millennium before.

We probably need at this point to distinguish the Greek (and Hellenistic) from the Roman conception of barbarism. Kristeva, in Strangers to Ourselves briefly traces the connotations of barbarism from Homer down to the fifth century. She cites Strabo: "The barbarians are all those whose pronunciation is clumsy and coarse" (1991, p. 51). She points out that whereas for Homer barbaraphones may have been incomprehensible mumblers but were at least capable of fighting alongside Greeks, the Persian Wars "intensified the rejection of the barbarian" so that for the fifth century tragedians (among whom she singles out Euripides as the most xenophobic) barbarian meant "'incomprehensible', 'non-Greek' and finally 'eccentric' or 'inferior'." It was the Romans who would add cruel to this list (1991, p. 51). For the Greeks the basis of barbarism is other-than-Greekness and so includes all manner of others from aborigines to the potentates of eastern empires, so that regardless of the personal habits of the barbarians whom the Greeks encounter, in their multiplicity they present under the sign of this totality, barbarian, as a collection of mongrels. In Aeschylus' Persians, the

⁹⁰ Cf. Gordon Childe's tripartite division in What Happened in History. Prior to civilisation are Neolithic and higher barbarisms, prior to barbarism is palaeolithic savagery (1942, passim).
barbarian represents the permanent threat to democracy. And yet their variousness and the protection of no less a deity than Zeus assure an ambivalence towards barbarians as strangers. More than a century after Aeschylus, Plato in "The Seventh Letter", writes, imagining what the reign of Dionysius II of Syracuse might have been like:

in which rule if philosophy and power had really met together, it would have sent forth a light to all men, Greeks and barbarians, establishing fully for all the true belief that there can be no happiness either for the community or the individual man, unless he passes his life under the rule of righteousness with the guidance of wisdom, either possessing these virtues in himself, or living under the rule of godly men and having received a right training and education in morals.

In the next paragraph this ethical cosmopolitanism is overturned in the conviction that Plato's friend, Dion, had he ruled, would have made the States of Sicily, "free from the barbarians, driving out some and subduing others" (1952, p 806).

For the Romans the outside which barbarism implies comes to be of the law, rather than of race or language or even culture. By the time of the late empire the classification and legal status of barbarians is complex, and, like the borders of the empire, in a state of continuous flux. It becomes uncertain, not that the borders of the empire exist but, rather, how to describe the nature of the difference between what those borders include and what they exclude. From a modern point of view we can see barbarians (of the invasions, of the menace to borders, of the lost provinces) as reversing a polarity which was entailed in Roman expansion: while Rome expanded it was Rome which made mongrels, in its decline it is barbarians who make mongrels of the Romans. The pragmatic and hybridising empire is defeated by its own method.

Gibbon's account shows the Scythians or inhabitants of Tartary in their "naked and most disgusting simplicity". In their tents "which afford a cold and dirty habitation for the promiscuous youth of both sexes":

the ox or the sheep are slaughtered by the same hand from which they were accustomed to receive their daily food; and the bleeding limbs are served with very little preparation, on the table of their unfeeling murderer. (1877, Vol IV, pp. 264-5)

We can only guess how, and with what pathos, Gibbon imagines the civilised English shepherds of his day come to their meat (when they are so fortunate). Gibbon breaks with his customary past tense to describe the eternal present91 of the shepherds of the North, who have repeatedly overturned the thrones of Asia (1877, Vol IV, p. 262). And we may be assured that they have been at least for some time eternally present as the sign of the outside of a civilisation which identifies itself with a classical model. Shakespeare has Lear imagine them aloud in his future to show Cordelia just how far outside of the pale she has gone:

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91 The operation of instinct is more sure and simple than that of reason; it is much easier to ascertain the appetites of a quadruped than the speculations of a philosopher; and the savage tribes of mankind, as they approach nearer to the conditions of animals, preserve a stronger resemblance to themselves and to each other. The uniform stability of their manners is the natural consequence of the imperfection of their faculties. Reduced to a similar situation, their wants, their desires, their enjoyment still continue the same; and the influence of food or climate, which, in a more improved state of society, is suspended or subdued by so many moral causes, most powerfully contributes to form and to maintain the national character of barbarians. In every age the immense plains of Scythia or Tartary have been inhabited by vagrant tribes of hunters and shepherds, whose indolence refuses to cultivate the earth, and whose restless spirit disdains the confinement of a sedentary life. (1877, Vol IV, p. 261-2)
Hold thee from this forever! The barbarous Scythian
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,
As thou my sometime daughter

(I, i, 1983, p. 1586)

Gibbon portrays Attila as exhibiting:

the genuine deformity of a modern Calmuck: a large head, a swarthy complexion, small, deep-seated eyes, a flat nose, a few hairs in the place of a beard, broad shoulders and a short, square body, of nervous strength, though of a disproportioned form.

Gibbon notes that he expressed his "consciousness of his superiority above the rest of mankind" through the "custom of fiercely rolling his eyes, as if he wished to enjoy the terror which he inspired" (1877, Vol VI, pp. 4-5). An excursion into the newspaper portraiture of Saddam Hussein or Colonel Gadaffi might be diverting here, but we shall forego this pleasure in order to note that the faciology Gibbon attributes to Attila is, in sharp focus, the effect of the landscape he inhabits and inspires with terror.

What we know of the opinions of the Huns comes to us through the Latin language which, according to Gibbon, "the barbarians were ambitious of conversing in", their own being "probably a harsh and barren idiom" (1877, Vol VI, p. 17). Gibbon's account of the barbarians, though further removed from first hand witness than that of his classical models, yet lacks their ambivalence. The I have heard another tale, very different from this (1952, p. 137) tone with which Herodotus paints Scythia as a collection of barbaric curiosities, gives way in Gibbon to the homogenised outside of the mind of law. The edge of the Herodotus' world may seem fanciful to us, as in the description of the country to the north of the Scythians as "concealed from sight and made impassable by reason of the feathers which are shed abroad abundantly" (1952, p. 125). But where Herodotus places himself, it seems unreflectingly, in a chain of uncertainties (to which we must admit he is both spatially and temporally in far greater proximity than Gibbon), Gibbon gives us an impression of eyewitness accuracy, an omniscience over millennia and over a vast and certain terrain (one which no doubt remains harsh and barren and in which terror is inspired).

Marx wrote of this kind of history in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon" as one which conjures up spirits of the past in order to write a cautionary tale for one empire in "time honoured disguise and borrowed language" (Marx and Engels, 1978, p. 595). We note that the spirits, past and disguise, which Gibbon conjures are less borrowed and more of his making than he would have us think. Ghosts may present as the apparition of lost truths but it is naive to think from such appearances either that they could not have been manufactured or that they are able to present faithfully the truth of another context, one now lost to us. In Reading Capital Althusser accounts, as homeostatic, the process of making history. It is this homeostasis which makes the past contingent on the means of recollection with which it has provided us:

every science of a historical object (and political economy in particular) applies to a given, present, historical object, an object that has evolved as the result of past history. Hence every operation of knowledge, starting from the present and applied to an evolved object, is merely the projection of the present onto the past of that object. (1970, p. 122)

Barbarism becomes what the mind imagines to be outside of the continuities enabling the mind. It will be, as in Said's orientalism, the process by which the mind makes itself in the guise of imaging its other. We may regard such a process as, by and
large, co-extensive with that of making histories. As long as history remains singular it is
doomed to exercise a panopticism over those objects and events it embraces. As long as a
single law is required, let us say to rule the seas, those who, for whatever reason, fail to
obey such a law will be pirates. The doctrine of universal human rights denies the ethical
viability of tying such an abstraction as barbarism (the outside of the law to which all are
entitled to belong) to any condition genetically or culturally inherited. Unfortunately it
finds itself relying on just such conditions in deciding which are the laws to which all
must be subject. It is not the conditions of every culture which will be imposed on the
collectivity of peoples. The concepts of law and government with which nations work as
international standards are almost exclusively derived from Western models, the lineage
of which can be very specifically traced. So that we may say that, despite the dismantling
of colonial empires in our century, the laws which obtain in and between post-colonial
powers were imposed on them in much the way that Roman law was imposed on the
parts of the barbarian world which Rome brought under its sway. To the extent that these
are allowed any local flavour, the contradictions and compromises wrought in the process
of administering universal law may be impressive, but they are greatly outweighed by the
instances in which the effort is given up as too much trouble.
The default standard of law is Europe’s, and not withstanding the military strength of
European peoples, it is not generally necessary that armies enforce this standard.

For Levinas “History is worked over by the ruptures of history, in which a
judgement is borne upon it. When man truly approaches the Other he is uprooted from
history.” (1969, p. 52) But the viability and authenticity of that project, of truly
approaching the other/Other, is brought into question by the reflexive entailments of any
consciousness of the means of approach. In Robert Duncan’s “Songs of an Other”:

If there were an other ...

if there were an other
person I am he would
be heavy as the shadow

in a dying tree. The light
thickens into water
welling up to liven

whose eyes? who hides his mother
behind him mirrord in his
bride’s gaze when the flame

darkens the music as he plays?
for I am here the Master of a Sonata
meant for the early evening

when in late Spring
the day begins to linger on
and we do not listen to the news

but let the wars and crises go
revering strife in a sound of our own,
a momentary leading of a tone

toward a conflicting possibility and then
fury so slowed down it lapses
into the sweetening melancholy of

a minor key, hovering toward refrain
it yet refrains from, I come into
the being of this other me,

exquisitely alone, everything about the voice
has its own solitude the speech
addresses and, still accompanied,

kindled thruout by you, every thought
of bride and groom comes to,
my other

cannot keep his strangeness separate
there is such a presence of "home"
in every room I come to.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 40)

Where Duncan’s poem blurs inner and outer alterities by means of a series of questions which fail to establish the action of agency – thus fail to establish the bounds of a self or its other/s – in Anna Swir’s poem, "The Same Inside", finding selves is an act of authenticity, an act by which knowledge is lost in a need for belonging.

Walking to your place for a love feast
I saw at the street corner
an old beggar woman.

I took her hand,
kissed her delicate cheek
we talked, she was
the same inside as I am,
from the same kind,
I sensed this instantly
as a dog knows by scent
another dog.

I gave her money,
I could not part from her.
After all, one needs
someone who is close.

And then I no longer knew
why I was walking to your place.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 200)

Acts of poetry have an affinity with the loss of purpose associated with daring not to provide a universe with its centre. Levinas writes of a "relationship with the other that does not result in a divine or human totality, that is not a totalization of history but the idea of infinity" (1969, p. 52). We should abandon the hope that we will find between selves a compromise in the form of such a totalisation as universal value. We should embark instead on the risky, perhaps impossible project of understanding each other. And in this we should be wary of that universalising pretension of which Nietzsche warns, in Ecce Homo: that of improving mankind (1992, p. 3).

If we say or merely hope that it is a barbarian logic, which is able, by virtue of not being accustomed to its rules, to defeat civilisation and the money system which enables it, then we are faced with a set of paradoxes: that it is only through co-option of language and civilisation, each in the other's pay, that we are able to speak of them; that the empire is at once attacked and defended by barbarians, ends as a barbarian empire, which is to
say, as no civilisation at all, despite yet being possessed of all the monumentality which constitutes civilisation.

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We must assume that in language as we understand it, the tropic and the iterative are coeval, to neither can we assign a priority over the other. Whereas the tropic movement of language depends on an ultimately unclassifiable instability, that of civilisation depends on an inverse proportion between the reduction of tropes and the reproduction of the same. Here one token is in the process of coming to stand for all others: the logical end of the reductionism entailed in a system where growth places no limits on iteration.

What limits the iterative and reductive work of exchange is the immanence of tropic processes in language. This is as much as to say that it is contextuality, i.e. the ever enfolding unfolding of subjects, texts, and contexts (in short that reciprocity which we may envisage as the framing of consciousness and the consciousness of framing) which frustrates the stasis of iteration. Derrida acknowledges as much in suggesting that:

the signified always already functions as a signifier. The secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifieds in general, affects them always already, the moment they enter the game. There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language. (1976, p. 7)

The rules of the framing are not only inaccessible to the reflection of the players in the moments of their play. They as well (because we have no way of approaching this game except by playing it) constitute an immanence not approached by way of a view from the outside which points to it. If the still heart of language is the moment of signification, it is one of unbearable equivalence, doomed to slip away into the spoken chain, needing but unable to constitute its own ontology. And it is yet the originary myth in which words are made. We cannot apprehend what is anterior to this moment. It is not the degree zero but rather the ground zero of connotation. It constitutes the moment in which we cease to speak: to all intents and purposes, an imaginary moment, of which Barthes writes:

denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and to close the reading), the superior myth by which the text pretends to return to the nature of language. (S/Z, 1974, p. 9)

Perhaps in these terms Rousseau can have succeeded in having a supplement at the source. If there are no signs but between signs then the synchonic moment is a convenient fiction of present order, enabling the naming of a place for ourselves, a moment of habitation which never happens and to which we are doomed to return: the ghost of langue

To deny that stillness and to insist on the facticity only of slippage is to ignore the means by which movement is apprehended and against which it is measured. The process of equivalence which claims the operational procedure of the sign, is one which Lacan has associated with the phallus and as well the grammatical copula92:

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92 Note here that Whorf regards the copula as an example of a cryptotype or covert category, those parts of the language — and in this case what could be more central, which "easily escape notice and may be hard to define, and yet may have a profound influence on linguistic behaviour." (1956, p. 92)
The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire. It can be said that this signifier is chosen because it is the most tangible element in the real of sexual copulation, and also the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is equivalent to the (logical) copula. It might also be said that, by virtue of its turgidity, it is the image of the vital flow as it is transmitted in generation. (1980, p. 287)

It is the reproductive act which subjects the process of signification (one of equivalence) to the iterative tendency, to the repetition of being, of which the phallus is the marker. The phallus marks the apprehended stillness of the spoken world, a world come to rest, the world in which civilisation begins us. This is the fidgety world of the repetition-compulsion, Freud's "manifestation of inertia in organic life" (1952, p. 651). Here, the relationship between repression and repetition is described by Deleuze in the following terms: "I do not repeat because I repress. I repress because I repeat, I forget because I repeat" (1994, p. 18). Regardless of where and how this circle is rejoined it is clear that without repetition and repression there is no civilisation. More of the same and a check on the floodgates: this is how civilisation keeps itself inscribed. Nor without repression and repetition could there be language, which depends, wherever consciousness is drawn, on the systematicity of iterative quantities, on an eternity of returns. In Culture and Value Wittgenstein writes "I really only think reproductively. I don't believe I have ever invented a line of thinking, I have always taken one over from someone else... What I do think is essential is carrying out the work of clarification with COURAGE: otherwise it just becomes a clever game" (1980, pp. 18-19).

The distinction Freud draws between primary and secondary processes is a distinction between types of excitation, between the bound and the free. Static and metamorphic, bound to repeat, free to move: where may we pursue the libidinal essences and where do they pursue us? In the manner of the phallus, and of slippery libidinosity, however gendered; in this manner the glissement which is characteristic of signification's diachronic reality is reduced to a stasis, which existing nowhere, claims to be in the true nature of things.

The tropic is purely relational, not anywhere. It is the characteristic of everywhere, which is the problem with us. And because the iterative depends on it, how can we not say that the iterative too is only in the instantiation of relations which we know as tropic? For both the tropic and the iterative we are always about to say that what they depend on, that what depends on them is the same. Thus Deleuze writes "Difference lies between two repetitions" (1994, p. 76).

But there is something not quite symmetrical, not quite reversible in this relation. The fly in the ointment, uncaused cause which makes perpetual these motions, is alterity.

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For Levinas the generality of signification is infinity, that which we may otherwise regard as the existence of alterity. Language, in this context of limitlessness, takes on the form of extended epiphany. It is the other speaking in me – the astonishment of this – which enables my selfhood in language. The conception of language as a totality (even if unreflecting, as in Lévi-Strauss’ gloss) collapses in the face of language as infinity (that is, in the face of the tropic aspect of language).

Levinas' infinity/alterity depend on an oscillation between the tropic and the iterative. Levinas writes that "to possess the idea of infinity is to have already welcomed the Other", that "the presentation of the Other to me is "the primordial event of signification" and that the "world is offered in the language of the Other." (1969, pp. 92-3) How can that world come to be offered but through the repetition and alterity
(Steiner, 1992, p. 234) of signs in our unfolding? Regardless of whatever frustration inheres in the effort to see the game, we know that the game goes on, not because of any meta-awareness of it, but because of the transcendence of selves which is its basis. Levinas writes "he who speaks to me and across the words proposes himself to me retains the fundamental foreignness of the Other" (1969, p. 101).

Between the arbitrary and the motivated aspects of the sign, between the commonplace and the unintelligible of Aristotle, the combination of the (Saussurean) halves of the sign involves a transformation where, for the sign itself, and for the process of signification, becoming foreign (the making unintelligible of the commonplace which so fascinated the Formalists) is the process of being itself.

Becoming is what confounds the stillness of being. It engages a laughter in which being dissolves and is re-made. It is Nietzsche who exhorts us "beyond pity and terror, to realize in oneself the eternal joy of becoming" (1977, p. 261). The incongruent (the unheimlich, the unfitting of context) is the realm, though not necessarily the exclusive realm, of becoming. It is the sign of the stranger, of barbaric logic: that usage which is yet to establish itself as unremarkable. The incongruent then is that which is out of expectation, that which enters onto the border, Kierkegaard's borderline of the wondrous, where eternity is the true repetition.

All things are becoming. Dreamer and dreamt, speaking and spoken. The reversibility in which all things participate is in the nature of a sensate speech (one with the capacity to recognise itself), that is to say, out of nature. But what exactly and why are all things becoming? Deleuze in The Logic of Sense (1960, p. 1) incites us to seek the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. In such a process for Deleuze "it is language which fixes the limits (the moment for example at which the excess begins) but it is language as well which transcends the limits and restores them to the infinite equivalence of an unlimited becoming" (1990, p. 2).

That becoming which engages the laughter in which being dissolves exposes all stasis and assumption, the enabling of everything, to a form of doubt so fundamental that in it everything instantly is pressed to re-assert itself, to become again or else dissolve. Haunting is that re-assertion of selves and substance against flux. Laughter is the eruption of a moment whereas visitation of the uncanny is forever fading, as the unrequital wish for a return to a stasis. Just as this stasis of ours never was so our wish for a return to it is never altogether gone. That wish is what becomes our history. It is out of the moment of laughter and the infinite dis/continuity of the echoes of like moments, that the world re-orders, having no other way to make itself.

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In the face of the same-making at the heart of signification, we explain the capacity of language and culture to renew themselves through the centrifugal resilience of the tropic, that process in which the truth is tested and reshaped and the official is always being undermined by the unofficial. This process is at least in part enabled by the fact that the principle of equivalence (as applied with the broad brushes: metaphor, naming, guessing what's there) promotes all forms of mistaken identity. Mistaken identity (catachresis) is a view over signification in which we attempt to recover the process of erasure which the sign effects. In the sign and in metaphor a pragmatically motivated likening is reduced to a claim of identity and in this process is entailed the erasure of the signs which show the effecting of the transference. This and the other: these are the poles which an analogical account of reality must travel and in so doing imagine a coincidence of frames as no movement at all.

Mistaken identity is the necessary condition of all representation, of the one standing for (standing as) the many, the uncounted others. For Rousseau it is "a
profound evil", "corruption itself". For Derrida it is "Exactly as within the political order, the menace has the shape of the representative." (1976, p. 304) And for Deleuze:

Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation has only a single centre, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilises and moves nothing... Infinite representation includes precisely an infinity of representations — either by ensuring the convergence of all points of view on the same object or the same world, or by making all moments properties of the same self. (1994, p. 56)

Mistaken identity must be a function of equality. And if we say that there have been (and still continue to be) times and places where the demand for equality is the key to the becoming just of such worlds, it is always a particular equality which is to be achieved, a particular inequality shown up, undermined, understood. Where equality achieves the abstract status of a universal it becomes a threat for managing difference. In *I Love to You*, Luce Irigaray writes:

claiming to be equal to a man is a serious ethical mistake because by so doing woman contributes to the erasure of natural and spiritual reality in an abstract universal that serves only one master: death. Aside from her own suicide, she thus deprives man of the possibility of defining himself as man, that is as a naturally and spiritually sexed person. For each man must remain a man in the process of his becoming. (1996, p. 27)

Claiming to be equal, in any case, generally assumes the argument from a position of a weakness, and while this may indeed be the position from which one comes, a question remains as to how permanent we make such a position by claiming it as ours. Marx writes in *Capital* that:

The secret of the expression of value (namely that all kinds of labour are equal and equivalent, because, and so far as, they are human labour in general) cannot be deciphered until the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice. This, however, is possible only in a society in which the great mass of the produce of labour takes the form of commodities, in which, consequently, the dominant relation between man and man is that of owners of commodities. (1952, p. 25)

Thus Marx explains why it was that Aristotle, writing in a slave society, was prevented from seeing that the attribution of value to commodities depended on the expression of "all labour as equal human labour".

Sartre frames equality as impossible in the following terms: "we shall never place ourselves concretely on a plane of equality; that is on the plane where the recognition of the Other's freedom would involve the Other's recognition of our freedom" (1989, p. 408). In any case there is, in the equalisation of identities implied in signification, the rejoining of a circle in which alterity is assimilated: It is the foreigner whose identity is always mistaken. The *foreign* is always mistaken for identity. Identity is mistakenly made foreign.

The process of signification is one in which alterity is, however unconvincingly, however temporarily, forever in the situation of being domesticated. It is this problematic to which Spivak refers, writing in "Can the Subaltern Speak?": "For the true subaltern group, whose identity is difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself" (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 27). Walt Whitman offers a short study of domestication and its effects in "The Sleepers":

Now what my mother told me one day as we sat at dinner together,
Of when she was nearly a grown girl living home with her parents
on the old homestead.

A red squaw came one breakfast-time to the old homestead,
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-bottoming chairs,
Her hair, straight, shiny, coarse, black, profuse, half envelop'd her face,
Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded exquisitely as she spoke.

My mother look'd in delight and amazement at the stranger,
She look'd at the freshness of her tall-born face and full and pliant limbs,
The more she look'd upon her face she lov'd her,
Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity,
She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace, she
cook'd food for her
She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the middle of the afternoon
she went away
O my mother was loth to have her go away,
All the week she thought of her, and she watch'd for her many a month,
She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer,
But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.

(1975, p. 445)

In the work of domestication, this giving of remembrance and fondness, whose presence
and whose absence is at stake? Who haunts whom? And where alterity cannot be
domesticated, is it in the situation of the we in Oodgeroo Noonuccal's much anthologised
"We are Going"? Is it in the situation of that we who "sit and are confused" and "cannot
say their thoughts", but whose thoughts are nonetheless rendered in English for the
reader of English: "'We are as strangers here and now but the white tribe are the
strangers' " (Tranter and Mead, 1991, p. 103).

Is there a treaty here between these selves and others which work through the
intersubjective circuit only ever to see others, selves? Spivak writes that the intellectual's
solution in relation to the "true" subaltern, whose identity is difference, "is not to abstain
from representation": "In the slightly dated language of the Indian group, the question
becomes, How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate
their politics? With what voice consciousness can the subaltern speak?" (in Ashcroft et al,
1995, p. 27).

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Civilisation maintains its forward movement and momentum (its progress) by the
fact of forgetting, a fact which is everywhere supported by the illusion and evidence of
memory. Thus Derrida is able to write, thinking of "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis
Napoleon", of "the life of forgetting, life as forgetting itself" (1994, p. 109).

Metaphor and the sign are both based on a dichotomous equivalence and
ultimately participate in the same process, that metonymic process of coming from and to
context. Such a process is essential to the generativity, the mutability, the unlimited
semiosis, which defines language and the worlds it opens onto. In and with words,
between and in selves, the future inhabits us now as our freedom, as in Bobbi Sykes
poem,"One Day":

Moving along Main St. /
Whitesville/
Digging all them white faces /
(Staring, or "not staring")
Until I felt surrounded /
Lost / bobbing on a sea I didn't know /

I began to concentrate so hard /
(Head down)
On the lines and cracks
Of the footpath ...

And I felt you / unknown brother /
Across the street /
Over the heads / cars /
Throwing me your glance /
Your salute / clenched fist /
Smile ...

Fellow black /
You were majestic /
Your sparks lit up the street /
Whitesville /
And I was no longer moving along /
But / Brother /
Moving up!

(Tranter and Mead, 1991, pp. 273-4)

In Spectres of Marx Derrida writes of the "apparition of the bodiless body of money", not as "the lifeless body or cadaver... a life without personal life or individual property", but as the "becoming-god of gold" (1994, pp. 41-2). He contrasts living work with spectral logic (1994, p. 75). He writes of a "hostility towards ghosts, a terrified hostility that sometimes feeds off terror with a burst of laughter" (1994, p. 47). For Derrida, choosing among ghosts involves us in the ordeal of the undecidable. To return to "The Eighteenth Brumaire", our survival in the here and now depends, not so much on our seeing the ghosts, even the ghosts that are in us, but rather on the ghosts seeing, recognising, us: "Vertiginous asymmetry: the technique for having visions, for seeing ghosts is in truth a technique to make oneself seen by ghosts" (1994, p. 134). Perhaps it is the exercise of such a technique of which Gregory Corso writes in his poem "I held a Shelley Manuscript":

My hands did numb to beauty
as they reached into Death and tightened!

O sovereign was my touch
upon the tan-ink's fragile page!

Quickly, my eyes moved quickly,
sought for smell for dust for lace
for dry hair!

---

By forgetfulness (guilty or innocent, it little matters here), by foreclosure or murder, this watch itself will engender new ghosts. It will do so by choosing already among the ghosts, its own from among its own, thus by killing the dead: law of finitude, law of decision and responsibility for finite existences, the only living-mortals for whom a decision, a choice, a responsibility has meaning and a meaning that will have to pass through the ordeal of the undecidable. (1994, p. 87)
I would have taken the page
breathing in the crime!
For no evidence have I wrung from dreams –
yet what triumph is there in private credence?

Often, in some steep ancestral book,
when I find myself entangled with leopard-apples
and torched-mushrooms,
my cypressean skin outreaches the recorded age
and I, as though tipping a pitcher of milk,
pour secrecy upon the dying page.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 210)

* *

What haunts every prospect of signification is an extreme manifestation, the sway
of one process to one end, this individualising of all things, this making them mine by
which my things ironically become anyone's, this stillness of possession which is to be
metonymically swept away.

In what Anzieu calls a skin of words is apprehended an apparent stillness, that of
the being of the sign, illusion which makes possible our speech of certain words. What
this illusion of stillness ignores is that these signs are only ever between subjects, only
ever becoming. It is in this betweenness that we ourselves become. It is where the body
of foreigners inhabits the community of words. It may be that for those of us entitled to
the life of the living that it is between the exigencies of language and civilisation we
uncover the prospect of community. We are then towards an ethics of such a symbiosis,
of the community in which writing becomes possible.

But if that is the way we face then how would our own authenticity be expressed
or at stake in such a movement? The paradox of poetry's role is that it is to become
secret from its lack of purposes. Such is the manner in which, through the exercise of
consciousness, poetry works to recover the authenticity of speech. This is the nature of
the interpellation which poetry is able to entail: to call you with your own words to
yourself. A poetry need not claim in the course of its reflexivity to have transcended the
conditions of its possibility. It may thus yet remain authentic to those conditions.
on becoming numerous

set out in a circle to see where we are
how many I am today
fat full of earth
and ripe to requite

   first of my tribe
   a practised demise
   distracted from absence
   the virtual here

my tail sets everywhere before
   a chase after smoke
   and bound in this
full of those musts
which make up volition

here I go
   see me set
   only watching

   modes: hailing and forage and welcome
I flail, the horror of any one thing at a time
sat to attention to misapprehend

one day
in drift of choruses
wake up to ourselves
   Why you? Why now?
(tragedy smiles on the many, makes few)

headlines
get a wriggle on
   one day
   sub cutaneous
   loose
then for the hunt and drag to caves
(I have been in these many hands)

the village arrives
   in the run out of trees

to blunt misgiving

224
one day
    halo shone
    chains all accounted

dark cloud to settle
    night my ink
I fumble the switch
    of forgetting
dark cloud to settle
    fall
in the grubby old arms
    of the done-to
din waking
    long prophesied

why don't I get doubt's benefits
as any dabbling child would?
why don't I earn that jaw respect
all the rest to work go for?
am robed of all the dignities
small purposes may generalise

because I play stakes bigger than me
loss at them foredoomed
in simple words
which cut the chaos
make it ours, a grief
which won't abandon in loss
however much is made

pale
whispering the what's to do

still stand
against this

ours the last country
    growth's parable
    and it's others go under

one day dead, waking
    all's forgiven
steady out of this rain falls each drop as a sea
sun meets us
as if to spite
    cursing cold
choir attending breaks the news
though in a tongue
you can't quite catch

my discipline they're after
a vial of sweat
for theirs is the kingdom
of eyes down reliving
relieving themselves

mine is a child's blue
sun's shot through
harbour in sail making lines

  the self a trick of unison
   a voice of accidents this mine

which distance
  catches, cannot see
      forgive me
          unsung
  you foliage Christmas dense
  and dinner swollen here by lacks
  which make my wanting mean

  how populous I am
  how dug in planks of the storm laid on
  take my swim as comes
  fall of the guttering steadies the rain

one day in its voice divided
  the personality of truth comes
when it comes and can't be rushed, slowed
  am what I'm born to be
  or made or make myself
  who knows?

to be in charge of words
  to let go of the world as read

depending on the what's-to-be
  I make my way unknown

  then does the voice
  betray itself, always outdone by its means
each compromise
  drags catacombs
the body requires its confession
slumps into something more comfortable
  (all of this which can't be helped
the with-us-wherever-we-are
  — all there's to know on the head of a pin
stuck in that haystack mop of mine)

we who weigh like a nightmare
  how it becomes us

    the wound healing time
    no patch of bright such

    not to worry
our parents in forever say
here I am

    angels of fate attend
    (what other kind?)
it's their wrath bears always up

liberty of my poor cell
  — a ramble in among of me

    when first we were fashioned of mirror
whole tribes tangled in

involuntary as sky it was —
  heart's refuge
in the true of dark
mind's refuge in the heart

    this much luck and hands like day
the body is a sunken ship
  the soul blind by
and half way home

much love bears down until loves show
skin so cracked
and set to paths
  how fallen to and for

I'll be a faithful ghost
I will, I didn't mean to drown
one day
billboards exhort
  the immutable gives a good shake
we are the main use
  of being mistaken

words invent our loves

        sun ticking over us stills
        one day

we're gone by then
and couldn't care
foils for silence stand, a ground
under the tickling dogged stars
as far, as deep as hope will have
  – a pill dissolved in word too slow
breath too catching

  scarred with flows
and self inscribed
  one day in skin, out again
guilt exalting a hoop of the self

  felled of laughter

my perfect parts
none made by me

we go on
in the making of ways
because
there is no other
6. Authenticity

Sometimes I think and sometimes I am
Valéry (in Anderson, 1996, p. 128)

Art does not deliberate.
Aristotle in the Physics (1952, p. 277)

Action depends on a veil of illusion

A macabre joke with some currency in Australia now runs as follows: Ivan Milat (convicted of the murder of half a dozen mainly foreign backpackers in the Belanglo State Forest) is walking through the forest with a backpacker. The backpacker says to him "It's getting dark and scary in here." Milat replies "You're scared? I'm the one who's got to walk back by myself."

In this scenario something characteristically Australian is inscribed as a revision of common knowledge about the normative and its outside – likewise foreignness, nativeness, fear. But perhaps all cultures have a way of turning horror to humour and if humour succeeds in lying close to the bone, then these bones might displace those of the swagman in "Waltzing Matilda", themselves a displacement of indigenes' bones. Explaining is supposed to kill a joke, but the Milat joke seems wrier the more it is thought on. It depends on a trick of identification which makes the appreciator of the joke uneasy and the joke subversive of the justice which has Milat behind bars. This is because the joke is about the identity and alterity of its audience, and the logic which takes in those who follow it is uncannily like other logics which have taken them in. Who are we? Who do we think we are? In what senses are we of this place? What if our real relation to this place, as ours, were by means of murder; a murder which makes places ours, places us, a murder we laugh off as if it were nothing or something now which cannot be helped or fixed, a fact of nature (a simple fact) or someone else's murder or something forgotten, just a joke now, a joke to even mention it? It cannot be pinned on us.

Do we protest too much?

We laugh at having caught ourselves identifying with a murderer and with his irrational fears (of the dark, the forest, the foreign place) when we should be afraid of that bent soul which speaks our fear.

Take a step back from this joke and the commentary attending it, the validation of a smile in response, a commentary packed with social comment and critique, one which (in the Freudian manner, one could say) judges the whole of society by a particular, aberrant and distasteful pathology. Many Australians must find this joke and the commentary unconvincing, unaustrian, inauthentic. Do they, by means of this attitude, this finding unfunny, exclude themselves from its audience? Or are those who cannot or will not laugh a necessary part of any joke's audience; those, for instance, whom the joke is on?

That the joke can be at once funny and repugnant, even divide a group of friends or family members along the lines of how they find it, makes it a good example of a phrase in dispute. My point here is that authenticity, that which would make this joke characteristically Australian or lead to its violent denunciation as such, is something widely contested but rarely spoken of as if it were in dispute. Claims of authenticity are good examples of those silencing moves which Lyotard associates with differends: they
function as last courts of appeal for cultural objects and practices and especially for people. Is authenticity only ever a trick among the homeless by which a phantom provenance is declared, appealed to, without ever being spelled out? For whom, to what, is a position, a turn of phrase, a tone of the voice, authentic? However such questions are, or fail to be asked, in a case where identity is at question, national or otherwise, the battle to establish the acceptable range of positions is a battle about authenticity.

Why should this issue interest the ethics of presence necessary to poetic production? It should do so because of all the floating signifiers poetry rubs up against this last court of appeal is the one by which poetry not only is judged, but in which it must frame its own standing out of judgement. Along these lines we note that authenticity has something in common with metaphor, it could even be named the claim which metaphor makes in telling us what is what. As Wenche Omundsen writes in an essay on tourism, a phenomenon for which she sees the search for authenticity as the major motivation, authenticity is "a system of mediation that works by making itself invisible. The touristic site passes through a process of sacralization through which its authenticity is bestowed. The parallel with religious rituals is striking" (Meanjin, 3 & 4 1997, p. 563).

It is my aim here to argue that the truth to the self on which authenticity has depended, once selves are seen as dialogically contingent, has at least to entail a truth to context. And it is from this vantage we might approach a dialogically contingent authenticity.

* * *

If authenticity is, among other things, to be regarded as a floating signifier, then it is as well to chart at the outset the range it covers. The most obvious means of approach to the concept is probably as personal continuity: my authentic self is the way I consistently am. By thinking of myself as being consistently a particular way I establish an identity among my actions, one constitutive of a particular self for myself. From this identity alterity is inferred: I know myself to be consistently different from others in certain regards. I am not as they are: thus I am me. But as psychoanalysis, and the dialogic nature of speech show (in the manner of David Anti in’s question: "who speaks for me when I speak? Do I have a quorum?" [in Hoover, 1994, p. 246]), a continuity borne of such separation is unlikely to be durable or even convincing. As far as literary production goes, the character who is completely consistent is one we might associate with the epic: a flat character. Novelistic characters seem real or fully human, round, perhaps to the extent that they evince inconsistencies. Consider Proust’s Swann, who experiences:

the slight thrill of emotion which a man feels when, even without being fully aware of it, he says something not because it is true but because he enjoys saying it, and listens to his own voice uttering the words as though they came from someone else. (Swann’s Way, 1996, pp. 299-300)

So this first angle on authenticity runs into trouble as soon as we recognise a role for discontinuity: sometimes a demand of authenticity calls for a break with past practices, identities, differences.

In Being and Time Heidegger writes that Da-sein "‘knows’ where it stands, since it has projected itself on possibilities of itself, or, absorbed in the they, has let itself be given such possibilities as are prescribed by its public interpretedness" (1996, p. 250). The they and its gossip are dangers to Da-sein and we might say, to the prospect of an authentic selfhood:

Losing itself in the publicness of the they and its idle talk, it fails to hear its own self in listening to the they-self. If Da-sein is to be brought back from this
lostness of failing to hear itself, and if this is to be done through itself, it must first be able to find itself, to find itself as something that has failed to hear itself and continues to do so in listening to the they. (1996, p. 250)

Heidegger argues that this listening to the they must be stopped, be broken by a call "from afar to afar", this in the form of a jolt, an abrupt arousal, of "him who wants to be brought back" (1996, p. 251).

The Belangelo joke works along these lines as a discontinuity: I catch myself identifying with my anathema, as one doomed by a pathological destiny to deprive myself of a companion in my other, the one who could make me forget the fearfulness of surroundings which are fearful precisely because characters like me inhabit them. Such also is the moment when I realise that I have been inauthentic and decide to do something about it, to make a discontinuity. Such realisation implies the confronting of a truth, one that was buried or for some reason unavailable, one which events bring to light, so that a particular way of being loses its viability as authentic. The moments in history in which identities and destinies are forged, reformed, even dissolved, are, in the manner of Foucault's epistememes, notoriously like this.

As for the prospects of bringing some decision about authenticity to bear on the ethics with which we frame our presence and actions, note that Heidegger's call is something unplanned and unwilling, even out of expectation and against the will (1996, p. 254). We do not, at least not as a rule, decide to laugh or to be disgusted with a joke. It is by such undeciding that our response can be authentic. To hear the call authentically means for Heidegger to bring oneself to action (1996, p. 271). Is it like this for poetry or is poetry mere reflection? Oscar Wilde writes: "When man acts he is a puppet. When he describes he is a poet" (1963, p. 869). And while it seems not improbable that there is something misleading in this separation, a doubt as to the inefficacy of reflection may be well advised.

Authenticities, Reflection

The unconscious as the collection of psychic potentials and events in which I truly consist (or fail to consist) as an I, would appear to provide a perfect surrogate for authenticity, or perhaps its nth degree. In Randall Jarrell's "Field and Forest", there is a stripping of the self and the landscape it inhabits, in a movement towards the essential or primeval:

When you look down from the airplane you see lines, Roads, ruts, braided into a net or a web – Where people go, what people do: the ways of life.

Heaven says to the farmer: "What's your field?" And he answers: "Farming," with a field, Or: "Dairy farming," with a herd of cows. They seem a boy's toy cows, seen from this high.

Seen from this high, The fields have a terrible monotony.

But between the lighter patches there are dark ones. A farmer is separated from a farmer By what farmers have in common: forests, Those dark things – what the fields were to begin with. At night a fox comes out of the forest, eats his chickens.
At night the deer come out of the forest, eat his crops.

If he could he'd make farm out of all the forest,
But it isn't worth it: some of it's marsh, some rocks,
There are things there you couldn't get rid of
With a bulldozer, even — not with dynamite.
Besides, he likes it. He had a cave there, as a boy;
He hunts there now. It's a waste of land,
But it would be a waste of time, a waste of money,
To make it into anything but what it is.

At night, from the airplane, all you see is lights,
A few lights, the lights of houses, headlights,
And darkness. Somewhere below, beside a light,
The farmer, naked, takes out his false teeth:
He doesn't eat now. Takes off his spectacles:
He doesn't see now. Shuts his eyes.
If he were able to he'd shut his ears,
And as it is, he doesn't hear with them.
Plainly, he's taken out his tongue: he doesn't talk.
His arms and legs: at least, he doesn't move them.
They are knotted together, curled up, like a child's.
And after he has taken off the thoughts
It has taken him his life to learn,
He takes off, last of all the world,

When you take off everything, what's left? A wish,
A blind wish; and yet the wish isn't blind,
What the wish wants to see, it sees.

There in the middle of the forest is the cave
And there, curled up inside is the fox.

He stands looking at it.
Around him the fields are sleeping: the fields dream.
At night there are no more farmers, no more farms.
At night the fields dream, the fields are the forest.
The boy stands looking at the fox
As if, if he looked long enough —

He looks at it.
Or is it the fox that's looking at the boy?
The trees can't tell the two of them apart.

(1969, pp. 334-5)

The fantasy of taking off "last of all the world" is suggestive of poetry's grail in the
unattainable beyond of its substance: as sense in and of a world or more. But the poem's
caution is in the line: "What the wish wants to, it sees."
In Jarrell's poem the stripping
away of the sensate and the worldly leads in the direction of an unconsciousness: an
imagery in which boy and fox, field and forest, are not told apart, yet seem somehow
truer than the certainty of lines they leave.

But if my real or true self were only expressed in the absence of consciousness, if
the unconscious presents us with an nth degree of authenticity, then it does this by means
of a circular logic. If the self is hidden from the self as the unconscious (only accessible
through special techniques or expertise) then how do we know it as a true self? What can
intervene here but faith? A kind of Freudian psychic determinism makes us all responsible
for our psychic health. There is something we can do about it because there is a truth to
ourselves which we can get to, by analysis or some other psychic exploration. It is a short step from here to that gloomy self-help (for instance Louise L. Hay's [1982, passim]) which tells us that we (unconsciously) choose our own illnesses, that physical symptoms are psychic symptoms and that if you affirm and love yourself enough you will heal yourself. This logic must be great comfort to the families of plane crash victims or for the limbless survivors of natural disasters.

Poetry will be tied neither to such an avowal as the completion of a form of knowledge nor of its complete absence. This must at least be in part because what requires of poetry its idiot-savant character is the fact that it moves, whether to recover or to achieve an authenticity, to rid itself of all those mediations of consciousness which, if they enable, as well stand in the way of its being itself. This is the infra-signification and pre-semiological state of language through which poetry, according to Barthes, attempts to transform the sign back into meaning (1973, p. 133). Such an authenticity is what poetry refers to in Kristeva's semiotic chora.

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The relationship between particular acts and the particular thoughts which bear on them is problematic in the manner of the round characters of fiction, for whom authenticity and consciousness are processes rather than fixed outcomes. Such characters become themselves in the process of negotiating conflicting claims as to what they are or should be. Tom Jones becomes the character we come to trust by means of tests in which, compared with an Odysseus, he often falters because of his own failings, not merely because of the obstacles against which he is thrown. Modern (and later) characters are made by means of negotiations among differends, negotiations which in the sense that their results are necessarily contingent (on among other things the results of other such negotiations), can therefore never be fully conscious. What individuals, as people or characters, negotiate among differends amounts to their own authenticity.

There are various authenticities and we fail to approach the differend here unless by the elaboration of their differences. For instance, there is the being who I really am, born of a transcendence of those limitations which make me and which restrict the expression of my potential. Such an authenticity might demand of me that I betray my class, or it might moreover insist that I am essentially a classless being. So the infinitely upwardly mobile soul inhabits a universal space, unburdened with the particulars of biology or sociality. The strongest version of this authenticity is teleological, determinist and tends to ignore the facts of existence and the fate of the overwhelming bulk of humanity, much in the way that people aware of their reincarnations generally know themselves to have been princesses rather than cockroaches.

And so there must be another version of authenticity, one which lies in the fact that my potential is the product of those forces which make me possible. In these terms then, in order to express my true self, whatever transcendences it may effect, I must be true to my making, whether by in/formal acknowledgment or by acting in accord with certain demands on me. This authenticity demands that I not betray my class. It may convince me that my life is set up as an inescapable prison, one in which I am only entitled to shuffle the furniture of my cell. It may equally convince me that I am not capable of betraying my origins, so strongly are they a part of me, and that therefore all of my acts are well grounded. The irony here is that, rather than change the world through an awareness of my origins, the care I take not to change myself ensures that the world continues in the image of the differences which make sense of my origins. We could think of this as the socially immanent version of authenticity.

The problems of this kind of authenticity are perhaps personified in the contradictory relationship which exists where the intellectual, or even the organiser, "represents" the interests of the worker (who cannot speak for her/himself), and thus
speaks for him/her, even makes it his/her livelihood to do so. By participating in society as one who represents others, the organiser loses the credibility and perhaps the confidence of those s/he represents. It is argued that this is a situation pragmatically necessitated by the manner in which employers or governments "represent" the interests of those they employ (i.e. unfairly). But actually all forms of representation face this kind of trouble: the givenness of an authenticity casts doubt on itself merely in the act of representation. The question "Can the subaltern speak?" presents in this sense as the symptom of a larger problem.

The most obvious example of the givenness of authenticity is in personal names. What we call given names provide us with a sign which designates personality, the selfhood of an individual. From a western point of view it appears that societies which resist the use of such personal names in doing so resist and restrain familiarity among selves. The impersonalising use of surnames in a boarding school, the use of the name of a constituency for a parliamentarian, show western societies themselves resist the interests of familiarity in favour of the serious business or strict conduct of society. The most extreme case is probably that of the monarch, who has had to deliberately efface his character in order to fulfil a social function at odds with the expression of personality. In Shakespeare's Richard II, the deposed king describes his position:

I have no name, no title,
No, not that name was given me at the font,
But 'tis usurpt. Alack the heavy day,
That I have worn so many winters out,
And know not what to call myself.

(IV, i, 1983, p. 480)

Later in the Tower, Richard, thus deprived of his authentic self, of the kingly attributes by which he has known himself, muses existentially:

And straight am nothing. But what e'er I be
Nor I, nor any man, that but man is,
With nothing shall be pleas'd, till he be eas'd
With being nothing.

(V,v, 1983, p. 490)

There are versions of transcendence which suppose that the function of enlightenment is not to realise the self beyond its conditions but rather to get beyond the self altogether. This is not only the case with Buddhism but with Sufism and any doctrine which supposes that one is or that it is possible to become part of God. Heidegger's self is "authentically as it can be, that is, free" (1996, p. 359). Apollinaire, in his poem "Victoire" writes:

Listen to the sea
The sea howling and moaning by itself
My voice as faithful as shadow
Would finally be the shadow of life
Would be as unfaithful as you oh living sea
The sea that has betrayed numberless sailors
Swallows my great cries like drowned gods
And the sunlit sea supports nothing but the shadows
Cast by the outstretched wings of birds
The word is sudden and it is a god that trembles
Advance and support me I regret all the hands
That were held out to love me
But what an oasis of arms will reach for me tomorrow
Do you understand this joy at seeing new things

Oh voice I speak the language of the sea
And in port I speak the language of the last taverns
I who have more heads than the hydra of Lerna

The street where my two hands are swimming
Probing the city with subtle fingers
Is moving but who knows maybe tomorrow
The street will stand still
Who knows what path I will take then

Imagine the railroads
May be outmoded and abandoned shortly
Look

Victory will be above all
To see truly into the distance
To see everything
Up close
So that everything can have a new name

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 130)

The fantasy of a telescopic vision is acknowledged by Apollinaire as not getting to an essential pre-signification but rather as inaugurating the work of renaming, perhaps reaching a new order of signification. In that order, or perhaps in the effort of attaining it, the self has recourse to a series of identifications with an outside of its signifying means. If, in such terms, it is far fetched to claim that one speaks in the language of the sea, it might be more difficult to disclaim the sea’s speech in us, to disclaim that is, that the voice inhabits a body in a world of more than voices.

A goal of authenticity might be stated in terms of losing the illusion of self, of freedom, of choice; in order to see how lives are authentically determined; that is, by listening not to hear oneself, seeking to hear and to find others by means of speech. The authenticity of language lies in the betweeness of selves on which it depends (and which depends on it). The Heidegger of Being and Time sees conscience as the transcendence of everyday noise and idle talk (1996, p. 251). But where else can conscience come from? In any of these cases we note the dead-end of an appeal to nature as the beyond or before of words, when our main means of arriving at selves and others is by way of words. A view across languages shows that the veracity and authenticity of particular words has to do with the company words keep, largely in the form of other words.

We think of ourselves as unable to agree with that Cratylus of Socrates’ acquaintance who felt that there was a truth or correctness in names, one which was the same for Hellenes and for barbarians (Plato, 1952, p. 85). But the exigencies of communication force us to treat those words we call names in exactly this way, as if they applied universally to what they stood for.

Of course given names, though personal, can also be common, so that in many cultures individuals are designated by names (often two or three) which are distinctive as sets. Interestingly these names are not normally chosen by those who bear them. In the average Indo-European arrangement of such a set as given name, surname, we note that one name is chosen for us by our parents, the other is a name given them and which we
share with them, a name given before we were thought of, but which, in the manner of
the clan and the line of descent, was always contingent on our coming, as if the pride or
embarrassment of what it means to have been part of a particular family were always
adjustable to its present fortunes. It is along these lines that ancestors may be pleased or
disgraced. The names which serve as our signs, as tokens of ourselves as unique and
individual presences, reveal layers of haunting, shallow and deep (of more and less
retrievable motivation). To circumvent this process by naming yourself (by deed poll or
simple declaration) is marked behaviour, behaviour of which questions are asked. Less
scandalous is the acceptance of a nickname (again a name not chosen by its bearer but at
least by people who associate a person with some manifestation of their character, and not
merely their antecedents) or the adoption of a name for a particular purpose, such as a
stage name or a pen name, even a married name. In the first of the Duino elegies, Rilke
writes of the strangeness of laying aside "even one's proper name like a broken toy". But
he is writing here of the situation of one who inhabits the earth no longer (in Rothenberg

We do not quite succeed in separating the being named which makes you who you
are from the naming which makes things what they are, the world how it is. Yet the
logical conclusion of the version of authenticity which is developed from Wilde to Sartre
is, as we will see, that the expression of self entails an escape from the tyranny of names
and of signs; that somehow names are arbitrary where selves are not, and that if we might
only elude the naming of selves (and perhaps their hailing) then we could be our selves.

As objects we note then that people are signs, but with this difference that, being
subjects as well, they make and modify each other and they make and modify themselves
as signs. They are capable of holding and modifying their own and others' attitudes to
these very facts. Ted Berrigan writes:

I can't stand
to be thing
I don't use

(Hoover, 1994, p. 282)

*

The consideration of elaborated and restricted codes (as in Chapter 3) points to the
fact that we cannot consider consciousness and authenticity as separate issues. Those
most subject to the monolithic habits of a restricted code are likewise most susceptible to
having their consciousness shaped by a universalising mass culture. Acts of
communication not only show, but make us, who we are. The fact of our recognising
language acts as authentic or not (or rather the foregrounding of this possibility in the
perception of inauthenticity), in no way suggests the plausibility of a view outside of such
acts and by which they might be judged. Such an ideal and essentialising view would,
making authenticity a metaphysical phantom, effectively abolish it. The sighting of an
authenticity would then signal its compromise in the fact of its return to the dialogic on-
flow of discourse. And perhaps this is the fate of abstraction in general: to be subsumed
in the seamless substance it stood out from in order to make sense. In the "Eighth Duino
Elegy" Rilke negotiates just such a Fortunatus' purse:

With all their eyes, all creatures see
the open. Only our eyes are
turned around, and surround it
with pitfalls, all around the way to be free.
What is outside, we know from animal
eyes alone; since even the youngest child
we turn around, force it backwards
to see conformity, not the openness that's
so deep in an animal's face. Free from death. Which is what only we see; the free animal has perishing always behind it, and God in front, and when it moves, it moves in eternity, the way springs run. We never, not even one single day, have pure space in front of us, into which the flowers endlessly arise...

Always turned towards creation we see only a mirroring of the free dimmed by our breath. Or an animal, wordless, looks up quietly and sees right through us. That's what destiny means: to be opposite and nothing but that, and always opposite.

If consciousness of our sort existed in the sure animal that draws close to us on his own other path, he would change our course with his kind of life. Since for him, being is unending, ungrasped and without glimpse of his condition, pure, just like his gaze. And where we see the future, he sees everything and himself in everything and healed for ever.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 352-3)

The sight of humans seems in this account to be mediated by its means of being said or shared, a situation which leads to envy of the "bliss of littlest creatures/ that remain forever in the womb that bore them", leaving us perhaps as if we, among words are always

in the posture
of someone who's going away (?) As he on the last hill, that will show him his whole valley one last time, turns round, pauses, lingers - we live that way forever saying goodbye.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 352-3)

Ekelöf deals with the capacity of reflection to confound the apparent simplicity of such life and death negotiations as who we are, how we become and unbecome:

Birth is simple:
You become you
Death is simple:
You are no longer you
It might have been the other way around
As in a mirror world:
Death could have borne you
And life extinguished you
- One way is as good as the other -
And perhaps it is that way:
It is from death that you have emerged
And life is slowly effacing you.

(1971, p. 94)
The closer together we coax these abstractions, consciousness and authenticity, the stronger our conviction becomes that they are mutually exclusive: the more we know of ourselves, the less ourselves we are. On the other hand the less we know ourselves the more we are prey to patterns which render us irredeemably a part of the wallpaper of humanity, which place us, that is, where we can make no difference, and which in placing us there, as it were obstacles in the path of consciousness, ensure in Socratic terms, that our authenticity is not worth living. In the terms Marx elaborated in "The German Ideology", our consciousness and our life process are each equally degraded.

There are exceptions which more than prove this rule. The psychotic killer — for instance Ivan Milat — is one (except in a certain sort of war) fallen well below any socially acceptable measure of self-awareness. He knows and does not know the effects of what he does but he revels in those effects, at least a part of him revels in the fact of his making a difference, this being the manner of his escape from the wallpaper of humanity. His authenticity ever after lies in the difference he has made, in being permanently tied as a name to an event to grief. Perhaps he is through this chain the cause of his own death which he must come to in remorse or triumph, or in the disinterest of a recognised madness. The media are constantly on the watch for these cataclysmic failures of consciousness, which, lacking as they do any convincing explanation, delight us with fear and ambivalent concern for our present safety and survival.

* * *

There is another variety of the "I am how I was made to be" theorem, on which science has had an impact. This might be thought of as a biological immanence: I get to myself, I get to be myself by cutting through all of the social stuff standing between me and my potential (we might as well say destiny). This is a comfortable logic for murderers, whom we infer are as they were meant to be, cannot help but be, and so deserve our sympathy. Whether we are more or less likely to offer our sympathy to murderers, it is in the terms of such a biological immanence that we remember our animal nature in viewing the actions of other animals. It is, as in Wislawa Szymborska's poem, only with difficulty, that we refuse their anthropomorphism:

In Praise of Self-Deprecation

The buzzard has nothing to fault himself with.
Scruples are alien to the black panther.
Piranhas do not doubt the rightness of their actions.
The rattlesnake approves of himself without reservations.

The self-critical jackal does not exist.
The locust, alligator, trichina, horsefly
live as they live and are glad of it.

The killer-whale's heart weighs one hundred kilos
but in other respects it is light.

There is nothing more animal-like
than a clear conscience
on the third planet of the sun.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 21)

Are animals (other than ourselves) selves? Is there a measure of their authenticity?
Trying not to see them as such we may still attribute to them gladness and light hearts and clear consciences.
The revolt of the small (Ivan Milat, any animal acting alone) serves to reinforce a
general pattern where, in the terms of Lukács' dichotomy between contemplative
and dynamic consciousness (in Zizek, 1994, p. 180), we may come to see action and
consciousness, however mutually dependent they are, as the respective outside of each
other. In Anselm Hollo's poem "The Dream of Instant Total Representation":

Even if telepathy were perfected –
and instant global communication –
where on earth would we find
statespersons, legislators, bureaucrats
able to withstand such an incredible onslaught
of info? Would the result not be total
overload, fried circuits, the screaming meemies?

Yet each and every ant knows exactly what
it has to be doing every second,
the whole shebang self-contained
and self-informing –

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 289)

Consciousness may be an act and acts may be the expression of consciousness but I act to
the extent and in the fact of my transcending that awareness in which I act. I reflect on
those actions and on my awareness of them only at the expense of acting. By this account
what I continuously sacrifice in the act of awareness is my spontaneity. But such a
separation assumes that we can do only one of these things at a time whereas in fact, as
we have seen with meaning in general, we are capable of a simultaneity, in this case, of
acts and of consciousness. In Valéry's terms, we think and we are, all at once, all the
time. Hollo's poem "The Dream of Instant Total Representation" ends as follows:

To paraphrase Blaise Pascal, I'd rather be
a confused, blundering, warm-blooded
hairy creature with language
to complain in, to praise with, no matter what,
than nature's prototype for the microchip.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 289)

If, as already claimed (in chapter 3) consciousness is a human nature, it has to be
conceded that our abstraction of this, our means of knowing it, is in the manner of
meaning: it arises dialogically. Consciousness feels as if it were anterior to language but
it is principally in language that consciousness lies between subjects and it is between
subjects that consciousness is shaped.

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If Socrates has been credited, by means of an ambivalence to oral and literate
technologies, with the invention of the "self" (Ulmer, 1994, p. 92), then the original of
the problem of authenticity in Western thought is one we easily trace to Plato's cave.
There the unreality associated with the visible everyday world is contrasted with the
inaccessible original of those manifestations among which we live confused. Rousseau,
in the essay "On the Origin of Inequality" undoes this primacy of the ideal for the real,
and of the mind over its objects, arguing:

the mind depraves the senses, and the will continues to speak when nature is silent.
Every animal has ideas, since it has senses; it even combines those ideas in a certain degree, and it is only in degree that man differs, in this respect, from the brute... It is not... so much the understanding that constitutes the specific difference between the man and the brute as the human quality of free-agency. (1952, p. 338)

Rousseau's noble savage is the ironic victim of a spirit of authenticity in which the frontiersman (by whose means the savage is known) returns to nature, especially to his own brute instincts, necessary in his situation both because of the relative absence of civilisation and in order to secure its foothold. Likewise in Australia the social Darwinism which came to explain, if not justify, the savage depredations whites visited on a dwindling population of blacks can be seen as the virulent exercise of asociality by an avowedly civilised culture on those who appeared, to the civilised, to have no society at all.

The belief, covert or otherwise, that those without our beliefs are not properly selves, has been belied by the attendant conviction that such souls can be damned eternally. Thus worldly cruelty is not only augmented by the infinitely longer variety, but actually justified on the grounds that it is both divinely instituted and could, accompanied by the appropriate instruction, lead to redemption. The idea of universal brotherhood makes proselytic religion credible.

Whether I proselytise or not, the fact remains that were I made by and in the image of a deity, or idea elsewhere than in those of like sentence to myself, the expression of an authentic self would surely need to reflect the fact of that light from elsewhere. How that light should shine on or be withheld from unbelievers has been the subject of continual doctrinal dispute. Whether being true to that light would entail a transcendence or an immanence would be a moot point: the choice between a Hebrew god who is everywhere or Thales' everything full of gods.

Shakespeare's King Lear is a text which deals in this kind of ambivalence, between those authenticities which pursue characters as if a light from within and those authenticities which are pursued by characters in the manner of what, in a modern novelistic sense, is the expression of personality. Lear and Glosfer are in the former category, Kent in the latter. Cordelia has a foot in both camps. Each character in the play moves ambiguously among those options. For Cordelia's sisters the play opens with what turns out to be the crucial game of humouring their father as to who he is, who they are and what is between them. They separate their consciousness of the effects of following or not following their father's wishes from the expression of what they might feel. A simple act of what is later learnt to be inauthenticity gets them what they want, what they believe to be their due; simply because for their father at the beginning of the play there is no separation between consciousness and authenticity: all are as they believe themselves to be, which in turn as their roles demand. Cordelia's intervention which begins the play's action is a refusal (of the inauthenticity demanded of her) premised on a consciousness of relationships and their meaning and operation, to which her father, in his kingly powers and persona, is blind. The consciousness which drives Cordelia's refusal, in finding herself unable to heave her heart into her mouth, subsequently drives the action of the play. Lear's fatal flaw is to not see his own effects in the affect or lack of it generated around his actions and demands, to not see the crack of light showing between the apparent and the real. Once Cordelia reveals that crack, Lear's fate is sealed. We could say of Lear that he has hoped to live in a denotative world where people are expected to represent themselves transparently. Lear is fated to see how appearance has misled him, how he has misled himself by encouraging the inauthenticity of those around him.

What begins as an ironic questioning of the unnaturalness of those with duties to him, (asking Goneril "Are you our daughter?", "Does any here know me?", "Who is it
that can tell me who I am?" (IV, 1983, p. 1595) merges seamlessly with full blown madness. Lear comes to see himself as 'a very foolish, fond old man", one "bound upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears do scold like molten lead." Lear has opened himself to an intricate pattern of deceptions and disguises, some of which serve and some of which oppose interests he has been incompetent, from the play's inception, either to articulate or act on. The doubt that he experiences of those around him, culminates in a generalised doubt as to where he is: "for I am mainly ignorant/ What place this is; and all the skill I have/ Remember not these garments; nor I know not/ Where I did lodge last night". When finally Kent disabuses him of the idea that he might be in France, replying to Lear's question, "In your own kingdom, sir", Lear responds to this by challenging that appearance of possession: "Do not abuse me" (IV, vii, 1983, pp. 1632-3).

The theme of sight misleading, and its implications for legitimacy is prevalent throughout, highlighted in Gloster's blinding and Lear's response: "A man may see how this world goes with no eyes" (IV, iv, 1983, p. 1629). The voice, as in Kent's feigned accent as disguise, is similarly suspect, and easily takes in the king. And yet Lear never eludes the notion of a king, expecting till the climax that nature should treat him as befits a monarch. Even going to prison with Cordelia, he calls himself and her "God's spies" (V, iii, 1983, p. 1637). Lear himself is the resolution of the conflict between authenticity and consciousness, achieving both at the same moment, on the brink of madness. Indeed Lear's lesson may be that to perfectly both know and be yourself is madness.

Even dying, though, even maddened to the point of death, Lear remains true to his driving flaw, seeking the terrible truth in appearance, turning our gaze to Cordelia's lips, whence issued the transgression which brings us to here: "Look on her, look, her lips, Look there! look there!" (V, iii, 1983, p. 1642). Albany leaves us with the play's injunction: "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (V, iii, 1983, p. 1642). The action has shown that easier said than done.

The version of authenticity which King Lear establishes is one in opposition to official consciousness. Albany's parting injunction suggests that there is in selves something deeper than the roles assigned in society. And yet we are left with a question as to whether those characters with whom we identify (especially Lear, Gloster, Kent, Cordelia, Edmund and the Fool) live out their buried selves despite the roles in which they are caught, or whether they are struggling to be beyond their roles and so to find themselves, outside as it were, the forms and experiences which have made them. As destinies and fatal flaws are characteristic of tragedy we are inclined to the former option; as the Renaissance mind is one open to its own analogies and means of invention a transcendent view of selfhood seems to apply. This ambivalence is characteristic of Shakespeare's success in the moment, not only which he made his, but which he occupies for readers since his time.

This adaptation of one context's truth to the conditions of another time demonstrates, for we moderns, that if it is not entirely up to us how we decide to be in relation to the great truths of our society, yet we do have acts to perform, beyond those merely assigned by role, and there is volition in those acts. The traps of Shakespeare's tragic heroes are not the flat traps of epic characters. Their fates are sealed more in the manner of the user of a particular drug, one who persists despite a certain knowledge that death will be the outcome, than in the manner of a man whose name is written on a bullet – an Oedipus for instance.

The lesson about truth here, if we allow there to be one, is much as in Nietzsche's mobile army of metaphors. Or as Lear's Fool declares: "Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out" (I,v, 1983, p. 1594). Truth is a servant of purposes, something alive between participants in society. It only matters when it is somewhere, is only known where it is contested and otherwise lies in the realm of sense which is common by
virtue of lying unchallenged. Shakespeare’s transgression of the fixity of truths is one which prefigures the cultural relativism of Vico. It prefigures as well the demands of the heteroglot novel which Bakhtin will spell out in Dostoevsky’s case as illustrated by the fact that “two thoughts are already two people, for there are no thoughts belonging to no one and every thought represents an entire person” (1994, p. 102).

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For Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy, Hamlet’s message is that: “Understanding kills action, action depends on a veil of illusion” (1993, p. 39). We might argue that it is in blurring the difference we suppose to exist between acting and being (or rather the consciousness of being which Sartre argues is the being of consciousness [1989, p. 31]) that we become who we are and thus live out the destiny of the Socratic life worth living. There is a haunting in the ambivalence of corporeal/psychic continuities: I am and I am not what I was. For Bakhtin, in “Literature as Ideological Form”, metamorphosis is a literary theme which “serves as the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual’s life in its more important moments of crisis: for showing how an individual becomes other than what he was” (1994, p. 185). But there is, in the general plot of life, no moment in which I disown the skin I was in. Any intention of pronouncing my own surpassing is defeated in the attempt. Am I half the self I was? More? Less? For Sartre it is in the nature of the horror which carries me towards the future that my consciousness of being my own future is anguish. That horror abolishes itself just as my decisive conduct is to emanate from a self which I am not yet. There remains anguish in the face of the past. Sartre represents this as the gambler’s resolution not to gamble being surpassed by his consciousness of it (1989, pp. 32-3). It is not merely the case, as in Nietzsche’s reading of Hamlet, that consciousness defeats authenticity, authenticity equally undoes the hope of knowledge, because it folds the known into the unknowable flux of action. The circle of Sartrian bad faith is one in which I flee in order not to know, but I cannot avoid knowing that I am fleeing (1989, p. 43). Authenticity and consciousness each thus function as obstacles for the other.

Nietzsche’s notion of authenticity derives from a deep opposition to Platonist idealism. The version of authenticity against which Nietzsche wishes most strenuously to argue is that of the saint, one whose character is marked by the complete abandonment of personality (Human, All Too Human, 1994, p. 97). The saint’s character is the logical conclusion of the tenet that authenticity entails a transcendence of the conditions of selfhood in favour of those established in the mind of God. The saint for Nietzsche, is by definition the one who does not know himself (1994, p. 101). But for Nietzsche the term authenticity is sometimes problematic, and if not evanescent, perhaps at least something unable to be recognised in one’s self: “But what measure, what scale is there for their (geniuses’) authenticity? Is it not almost imperative to be distrustful of anyone who has feelings of this kind?” (1994, p. 108). The question we need eventually to ask of Nietzsche is whether it is his bound or his free spirit which is authentic:

The bound spirit assumes a position, not for reasons, but out of habit; he is a Christian, for example, not because he had insight into the various religions and chose among them; he is an Englishman not because he decided for England; but rather Christianity and England were givens, and he accepted them without having reasons, as someone who was born in a wine country becomes a wine drinker. (1994, p. 140)

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We can easily see the version of authenticity as social immanence as one requiring a passivity of the subject, who simply is as s/he is, and not by virtue of any personal act or consciousness of situation. Opposed to this, for the individualist authenticity is the
expression of the person who lifts him or herself out of bad faith in order to express a self: Shakya, the historical Buddha, and Christ-as-man would be prime examples. The notion that authenticity entails the passivity of being in one's role has fared particularly poorly among many philosophers of our century. The general existential assumption has been the opposite of this: that sociality is what prevents the individual from expressing an authentic self. Heidegger, Sartre, de Beauvoir are all concerned, as was Oscar Wilde, with an authenticity which is effected by means of an escape from the real conditions enabling the self. Wilde tells us that: "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth" (1963, p. 887). In "The Critic as Artist" he writes of the dangers to art in sincerity: "What people call insincerity is simply a method by which we can multiply our personalities" (1963, p. 889).

It is Foucault who brings most forcefully back to earth the fantasy of the self's stepping beyond its enabling technologies. But where, in Foucault, is authenticity? The leitmotif of Foucault's essay, "What is an author?", is the rhetorical question, borrowed from Beckett, "What does it matter who is speaking?" Foucault prognosticates a future society in which the author function will disappear and in which all discourses would develop the anonymity of a murmur, so that we "would no longer hear the questions that have been rehearsed for so long: Who really spoke? Is it really he and not someone else? With what authenticity or originality?" (1991, p. 119). In such a world the authority of an identifiable voice will have been obviated by, or sacrificed to, contingency: the lack of a convincing narrative in which such a pseudo-hero as an author could maintain a role, the fragmented nature of genealogy, the absence of a normative centre from which any subject's or text's authenticity could be measured. Foucault believes that the question as to what part of his innermost self an author expresses will be replaced by questions such as the following: "What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects?" Behind these questions one will hear no more than "the stirring of an indifference" as to the question of who is speaking (1991, p. 120).

In 1998 with the advent of internet technologies and their bewildering of authority and copyright, it is difficult not to read Foucault as prophetic. But it is equally important not to take these words as a nihilist injunction. It should be remembered that elsewhere Foucault exhorts us towards an "art of living counter to all forms of fascism", in which we should: "Prefer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems." When Foucault encourages the tracking down of all forms of fascism, "from the enormous ones that surround and crush us to the petty ones that constitute the tyrannical bitterness of our everyday lives" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, pp. xiii-xiv), we are left with the feeling that there is an authentic mission to live up to, at least for the critical mind. As long as we remain in the epoch of selves, and whether works are authored or not, there will remain in reading and writing efforts at self-invention: being what one was not, becoming what one could not have been before. And if these efforts can only be regarded as rehearsals of a self (which perhaps distracts in the manner of a Platonic essence) there nevertheless remains a self to lie under the erasure of becoming self. And so that self has an authenticity to live down or live up to. Such a phantom authenticity is as illusory and prospective as the selves which seek it. And yet this is the risk of selves: to become, to decide to be something, someone, to be a body where it goes, to be on the way.

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This is stuff you mainly get to do with words. Of course words do it to you. Heidegger's problem is that he has us as servants of language but he expects our authenticity to be a transcendence of what language makes us to be. Heidegger's authenticity is only in anticipation (1996, p. 245). Lyotard's differend, as well Rorty's final vocabularies, depend on the acceptance or rejection of the truth-in-names. It is by
these commitments to relativism, that they, as Foucault, escape the tag "metaphysician"; a vocation which condemns one to believe in the truth-in-names as if it were out there, and not merely that truth in which our day-to-day lives have no choice but to be lived.

Whether authenticity is immanent in or transcendent of sociality, it depends on the presence of a voice of which I can say, without illusion or provocation, without affecting any pose, without trying to impress: This is mine. There are degrees of this to the extent that no one has such a voice in every context. No one is perfectly anonymous in their exercise of words, either mentally or in community with others. Everyone has, however, crowds in which to hide. In any case the effort at playing out the implications of an authenticity leads back to questions as follow. Is this authenticity of mine something I carry around with me inadvertently and despite the world which I inhabit? Must I not reply that this is an impossibility because my self is the product of forces which transcend it and which cannot be held in check by my self? And yet in the very act of speaking with the words I am given, if it really is an act, I transcend them: both the words and the act in which they become mine. Is my authenticity then a transcendence? This would also appear to be impossible because I am haunted, I really am the sum of meanings which I carry as the potential I am to express. It appears to be the case then that consciousness and authenticity actually entail each other because the unreflective consciousness we at first demand of authenticity is in fact impossible: we can only begin to become ourselves by knowing ourselves. Perhaps in this way I am a sum of selves which lie over enabling each other and, as in Norman Maccaig's poem, "Summer Farm", not without metaphysical pretensions:

Straws like tame lightnings lie about the grass
And hang zigzag on hedges. Green as glass
The water in the horse-trough shines.
Nine ducks go wobbling by in two straight lines.

A hen stares at nothing with one eye.
Then picks it up. Out of an empty sky
A swallow falls and, flickering through
The barn, dives again into the dizzy blue.

I lie, not thinking, in the cool, soft grass,
Afraid of where a thought might take me –
The grasshopper with plated face
Unfolds his legs and finds himself in space.

Self under self, a pile of selves I stand
Threaded on time and with metaphysic hand
Lift the farm like a lid and see
Farm within farm, and in the centre, me.

(in Heaney and Hughes, 1997, pp. 124-5)

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If, as for Socrates, knowing thyselv is the way to the life worth living then the true expression of the self is the reflexive path, one everywhere rejoining itself and in which self-knowledge is forever deepened. On the other hand if reflection is a self-defeating process in which spontaneity is lost in favour of the theatrical, indeed political, acts of one who considers her/his every next effect, then reflection must be the enemy of

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94 For the Socrates of the *Meno* the truth within the self borne by the transmigrated soul is what makes teaching impossible and the process of learning one of recollection.
authenticity: it represents a path in which, departing ever further from action, knowledge of the self becomes ever shallower and more confused. A third alternative would combine those above so that this lostness would be regarded as inevitable and therefore authentic, a circle we cannot step out of.

But is there available to introspection a social and transcendent version of the self, one which obviates the need to pretend itself outside of words? There is the social self which becomes and has its effects through words: the dialogic self, the self of inner and outer speech. Everyone wants to grab an end of this self and tug it out of the dialogue which makes it possible. Even Bakhtin pulls the epic out of its dialogic context in order to make it the bad guy. If the epic past is frozen and its appeals are as to nature then we note that this is not because it and they were ever thus, but rather it and they are the result of interaction and turntaking: the epic too arose dialogically.

These questions can only be important for poetry to the extent that there are choices to be exercised in un/deciding them. If all that I write is about myself, however concerned I am in the ethics of my presence, adopting this or another angle on life or writing becomes equally futile. Efforts at self-knowledge bring me no closer to it than would abstention from them. Equally efforts to ignore my situation are doomed because my acts are informed by what enables them. Failing to escape myself, my possibilities and what conditions them, I might as well go back to where and how I was before, to the unreflective being I was. Except that this is not an option because that then and there is no longer mine. Perhaps I never was an unreflective being. Whatever you call the processes of enlightenment or delusion which have brought me thus far, the fact is they have brought me, the journey is mine, and I cannot just switch on a convenient sort of amnesia which rewrites and erases those introspections which hindsight deems not to have been of value. Or is it rather the case that I merely lack an ethical justification for such homeostatic practices?

Where the memory is lost or displaced the particularity of facts may have a hope of redeeming it. What works for poetry in this, its authenticity, is a truth to the particularity of a journey, the personalisation of publicly available processes; those processes which the poem returns to the public as now somebody's: a public version of the world. "I'm here to define myself and I'm telling you who I am and what I'm doing it for", David Antin tells us (in Hoover, 1994, p. 246). Lowell's offering, in Life Studies, of a seamy real self under the highly wrought artistry of the poem can only work because it offers a reader points of identification in the life which for the reader, too, has been hidden. In Charles Bukowski's "crucifix in a deathhand", what is confessed to in the personality of time's passage is not any rite but the realisation of its absence:

25 years ago there used to be a whore there with a film over one eye, who was too fat and made little silver bells out of cigarette tinfoil. the sun seemed warmer then although this was probably not true, and you take your shopping bag outside and walk along the street and the green beer hangs there just above your stomach like a short and shameful shawl, and you look around and no longer see any old men.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 56)

The poem does not seek evidence for or against a proposition. It frames propositions as evidence for and against themselves. The sun might have been warmer then but such a
comparison is to be doubted immediately it comes to mind. The poem is a kind of scavenging among the discarded of enquiry, thus a home for unwanted memories and so for the return of the repressed. The "findings" of poetry, unlike those of a science, are never privileged with having been right. Poetry, by this means, may buy itself out of the homeostatic traps of prescription and amnesia.

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In the here and now Australian society continues to be one in which all sorts of convenient amnesias are able to be switched on. The decades of dispossession were followed by decades of amnesia, so that assimilation was their continuation under another name. A characteristic (and sometimes literal) expression of amnesia in the sixties, before Random Breath Testing, was the hungover male's excuse: "Can't remember how I got home". Not remembering how we got here has been a national pastime, it has been for us the sine qua non of nationhood. This refusal of reflection is as authentically Australian a posture as any other we can name. It was a real response to a certain kind of horror, a real aversion to a certain knowledge which touched on the meaning of being here. It was a subversion of the homeostatic circuit of collective self-justification and as such a means of disconnecting oneself from the official means of being here, this in favour of merely being here in the now. It was, as the Ivan Milat of the Belangelo joke, a displacement of fear from the mindset of the killer or potential killer or accessory after the fact. The primal crime enabling possession by such means is naturalised, cast back into the before of history, the before of civilisation; so that we now are neither implicated nor competent to offer evidence. It is as if there were a means of forgetting, even a temporary means, which could serve as absolution. Just as amnesia en masse was the authentic means by which one or more generations coped with the contradiction of their fine ideals being founded on genocide, so the question for the children of that amnesia is how to respond authentically to a knowledge of it.

Authority

It may be the case, as Foucault suggests, that it no longer matters who is speaking. That contingency would, as Foucault acknowledges, place an emphasis on the possibility of assuming a particular subjectivity. In the case of poetry, we learn from the expectation of modesty encumbent in not declaring oneself a poet, something about the relationship between poetry's originary personae and the canon which will include or exclude their productions. As in Vicente Huidobro's "Ars Poetica", the maintenance of a distance between the person writing and the potentials of the subjectivity that person practises - via observation, statement, exhortation - allows the proposed personae of any such writing far greater scope than any individual could sanely claim:

Let poetry be a key
Opening a thousand doors.
A leaf falls; something flies by;
Let all the eye sees be created
And the soul of the listener tremble.

Invent new worlds and watch your word;
The adjective, when it doesn't give life, kills it.

We are in the age of nerves.
The muscle hangs,
Like a memory, in museums;
But we are not the weaker for it:
True vigor
Resides in the head.

Oh Poets, why sing of roses!
Let them flower in your poems;

For us alone
Do all things live beneath the sun.

The poet is a little God.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 185)

Lawrence Ferlinghetti offers an existential if ironic, post-modern and less messianic version of the poet's subject position in "Constantly risking absurdity":

Constantly risking absurdity and death
whenever he performs above the heads of his audience
the poet like an acrobat
climbs on rime
to a high wire of his own making
and balancing on eyebeams above a sea of faces
paces his way to the other side of day
performing entrechats and sleight-of-foot tricks
and other high theatrics and all without mistaking any thing for what it may not be

For he's the super realist who must perforce perceive
taut truth before the taking of each stance or step
in his supposed advance toward that still higher perch
where Beauty stands and waits with gravity
to start her death-defying leap

And he a little charleychaplin man who may or may not catch
her fair eternal form spreadeagled in the empty air of existence

(in Hoover, 1994, pp. 45-6)

Postmodern poetry's most convincing subject matter may be in its evocation and evasion of subject positions in the circuit of personae through which the poem is able, even if notionally, to circulate. The habitus of the poet today, if it has this coherence, is acquired in stages, which while they may reflect the forms and content of the canon, by no means
guarantee inclusion. The community of the living is real; the community of poetry's holy saints, useful as it is to us, involuntary as it may be in writing processes, lives in our imagination. And yet we choose our company there. What kind of community do we have without it?

At the poetry reading where we feel the writing is bad because those reading have lost their voice in the effort of turning their stories — which in conversation they could tell well — into self-consciously literary artefacts, what we experience is authenticity wrecked by consciousness, wrecked by, in other words, trying too hard. What makes the head throb? The sincerity to which Wilde alludes? The endless sameness of sentiments claimed as uniquely personal but scattered about as if they ought to be immediately recognised? This is Bernstein's restricted code dignified as public event. It is not that these people do not know what they are doing. They affect styles, they can tell you what kind of poem they do. But somehow they lack the humility to see what it is that they cannot do. Like the indefatigable crooner whose kara-oke accompaniment is turned off to the horror of the audience, they think they have the skill they lack. Everyone who seriously writes poems experiences the doubt that they might be as these serious poetasters are. The irony here (as best exemplified perhaps in the example of grammatical hyper-correctness) is that the canon seems to weigh heaviest on those whose knowledge of it is most imperfect: the less we know the more we conform, the less we have to conform to.

In claiming these bad writer-readers as victims of, as it were, the effort of canonic consciousness, we suggest that they have failed to achieve a consciousness which their authenticity would be able to survive. If only they wouldn't force those rhymes, if they could just stick to their natural voice rhythms, then I'd be able to hear them. But as in the paradox of the Cretan liar we find ourselves having to acknowledge that the bad poet cannot know that s/he is bad: ignorance is the condition of her/his bliss. How is this catch different from that by which Lyotard approaches the issue of the differend, namely by way of the author or work whose exclusion from the canon proves that s/he has not been overlooked? Apart from the problem entailed in a critique of such a position which assumes a position over it, are we not falling into the trap of recognising the bad poet as two selves: the authentic one of her/his daemons and the inauthentic one which makes the (failed) effort at consciousness? Why should we not regard that aspect of the bad poet which makes the effort, after all the effort towards poetry, as the authentic one? Is trying-too-hard not an authentic expression of selfhood? In the first of his "Fifteen False Propositions Against God" Jack Spicer writes:

The self is no longer real  
It is not like loneliness  
This big huge loneliness. Sacrificing  
All of the person with it.  
Bigger people  
I'm sure have mastered it.  
"Beauty is so rare a thing," Pound sings  
"So few drink at my fountain."

(1975, p. 87)

And if the self is irremediably divided then which of its parts are we to call authentic, which inauthentic? Does authenticity consist in some movement among these? Or is the self one more, perhaps the key among, Platonic mirages, the no longer real; one bolstered by the idea of the authentic, one for which psychoanalysis may furnish a cure, at least a clue?

Denise Levertov's poem "Matins" takes up such negotiations:

The authentic! Shadows of it
sweep past in dreams, one could say imprecisely,
evoking the almost-silent
ripping apart of giant sheets of cellophane. No.
It thrusts up close. Exactly in dreams
it has you off guard, you
recognize it before you have time.

The authentic, defined later as a joy (a terrible one), is that which undermines the
knowledge in which it is apprehended. It is always already missed or surpassed ("rolls /
just out of reach"). This is what its signs show:

The authentic! I said
rising from the toilet seat....
it's always a recognition, the known
appearing fully itself, and
more itself than anyone knew.

For this persona the authentic is a "shadow painted where/ yes, a shadow must fall"
(1967, pp. 27-30). Authenticity is of its nature (as an abstraction of consciousness)
something never finalised, always subject to revision. Hence Oscar Wilde's truth in
masks. Acting, in both senses of the word, is how we become, because it is by
pretending (i.e. out of the imagination) and by doing (and being done to) that we manage
to be anyone. Acting then embodies the contradiction of authenticity, which is only
available to consciousness. Consciousness is of its nature (as the free play of sentient
being) a manner of apprehension in which the unfolding world presents as already
finished, as names and facts. The moment I know who or what I am, I have surrendered
my authenticity. And for what? Self-knowledge, in rendering me other than the object I
sought to know, unfailingly defeats itself. What appeared to be mutually exclusive
choices have turned out to be mutually inclusive ones because we are forced to admit that
authenticity itself is not only the object of consciousness, not only the result of conscious
negotiations and resistances, but also appears to constitute in itself a style of
consciousness. Relax. Be yourself. Make yourself at home. We say this meaning we are
stressed by the stress you demonstrate in the act of (we assume) being inauthentic, with
the object (we assume) of impressing us that you are how you imagine we would want or
expect you to be. How can I possibly, through all this complex of spoken and unspoken
negotiation, be myself or make myself at home?

If we hope to associate this exponent of a new round of abstraction, authentic
consciousness, with Bernstein's restricted code, perhaps to oppose it as such to reflexive
consciousness (the avowed consciousness of consciousness with which both literary and
philosophical discourses have sought to endow themselves) then again we need to
acknowledge not only, as we have, that consciousness and authenticity devour and entail
each other, but also that our access to either concept (and thus the dichotomy) is
permanently compromised by the fact of our only having one means of approach. The
authentic mind is such only to the extent that it succeeds in achieving an unconsciousness
of consciousness, which we can only know through recourse to a reflexive process,
which nevertheless provides no guarantee of understanding itself, its means or its other.
This is the problem Wittgenstein tackles in his essay "Thinking" where he writes:

"What happens when a man suddenly understands?" – The question is badly
framed. If it is a question about the meaning of the expression "sudden
understanding", the answer is not to point to a process that we give this name to.
(1994, p. 112)

If "primitive" thought is to be credited with achieving an unconsciousness of its
own processes, we can proceed nowhere with this postulate because any evidence
accumulated in its favour would only serve to prove, as Said does in developing a theory
of Orientalism, that what we know of our others is at best compromised knowledge. It is
a knowledge which though regarded as universal, can actually only be ours: a kind of self-defeated reflection, which while failing to acknowledge itself as such, yet may in Socratic terms make life very livable. Islam writes:

Othering does not produce the other; it only produces an othered-other. One cannot produce the other. The other is so radically inscrutable in being an outside or infinity that it eludes the othering of the subject (the master). In other words, the other remains beyond the representational capture – designation or predication – of the subject. If the other were to remain other, it would remain beyond representation. (1996, p. 80)

If anything exists behind the abstraction we know as the primitive mind it is both inaccessible and irrelevant to the civilised mind which dreams of itself and on its own terms in imagining a state anterior to its own.

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I have written that that myth derives its authority from dreams, but perhaps it also takes from these its simulation of authenticity. Dreams may be regarded as authentic experience but theirs are not experiences in the usual sense of the word. Experience is of a world which selves inhabit, dream interior to those selves. Yet what else but the world can dreams experience? In dreams we imagine that we are who we are precisely because in dreams we cease deliberately acting. There is no one to impress in dreams, no one but ourselves. Yet what can dreams be but acting, but fiction, when they can only refer to, but not participate in, a real world? It is in this way that dreams model the relationship which exists between "real" worlds and literature (including myth) in general. Dreams without a waking world to refer to – what would they be? And a waking which dreaming never interrupted, which never paused to take account (but in that way of not accounting which dreams have)? We must imagine madness there. There is no question then of a connection, the question is how to approach the mystery of those flows between, in which the waking and dreaming worlds sustain or derail each other.

Dreams, in their relation to waking, model the inversion which characterises the world as ideological. Discounted in more or less the way that false consciousness is discounted (by a view over it, a waking view) dreams offer the thetic consciousness a pause in its process, which allows stock to be taken, by, as it were, a view outside of but not over that consciousness. By this means the thetic is able to iterate a commencement which the metaphorical principle inscribes (Lacan, 1980, p. 158). Forgetting, we wake to the selves we were, cleave to those selves where we have changed by virtue of acts which have no (exter) world to act on. In dreams we only act but act authentically, in waking life we are but act. Waking, we act as well on other selves and signs, in flesh if also virtually. But it is the authentic acts of the dreamer which provide an interruption in the continuous burial of the signs of equivalence enabling speech. And it is for this interruption, no doubt, that dreams have since antiquity and in many cultures been prized as inspirational and as well tied to poetic processes. Ambiguity and overdetermination (in the acting of the dreamer) are what psychoanalysis approaches by means of condensation and displacement. In waking language is polysemous and mutable because it is between subjects, between contexts; never right nor wrong, rather fitting or not. Dream and cultural artefact, as enoncé, as objects of memory, stand out of the immediate circuit of words and acts, yet depend on these for their sense and survival. That sense and survival rely, not on the assertion of metaphysical truths for all time, rather on the polyvalent means they serve and establish in standing between contexts.

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95 Ursula Le Guin's novel The Lathe of Heaven is a study of the hypothetical case of a subject whose dreaming is immediately effected in the external world (1971, passim).
It is difficult not to conflate some key thelemics here. The relationship between dream and waking states appears to model that between the sides of a differend, between for instance, official and unofficial consciousness. Is the other side not always dreaming? Disputes between official and unofficial consciousness frame appeals to authenticity in just the manner of the differend which divides Lear and Cordelia at the beginning of their tragedy. Each sees the other misapprehending the real state of affairs.

Is history like this? Is it the picture of a world in which the waking always run the risk, as Descartes did in the Meditations, of being caught dozing, so waking to a world unlike the one known, and in which selves are no longer themselves? Such is the world that Walter Wanger's 1956 anti-communist/anti-McCarthyist (depending on your reading position) horror spoof Invasion of the Body Snatchers parodies: a moment's sleep is enough for the alien mind to get hold of you and there goes your soul. Your past, all the past will have a different meaning then. You look the same, you know everything you knew before but you are not you. You do not feel anything because, in the manner of the dreamer, you are not quite in the world.

Between white and black in this country the differend appears to be much as between dreaming and waking. How can, for instance, Koori read gubba consciousness but as a succession of dreamstates which open onto each other without a moment's waking: the dream of an empty land, the dream of a dying race, the dream of their becoming us, the dream that all is forgiven and that one speaks on equal terms. Kenneth Slessor's 'South Country' conflates imageries of dream and death, land and its secrets of loss and betrayal, white and black, presence and absence, all with an oneric assurance of the repressed returning, coded, insistent, as a truth "feeling its way to air":

South Country

After the whey-faced anonymity
Of river-gums and scribbly gums and bush,
After the rubbing and the hit of brush,
You come to the south country

As if the argument of trees were done,
The doubts and quarrelling, the plots and pains,
All ended by these clear and gliding planes
Like an abrupt solution.

And over the flat earth of empty farms
The monstrous continent of air floats back
Coloured with rotting sunlight and the black
Bruised flesh of thunderstorms:

Air arched, enormous, pounding the bony ridge,
Ditches and hutchies with a drench of light,
So huge from such infinites of height,
You walk on the sky's beach

While even the dwindling hills are small and bare,
As if rebellious, buried, pitiful,
Something below pushed up a knob of skull,
Feeling its way to air.

(1963, p. 112)

If history is allowed any continuity it is in the accumulation of judgements allowed by those judgements which have succeeded them. It depends on the waking mind's
achieved continuity. A rupture occurs where the compounding of crimes becomes, in this process, unsustainable. Where one cannot remain awake one is bound—from throw a couple of clichés together—for a rude awakening, bound to wake up to oneself. When one wakes then all of the past that was lived as a lie will appear as if a dream. That having-been-awake-before aside of the truth now known will have counted for nothing. How seriously are we to take the diabolical reversals in those truths which are effected by the same methods which established truths before? In *Hunters and Collectors* Tom Griffiths writes of how even an emphasis on Aboriginal continuity of occupation can serve to deny Aborigines a history. Since the passage of the 1976 Aboriginal Land Rights Act, the work of historians, seeking not to undermine Aboriginal land claims, has been:

> to demonstrate the impact of European settlers, explain any Aboriginal dislocation, and dramatise Aboriginal passivity and European agency. The dominance of the notion of sacred sites has also placed an emphasis on Aborigines as religious beings rather than economic ones, and therefore portrays them as natural opponents of "development", and as anti-historical. The traditional divide is perpetuated: anthropology deals with "the other", whereas history is concerned with Europeans. (1996, p. 230)

An old means proves a new truth right without much disturbing established scholarly relations of agency. Nor is a white romantic view of the Aboriginal "Dreaming" as pre-conscious much worried. The (homeostatic) trick of happiness must be to make your ignorance blissful. To make bad faith: that embarrassment which for Sartre we can neither reject nor comprehend (1989, p. 50).

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Public and academic debates in our time (especially those centred on literary hoaxes) over issues of indigeneity and over issues of authority (who is allowed to speak for whom), highlight the uneasy fit of post-modern conceptions of the self with what we might think of as conventional or popularised modes of apprehending art and its production.

For people of Aboriginal descent in Australia today it is not simply a matter of knowing or of claiming where one is from, not merely a matter of discovering the truth of the past which before was hidden. These agendas, regardless of one's genetic line of descent, involve taking sides against the self. Pretending to belong to half of the past, the winning side's past or the past of a group which imagines its victory in the future, is a perennial dilemma for popular (if not all) historical consciousness. The problem before was that of only acknowledging the conqueror in me. The prospect now is of only acknowledging the victim of conquest. To speak in the language of conquest (I mean the English language) as the oppressed, and as if in a perfect continuity with a past of resistance, would appear to be an impossible necessity for the black activist today. The sentiment of those who in Oodgeroo Noonuccal's "We are Going", cannot say their thoughts is in that poem immediately given us in *English*, and by someone who later reclaims an identity by abandoning a European name in favour of an Aboriginal one, one which locates her: *of the tribe Noonuccal*. But the conqueror's language can, will be, transgressed.

Resistances and continuities are unearthed. They are part of what has been stolen. Are we left with a subject speaking for a continuity because of the fact of resistance? In the manner of Lyotard's contention that "everything is as if 'language' were not" (1989, p. 159), does such a subject speak as if the resistance were either unnecessary or something foregone in the act of speaking. *(I have a culture. I do not have to, I cannot return to another language, one lost and in any case unknown, never known, to me. *I have no choice but to speak with a voice and with the words which imply the loss of the culture which makes the resistance, which made the struggle. I cannot go back to or begin*
from where I never was.) How easily these subject positions, these hard truths of challenged identity, are turned to the program of those who wish to deny Aboriginality, who wish to assert that the line has been broken (Griffiths, 1996, p. 235). The land claims of the fair-skinned, English speaking "Aborigine" are dismissed as inauthentic. Can the subaltern speak? This is the question with which Lyotard begins to define the differend in his work of that title:

You are informed that human beings endowed with language were placed in a situation such that none of them is now able to tell about it. Most of them disappeared then, and the survivors rarely speak about it. When they do speak about it, their testimony bears only upon a minute part of this situation. How can you know that the situation itself existed? That it is not the fruit of your informant’s imagination? Either the situation did not exist as such. Or else it did exist, in which case your informant’s testimony is false, either because he or she should have disappeared, or else because he or she should remain silent, or else because, if he or she does speak, he or she can bear witness only to the particular experience he had, it remaining to be established whether this experience was a component of the situation in question. (1988, p. 3)

It appears that the more monstrous the crime, the harder it is, not only to acknowledge, but even to see. And yet there is a loss which inscribes the making of all Australians. Judith Wright bears witness to this in "The Broken Links": "These two strands – the love of the land we have invaded, and the guilt of the invasion – have become part of me. It is a haunted country" (1991, pp. 29-30). The knowledge of that loss is widely available, is to be dealt with, and as such is able to be deployed to various ends, able to be exploited.

The same can be said of the desire to forget, which is, in our case, not the exclusive province of white Australia. Phillip Pepper begins his family history You Are What You Make Yourself To Be by writing that his grandfather told him to forget the atrocities perpetrated on his people because white people (lohans) were not going to go away:

"We have to learn to live with them. No good bringing back all the things that happened in the early days. What's the good of that? Makes people not nice with each other, talking about it all again. It's much better for us to try and forget those things because the lohans have come here to our country and they're not gonna go away. So the only thing for us to do is to get on with them the best we can. Doesn't do any good talking about things that happened, Willie." But I said, "Granpa one day I might want to hear the truth about the things I hear - one time other people might want to know." When I got older Grandfather did tell me things, some of them funny, some of them aren't. These are the things I want to put down. (1980, p. 9)

When Mudrooroo juxtaposes "masters of our languages" with the marks which initiate black flesh (in the poem "Hide and Seek", Tranter & Mead, 1991, p. 229) the reader is up against the uncomfortable facts through which identity is hidden and sought:

Now we have become monosyllables,
Lonely in straight streets,
As long as the sentences
We once formed
From our initiation marks,
Cut deeply into our living flesh,
By masters of our languages.

If there is something distasteful for the (civilised) reader in the signalling of identity through the marking of skins, how should we then regard that mastery which is expressed in the extinction of languages? Or indeed the effort at their retrieval, their
collection, the drawing of lessons from them. J.M. Coetzee writes of the inscribed wooden slips his protagonist reads in Waiting for the Barbarians:

There is no agreement among scholars about how to interpret these relics of the ancient barbarians. Allegorical sets like this one can be found buried all over the desert. I found this one not three miles from here in the ruins of a public building. Graveyards are another good place to look in, though it is not always easy to tell where barbarian burial sites lie. It is recommended that you simply dig at random: perhaps at the very spot where you stand you will come upon scraps, shards, reminders of the dead. Also the air: the air is full of sighs and cries. These are never lost: if you listen carefully, with a sympathetic ear, you can hear them echoing forever within the second sphere. The night is best: sometimes when you have difficulty in falling asleep it is because your ears have been reached by the cries of the dead which, like their writings, are open to many interpretations. (1982, p. 112)

Words and skins not only indicate the means of possession of particular identities. They are as well that of which persons as bodies are possessed: I am in my words as I am in my skin. Can I have more or less of my skin, can I be more or less lost for or among words? Whose interests are served if I am like that? Those labelling half-castes, what kind of purity have they in mind?

Skins and words are sites of doubt. In those differends which are negotiated between them identities are made. They are not made in the vacuum of a single experiment finding its resolution, but in a process, which whether dialectical or not, opens endlessly onto a past and a future of like negotiations. If we cannot retrieve the words of those who lie under the totality we know as civilisation, what remains accessible is the logic of the totality over them. Coetzee writes:

Empire has created the time of history. Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One thought alone occupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies. It is cunning and ruthless, it sends its bloodhounds everywhere. By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation. (1982, p. 133)

Those who speak for the victim, however they come to their position are, at least on the surface, infinitely more confused in their identity than those who deny the crime. Kath Walker becomes Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Eric Willmot, Mudrooroo, Archie Weller—all proponents of an Aboriginal reality, of an Aboriginal past of Australian society, come one by one under a cloud, one which casts them personally as of doubtful identity. Does doubt as to their identity make doubtful the veracity of their stories, their styles, their means of research? Would they have approached differently a white archive had their skins been different? Or is it the case that their work is tainted for the fact of having lived a lie? How then is the civilisation of the archive they approach not so tainted? The particular controversies turn out to be far less interesting than the climate in which they are symptomatic, not only of confused identity, but of confused claims for authenticity, confused means of authentication.

The more fluent I am in the language of my dispossessors, the more my facility for liberation, the less self I have to retrieve from those who have dispossessed me. It is along these lines that Spivak writes: "The postcolonial intellectuals learn that their privilege is their loss" (in Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 28). Where does this argument lead? If I were perfectly able to speak for my people to the others, would this mean that I could have no people for whom to speak? In a monolingual world it would. Were the differends between languages unassailable then every word out of my language would be
an act of betrayal. But languages unfold diachronically in interaction, speakers circulate among them participating in, enabling, this process. If the charlatanism of a Demidenko/Darville serves as an illustration that there is sufficient doubt, in a culture or genre, to be exploited by those who serve no interests but personal or egotistical ones, should we be surprised that fiction is inhabited and orchestrated by those who play with the prospects of who to be? In fiction the player who worries the rules is the winner.

What happens to fiction, what happens to poetry, what happens to all possible worlds and related to all of these foregoing, what happens to the prospect of communication, if I cannot adopt or even imagine your position? A classic double bind: I cannot speak for you because I cannot transcend my own subjectivity in order to reach your voice. But if I cannot speak for you then equally perhaps I cannot speak really with you, not with understanding, because in either case the same transcendence of my own position is required. In this view writing is nothing but autobiography. It is not even the case that I am only entitled to write my own story. It is the only story I can write. We are all accused then of the playwright's solipsism (all of my characters are me—where else could they come from?) Or have it the other way: I am irrevocably split. My voice is never authentically mine if I begin to acknowledge that it entails all those voices which went into its making. Acknowledging this form of haunting in no way suggests that a picture of my making, thus my position, is possible. We discover here, not ourselves, but an infinite regression of mirrors, ones in which anybody could show up but somehow I always do.

No story but mine to tell or every story mine. To be at either end of which of these positions is the more disastrous for the already oppressed, for the continuously oppressed? Are these positions not ultimately the same? My solipsism is your silence just as surely as my omniscience was. Including you in my community of selves (this differend) is not including you at all. It is to silence you as one of mine, as under mine, a member of my family, you as my dependent. How weak all of our ways out of this are. I speak of you/others in the third person, with academic authority and thus I clear myself of having made any claim on your behalf. You become part of the garden I arrange about me out of the elements of wild nature. The imperial mind, to take it back to a humanist source, here is one such as in Marvell's "The Garden" "where each kind/ does straight its own resemblance find":

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind
Does straight its own resemblance find;
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds and other seas,
Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

(1972, p. 101)

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In *Hunters and Collectors* Tom Griffiths accounts for a differend between traditional owners and the academics who, in large part, determine the significance of the material, and especially human, remains of which those owners are the custodians. A differend is brought to the fore in the shift of custodianship of those remains, a change

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96 Helen Demidenko's novel, *The Hand that Signed the Paper* (1994), thought to be by an Australian of Ukrainian descent, won a number of important literary awards in 1995. It was subsequently discovered that the author's real name was Helen Darville and that her Ukrainian credentials had been fabricated.
brought about by a more general ethical shift in attitudes toward Aboriginal culture, rights and the facts of prior dispossession. When the Kow Swamp collection (of human remains) of the Museum of Victoria was handed back to its traditional owners in 1984, John Mulvaney, one of the first wave of 1950s and 60s trained archaeologists, resigned his position as honorary fellow of that museum, believing it had failed to defend its investment in intellectual freedom. His position attracted international support among anthropologists and archaeologists who believed – as for instance reported in Science – that their disciplines were threatened with extinction. Aboriginal people, in their efforts to undo the desecrations of science, may adopt agendas different from those of even non-desecrating scientists who, keen to portray themselves as having turned over a new leaf, actually provide Aborigines with the knowledge and evidence by which their ethical position is established. For example, writes Griffiths:

Skeletal biologist Colin Pardoe has reported that some Kooris give more significance to a Cowra burial dated at no more than 150 years in age than they do to the famed Lake Mungo skeletons of 25-30,000 years in age. They valued the recent burials more highly because, they said, it "showed the continuity of Aboriginal culture well into the late 1800s". (1996, p. 100)

The point that Griffiths wishes to make out of the plethora of contradictions and ironies circulating in and around this story, is that while there is "a genuine contest between ways of knowing, between forms of history-making" Aboriginal views and white professional ones are interdependent: "A consequence of dispossession is that the old culture often only survives to the extent that it has been appropriated and preserved by the new" (1996, p. 99).

These difficulties we might point out here, while being some people's special concern, are really everybody's in particular. We are all inherited and disinherit by those facts which have us here, how we are, in our skins, finding our way in words. The crises of identity of those whose authenticity and authority are brought into sharp focus are important for us because they demonstrate in extremis the crises to which all of us are subject just in the everyday work of being who we are.

Is authenticity then as that about which I have no choice? Phillip Pepper has as little choice about his Aboriginality as he does about his use of English as the medium in which he not only tells us his story, but in which he conducts his life as an Aboriginal person. He preserves for us and for future generations of his people many Kurnai words, but he is not a speaker of Kurnai. There is no longer such a living language as that which haunts his speech, makes it particular, authentically his. It is as such his story is important to us, as is the motto he has chosen for a title, You are what you make yourself to be, because he shows us how it is that one lives (in) a differend. Just as Sartre has us responsible for everything but our own responsibility, so what we here have no choice but to do is to negotiate, to make our way. It is by means of mongrelhood, in the flesh of the differend, that we entertain hopes of reconciliation, the kind of hopes which Anselm Hollo expresses in his poem, "Shed the Fear":

Who has a face sees
the world,
but the world
is not
to be borne –
or only
when seen as
another:
how did this
come together? How
did I find you?
So many turns
in the road,
so few of them
possible!
How not to spin out
in hairpin turns
of disbelief...
The Sufi martyrs
insisted:
"The world
is a wedding."
Why not
go with them,
in the face of
present carnage,
centuries
later.

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 288)

Rights to Identity

How does white Australia talk itself through that succession of dreams and their
personae which bring about its present consciousness? In a dialogue, yes, but how
would reconciliation be brought about when the authentic dialogue which white wants
with black in this country is akin to the dialogue a truck driver might want with someone
who has been run over by him and lies unconscious on the road. I was driving the truck
just a few moments ago but now I have stepped down, I want to help, at least to feel
entitled to do what I need to do in order to get on with my life. I want to finish the
business, to put this event behind me. Somehow, though, I never get any satisfaction
from the victim (my personal victim) who, to the extent that s/he survives becomes more
and more demanding in the measure that s/he becomes less and less deserving (less and
less my victim, that is). Her/his argumentativeness, as it builds, likewise serves to
demonstrate the passing of the danger I perceived her/him to be in: a danger I must
acknowledge, which this body in evidence constitutes, of the potentially criminal effects
of my action.

These positions may appear to be reductio ad absurdum the pictures of politicians
and not the way reasonable people live their lives or exercise compassion. If a passion
for justice should take hold of me, where would I go next? Should I be charged with
culpable driving? After all it is my choice; I am the judge, the jury and I make the laws
too. The separation of powers is pretty well an all-white event. What would happen to
my authentic dialogue then? My partner cum victim becomes the object, and perhaps one
day, but naturally on my terms, the beneficiary of my law. More of the same or a new
phase in the relationship?

In any case, I genuinely cannot remember what was in my head in the moments
leading up to the accident. Did I have any intentions? I might have had but that's all in
the past now. How could those intentions matter to the victim? And now the victim is
sitting up shouting at me, wants a fight. That's my cue to go, s/he must be all right now.
Had s/he lain there like a corpse, in the very act of making me culpable, then s/he would truly have been subject to my authentic outpourings: of grief, of guilt. Imagine her/him though as a sentience, embodied or floating over the scene, witnessing my acts, my trials after the event. Those "last of their tribe" colonial depictions – portraits, busts, poems, daguerreotypes – haunt us in museums now, as reminders of culpable acts – perhaps as they were meant to.

But let us put all that behind us. We will not reason our way out. The important thing is that I have turned over a new leaf. Society is different. I want to understand you, know you, make you a presence. Already I have elevated you from inert object to a sentience on a par with my own. But I sense a resistance. You don't believe I have really changed? Then I'll do that believing for you. I'll show you how it's done. Would that not be within the exercise of the rights of identity required by the will to reconciliation? How, after all, can I be in any sort of relationship with you if I cannot write about you, with you, for you, against you? How dare you deprive me of my right to imagine, to communicate, to be with you, to be everywhere and everyone at once. It is almost a duty in my tradition. And if you face the facts you will have to acknowledge that it is your tradition too. Why should I be deprived of a freedom to take from you this last gram of identity, when I have already taken all the rest? Intellectual honesty demands of me that I acknowledge how inauthentic your claims to indigeneity now are. It is I who, in reminding you of the scale of your loss, must inform you that you cannot be who you think you are. It is no longer your loss which you mourn. It is somebody else's loss, one from which we are virtually now both at the same distance. And so you see I do have the right to speak for you, and for the pain and loss which you mourn as yours but I know equally as mine.

By this means a sensitivity to the facts of dispossession is able to be deployed in the ongoing cause of dispossession, as the argument, for instance, that you have no voice. Richard Rorty, in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity writes that the oppressed, deprived of a voice, can only be spoken for. For him the victims of cruelty:

*do not have much in the way of a language. That is why there is no such thing as the "voice of the oppressed" or the "language of the victims". The language the victims once used is not working anymore, and they are suffering too much to put new words together. So the job of putting their situation into words is going to have to be done for them by somebody else. (1989, p. 94)*

Rorty is well answered here in the words of Anatol's Stern's Futurist poem, "Europe":

```
abecedary of slaughter
of dirt lice fires
and mercy
united states
and argentine brazil chile
states at war
phenomena and noumena
eternity and nothingness-
two fattened boxers
who will always win!

we
who wolf meat
once a month
we
who breathe
sulphur
expensive sulphur
```
like air—
we
who drag along the streets
our queue of sunken bellies
our powerless fists
stuffing our pockets
we shall
lose
lose
lose
as always
they feed us
they feed us
they pour down our throats
food for the spirit!
500 metres of trichinae of
sermons
faded tapeworms of
newspapers
sweet
virulent
bacilli of words
are shoved into our mugs
by the gluttonous fraternity of
scribblers of
presidents of
ministers of education
china of the west!!

stop poisoning us

we are not rats!
o if we only could be
a proletarian swarm of rats
we could
bite the
white
fleshy
fingers
which incessantly push towards us the
white
poisoned
dust of
powderised pages
grand
showerbath
of meetings
the message of propaganda
the gospel of terror—
this is the chasm
into which we jump
since we cannot jump
into heaven

(in Rothenberg and Joris and Joris, 1995, pp. 251-2)
Amiri Baraka in his (1964) "Political Poem" asks, perhaps of a persona such as Rorty's:

It is polite truth
we are left with. Who are you? What are you
saying? Something to be dealt with, as easily.
The noxious game of reason, saying, "No, no,
you cannot feel," ...

(in Hoover, 1994, p. 261)

This is that speech which if for them thus becomes, however it arises, the sign and the means of their oppression. We know the oppressed by this lack which maintains their condition and makes them our responsibility. How do they and we (whatever the overlap) get out of this circle? The puzzle here is belied by the fact that sometimes we do, and by the fact that it is a feature of modern (and later) societies that, shifting through personae, the same people (for instance workers, members of minorities) are in turn, or at least from different points of view, oppressed and oppressors, victims and beneficiaries of cruelty. If for Rorty the oppressed cannot speak for themselves, perhaps they do have remaining to them diversionary tactics (such as the perruque de Certeau, to be discussed in chapter 8) and such a minoritarian position as is available to all who labour under the thumb of official consciousness.

And for myself? All I will have ever proved in the effort to disclaim the possibility of your voice is that it was I who was unworthy of trust, that it was I who failed authentically to approach the differend between us.

Is it the case that my silence would make things even?

In coming to this conclusion, not even a beginning, must I not ask who I am anyway, whose demand for silence has no other reading but that I speak not to myself. Is it not the case that the invisibility and silence I cultivate effect the concealment of a mastery? What does any of this matter when I do go on speaking, thinking among my selves and other selves, when the voice which drowns mine out is mine?

What I have to do is not silence, not a disappearing trick (that did not work on you). I cannot even completely get off your land, not even off your back. (After all you depend on my welfare. And is that not the apotheosis of victimhood? The thieves must grudgingly support those they have robbed, from what but from the inheritance the robbed have lost.) By far the worst thing I have done is to make you, not as I am, doubtful of who you are, but rather as I can never be, doubtful of your presence at all. I think I have to listen to you, whoever you are, whoever I am, so that we may speak, perhaps not at first as equals, but at least as if not alone. Perhaps I have to retrieve the innocence of those Sufi martyrs who, Hollo reminds us, were able to regard the world as a wedding.

*

As far as my authenticity is concerned – the question of being true to a self comes dangerously near to denying the semiotic facts of existence: my being a sign among others, all of whom fashion signs and without the need of any such intention.

Are questions of selfhood and of authenticity then questions of discursivity? If we note that there is no outside of that textuality unable to refrain from its own haunting and making, then equally there is no closure on or of the contexts in which texts unfold as the others of texts. Texts make themselves particular in the manner of their imitation of and innovation from the context of texts enabling them. The taste in terms of which art is promoted or disparaged is very often argued for and against in terms of these categories:

260
work is condemned as too derivative or on the other hand lacking reference, refusing to make sense; it is praised as innovative or on the other hand presenting the culmination of works before it, making sense of them, as in Eliot's "tradition".

Both of these positions can be supported in terms of authenticity, equally in terms of consciousness. Mimesis is the authenticity of acknowledging where you are from, innovation is the authenticity of acknowledging where you are going. The mythic quality of the (unavowedly formulaic) pulp-fiction work which shows no knowledge of its predecessors, of the "conventional" poem which can be loved by those who do not know poetry, trades a sensitivity to the literary or aesthetic resources of everyday language for the arrogant populism of those who claim (or are claimed) to be the first or one and only of their kind. This pleasures the reader who sees her/himself as unread because it labours the illusion that there was no path to what is now read. The anti-canonic reader, whether or not s/he articulates her/his position as such is one who, having only the dictates of common sense to obey, falls into Nietzschean category of bound spirit, has only closed texts to read, texts which only read one way.

But bound and free readers are as idealised in construction as are open and closed texts. If we take the abstraction at the other end of the scale then the work which can be read by no one because no one can have read enough to read it (no one is sufficiently cognisant of the haunting of the text) — say, *Finnegans Wake* — succeeds despite and because of, but not in the exercise of those pretensions: people read it because they can and because in so doing they make sense of the paths in reading which have brought them to this text. Therein lies its pleasure: the pleasure of spirits wishing to know where they are bound and where they are free. The well-read reader closes down the open text by means of the tools, mainly of memory or its surrogate technologies, with which s/he approaches it.

Works of art depend for their success on managing the balance between the showing of where one is from and the dissolution of that past in the making of new things and by new ways. They balance in one moment haunting and laughter. To express the truth to context which an ethics of presence articulates requires both knowledges (of oneself as from and going somewhere) and both authenticities (to one's past, to one's will). Without one the other makes no sense. Abstractions such as open and closed text, bound and free reader are not metaphysical givens, but means by which we approximate specific cultural contexts, those specific networks of difference which establish human community, something which may be unattainable as we would wish but which nevertheless exists everywhere; we could say, as the human sign.

A question is perhaps then framed as follows: how can we be true to selves when selves are textual evocations, when the experience of selves is vicarious, mediated by voice or book or screen? Criticism is about making vicarious, about making people feel that they have read what they have not read, or that they need not read, or even that it is worthwhile their authenticating what they are told about. But if criticism is like this it is only obviously so. History, the news — these are filters which allow us to know what happened before us, what happens elsewhere. They necessarily make an experience for us of what is out of our experience (Where were you when Kennedy was shot? means How did you first learn about that event?), so that we trust as ours the knowledges of others and we measure what we ourselves experience against that sort of knowledge. If it is obvious that criticism is like that because it is a step removed from the text we seek to approach, then is it not the case that all writing and telling is like that: a mediate account of someone else's senses? A text can of course disclaim that circuit, claiming its own terms sufficient. But then how does such a text come to our attention?

An age of simulacra both provides and undermines the strongest measures of authenticity yet available. Photographic "realism" suggests a strong analogy with denotation. To believe in the truth of photography entails the same faith as required by the truth of plain speech. In *Camera Lucida* Barthes tells us that photography is
subversive when it thinks (1984, p. 38). That photography on which we rely for the here-and-now images of everywhere the action is, and by which we simulate for ourselves a panoptic status, is resolutely not on the side of thinking. It demands to be regarded as authentic representation of an unmediated real, the natural real which the lens takes in by its nature. But photography is also a violence of appropriation, a kind of making death which functions by annihilating itself as medium, so as to present "no longer a sign but the thing itself" (1984, p. 45). The kind of authenticity on which both realism and denotation rely is that of an absence of mediation, one which fails to survive any sort of scrutiny.

Authenticity in the work of art which has come, most typically in the case of the painting, to be represented in the veracity of claims as to authorship, depends on a canonic mediation of vision which generally accepts that we see with the artist's sight, that what remains to us is a kind of left-over vision. What is at stake in the authenticity of a painting need neither be its canonic position nor its mediation of the real, yet these are vital to the status of both the objects and the conditions which it cannot help but represent. This is because the work of art remains the énoncé of consciousness, be it thetic or otherwise, and is therefore subject to the regime Le Dœuff sketches in noting that "All thought presupposes an undefined area, a certain play of structures, a certain margin of free-floating around the codified procedures" (1989, p. 115). Authorial authenticity, which depends on a canon assigning value as relative (nobody bothers about the authenticity of worthless paintings by unknowns), rests on purely technical considerations, as the domain of experts, those who know true value in a way which cannot be established by the layperson or by the application of the techniques with which one appreciates a painting.

It is no doubt possible to trace this commodification so essential to the value we assign art, through the forms of authority which, from the medieval world, have been attributed to religious relics. The moral force which we feel in claims that particular objects are real or fake Rembrandts inherits something from the moral force which claims another sort of object, one equally of veneration, as a piece of the true cross or the skull of a saint. Needless to say until the advent of modern scientific dating methods, religious relics were much easier to fake than works of art, the provenance of which was accessible to scrutiny by a technology of a connoisseurship, which could depend largely on the eye. We note that the detection of fakes among relics must have required of the inquisitor a suspension of faith (for the purpose of establishing the veracity of faith's true objects). Such a suspension is likewise evinced on the part of the connoisseur, whose judgement as to the authenticity of any particular work has a strictly limited impact on the force of the canon which requires this judgement in order to maintain an œuvre intact.

Does authenticity in reading depend on any such suspension, either of belief or disbelief? Here the commodification of texts and the effort at exegesis point us in opposite directions. The canonised work is invested with the belief that it performs certain functions which place it among other such monuments. It demands a faith in the justification of its place, which as we have seen, is arrived at by means of a circular logic. But to understand texts we suspend a disbelief in some knowledge we lack. Coleridge writes, in Book XII of the *Biographia Literaria*, "until you understand a writer's ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding" (1951, p. 231). We may not be interested in the understanding or ignorance of an author per se. But we do depend as readers on a sentence which demands such negotiations as knowing or not. A modern or later poetry, seeking to undermine the premises on which a place in the canon has till now depended, functions to challenge especially the most invisible of beliefs. The reader of poetry thus perhaps fails in the effort to rid her/himself of those conditions of subject formation which allow her/him a position from which to read. And yet it is such a movement, away from the certainty of what is able to be known or judged, away from the certainty of who I as a reader am, which the poem authentically demands, without requiring a consciousness of any such intention. Jack Spicer writes in the "Love Poems" in *Language*.
"If you don't believe in a god, don't quote him," Valery once said when he was about ready to give up poetry. The purposeful suspension of disbelief has about the chance of a snowball in hell

(1975, p. 226)

Poetry's authenticity is in daring not to know. It is outside, on the brink of madness with that Lear who knows he will forget his nature and craves to be told who he is. This daring not to know must as well be the basis of poetry's community because in this means lies the faith which unties the knot by which we are prevented from being and knowing ourselves.

Art has never succeeded (as art) in the role of telling the world what to do. If it turns the world upside down or changes it, it does this as an effect among many which lead to next causes. It moves people in the thick of their world by fitting and unfitting there. The world is the result of the sum of human activity in, with and against all of nature: the big picture which we relate to as a system of signs and which really does consist of things including flesh and blood. The role of art may be to show how the world is upside down or ought to be. Sometimes that role will involve pretending that there is a certain kind of world, different from the one we know, one which to move us must have a familiar and an unfamiliar aspect. It is on the balance of those familiar and unfamiliar worlds, how convincing they are as presence and as possibility, that we judge the success of an artwork. Authenticity in art is the exercise of consciousness which knows where it comes from, however its past will be later re-written; which knows its own path, however it is to be judged; which knows by means of these, its caveats, a little of how little it knows. The unknowing of art is an art borne of knowledges then, the sort of knowledge which Miklos Radnóti exercised in a concentration camp:

I write this poem just as I live,
blindly, a caterpillar inching my way on the paper...
waiting for good news, woman's beautiful word, free human fate,
waiting for the end that drops into dense twilight, for the miracle.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 717)

Radnóti's eclogue begins "Do you see?" and ends "for I cannot die nor live without you anymore". Trapped in his own head, when sleep does not come, when there is no release among the personae who comprise the community of the self, the prisoner yearns for the word of another – for human community. The means to those knowledges which frame the unknowing of art are dialogic, transactional. Art addresses, is addressed, even if it has to be exhumed from a grave where it lay, waiting for a war to end, waiting for its community to be possible. Authenticity is between us and it comes from that becoming foreign which is the first step toward a worldwide indigenceity – towards perhaps, the love of planet or the Sufi martyrs' world as wedding.

Authenticity is neither of individuals nor of any specific instance of dialogue because there are no subjectivities or words which are in themselves inauthentic. Rather there are dialogues and positions in them which are more or less true to their enabling conditions and to the knowledge in which their possibilities are borne. The lies of politicians are not necessarily inauthentic. They may be wholly appropriate to a particular persona. Their authenticity is ultimately contingent, measured against the conditions they will have addressed. If the past were merely finished then it would be necessarily authentic, done. It would bother us in the manner of a question as to how next to be.
And so it does. But it bothers us not because there is a way to be but because we have a choice to make.

Appeals to transparency, such as Heidegger makes in *Being and Time*, guarantee the reliance of authenticity on an ideal of conduct so that the authentic life is imagined as outside of the everyday and the concealment from which *Da-sein* has to recover itself in its thrownness. The authentic life then becomes a purely notional outside of the facts as lived, one which we may be sure (as ideals always do) allows us no escape from those facts but merely hypostatises certain desires, as if, however unattainable they might remain, they could yet constitute for us, as for Plato, the source and model of all the inferior imitations, which in life we take for real.

Words and the world present in the only substance with which the question can be asked. The same issue confronts the relation between the world and art. How do these make or entail each other?

What are words but the ideality we cast upon the world in order to see it and to bury it as well? It is necessary to challenge Heidegger on the basis that disclosure and concealment are necessarily the same process (as are memory and forgetting). Words entail the apparent stasis by which they change the world. Arguing whether we accompany them, or they us, may not in the end prove useful. Truth to context, our shorthand for authenticity, is then only ever a measure of words, in words.

Community is the spirit of that mediation between consciousness and authenticity which is not there to be reclaimed because it refers to the inaccessible before of language. Authenticity is the big question for anyone who assumes that the analysed life is the one worth living. Poetry's daring not to know (itself and its others) begs such a question. As does the quest for identity of those who are no longer content to accept themselves as the inheritors of those ethics which have enabled them their presence. To open and maintain a flow between consciousness and authenticity so that we can achieve the state of which Valéry wrote, of sometimes being and sometimes thinking, is how we work towards making a community of the self. And that is perhaps the precondition for a community of selves who have decided how to be together.

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In Dostoyevsky's story "Bobók" the dead crave to live out their remaining months of consciousness without having to be ashamed. As the body nears decomposition only meaningless sounds, something like "bobók", can be made out. The "last mercy" is that in these two or three months they come to know themselves for what they are. Unfortunately what they have to put up with from each other is a kind of moral stench, the stench of the soul. Their efforts in the direction of authenticity are frustrated by an unceasing moralising: they want to be themselves in the little time left to them, but what is under the affectation they express by way of language is something ineffable: a silence, an absence, a pile of bones (1943, pp. 151-167). Such is the temporary community Dostoyevsky imagines for the dead, one in which one loses self or soulhood in such a measure as one loses the materiality of a body.

Or take the case of the princess who is no longer a princess, though in her death many wish to make her one. At no stage does she emerge from the fairytale (tragedy to which we have no access), so that from our point of view this intriguingly real (flesh and blood, after all she dies!) entity is entirely manufactured, though not in the manner of Shakespeare's Richard II, who, being no longer a king, can be nothing. She fills out a plethora of real-life roles: not just a royal socialite but charity worker, neurotic victim, hero-mum, survivor of eating disorders. She has been through all that we could go through, to arrive at a tragic and spectacular end, which makes sense of the tortments by which she arrived there. Are the real life roles she is assigned any more real, more true to
her form, than the crown without which King Richard cannot live? As for Shakespeare so for us: a fascination with the mysterious and contradictory hybrid of feudal and modern, title and human, in a single personage. The sympathy we feel for the woman who is daily molested in the course of stepping out her front door just to get on with her business, is achieved naturally enough only by means of the attention she and we detest. Without the invasion of her privacy she can have, in the public eye, no privacy to invade. In any case her business largely is that of being molested by the press. How would she have lived after her accident, as a cripple, disfigured? What would have happened to the hounding then?

From those negotiations which have brought us thus far we can perhaps say that consciousness and authenticity frame each other, each is the means of the other's production because we are ourselves in acts of knowing, we know ourselves by certain acts, recurrences which situate those selves – as semiotic events. And so perhaps consciousness is for humans, as William Anderson writes, the authenticity of being alive (1996, p. 181). The signs of that concurrence of the real, the communication of affect, may be in literary work, as in life, as Emily Dickinson portrays them:

I like a look of agony,
Because I know it's true;
Men do not sham convulsion,
Nor simulate a throe.

(in Kavanagh and Michie, 1987, p. 147)
instructions to the self

a kind
  of nagging
not showing

just time killing us
  as it will in its course
without judgement or panic

next truth must always
  lie close to tautology

thus far it's in
breath short of span
  calls after me
    when I go out

so we dwell
  in mercy together
all written in a dreaming calm

few articles of doubt sustain

after demise
the odd appearance
perspired as we do
and tasks set to
  between doom and the bullet
to be continued ad infinitum

    I may be magnificent
God only is great
    I throw a lifebuoy to the critic

first rule is to disobey
use your luck
and gifts
tear shadows
with an eye to glory

it's all mistakes
by which survive
the not resolving

    no way of getting here
for a monk on a rock with impossible ceiling
    no way down
the smell of ink is all that stands
attributes of nature

*

an act of drift
to slake the tongue
    with household tides

ourselves are fur and fish
a bonepicker's special
Sunday soup to breed all week

    by calm
I itch
I'm anyone
    natural
to watch the papers
    read the telly
buy insurance
thinking ashes
    self hanged
in some heart's empty corner
    signed by the fans away
it's natural
    wind changes and again
birds sift through it

    impossible reciprocal
    no heavenly remembered
intransitive hope

I'm going through
    my difficult period
my work's resisting what's required
ordeal is resting up from me

    outlives me life
    thus worth my while
collecting from everywhere
    selves make

    last of the suburbs
    this strung along
pearl of abandoned wash

    shiny town of tidy sun
idle where the mill won't grind

    innocence losing
but the dishonoured sea returns
to our own abject

nose to the grind
    bone lost in sparks
I don't want to know
    what it is that I do

    creation is something time learns from
who knows what trains thought abandon

    I'm planning to survive my works
- a match, a swig of kerosene
    ink foiled
call this insurance
    triumph over art
a comfortable obscurity
    the best place to write from

*

unsteady world aside
meet myself somewhere
    in a club
at the beach
    some languorous hour
the one impressed
alley dark
unscared I'd slink
consort and cheaply
have my self
if in that firing squad
   I'd be the one to finish me
save all of my three wishes last
   revel the senses
that's why you're here
   presence out of every pore
breakfast a king
imperial lunch
I'd dine like a thing from another world

*

the phone rings all at once
   then tell me what is not like this
everyone works for us
they're all non-stop making it up
   people forget this
thinking they're had
   or bullied merely to belief

   my affects each
   they come to me
   happy tribe

   born ill equipped
   know not to listen

to say the world for love of us
   is singing or knows what to do
sets off the barking chain
   to join the earth
mouths melt to butter    they're had back
   - there's honour

   see yourself contingent
and when there's no self left to see

under old derro skies
   no address and no reader

serious bugger
always a beginner
that's how they'll have me slated
in the book of the worthwhile obscure
     ( it is hoped )
his tombstone reads:
sad when left

*

as truth is in distance
out of particulars
abstract as your face in mine
a kind of Braille you write
to leave no trace
where
time is best stolen
from strangers

must look with other impossible eyes
make the dawn last
with insatiable crowing

crag worn away
holding first fire
chained to it
telling and told
for the jealous unseeming
and yet they are warm
yet they see by this light
in clumsy mother hands

doorstep is crowded
with not letting go

under the old pile of dirges
this is the eye remembering fire

the trafficker of shadows

fruity death
with its planets
its junk
blue and black
rotting

up of day

shy immanence
signs in the fridge
we think we're cheating
the big fly-swatter
but it wants its meat as well
rare affections)
        and in the end the heart attacks
or inside folds away took up
        - befalling or some visitation
everyday death
says these are mine
what scraps and pangs are quibbled for
life's relentless
we're the plague kept from
still subject
to our own subjecting
my dear
my made bed
    lie in you
and when I am towards cessation
a bob each way
    and a box of old holies
chickens to roost
    the only stasis apprehension
trial by error
    formula yearning

*

I for my part
go on wrecking like this
every draft further
    from perfect beginning
        which looms ahead
        away like doom
7. Community:
The Body of Foreigners

The Museum gives us a thieves' conscience. We occasionally sense that these works were not after all intended to end up between these morose walls, for the pleasure of Sunday strollers or Monday "intellectuals." We are well aware that something has been lost and that this self-communion with the dead is not the true milieu of art - that so many joys and sorrows, so much anger, and so many labours were not destined to reflect one day the Museum's mournful light.

By transforming efforts into "works", the Museum makes a history of painting possible. But perhaps it is essential for men to attain greatness in their works only when they do not look for it too hard. Perhaps it is not bad that the painter and the writer do not clearly realize that they are establishing a human community.

Merleau Ponty (1964, p. 62)

It is the endless reversibility which Benveniste implies in the relations which characterise "I" and "you" as partners in dialogue (1971, pp. 223-30), these the basis of discourse, which constitute the necessity and im/possibility of community. For Merleau-Ponty the reversibility of conversation and its relation to the subject constitute a kind of blurring, in which they become impossible to pick apart: "the conversation pronounces itself within me. It summons me and grips me; it envelops and inhabits me to the point that I cannot tell what comes from me and what comes from it" (1974, p. 19).

We are never out of the community of words, the community of words is never out of us. In this manner we are of the world; because I do refer to a world which is outside of my saying - that saying which the world inhabits in making possible. I do make possible a world in my saying, which is the habitation of the already said. I do pass beyond saying in the moment of laughter just as laughter passes beyond me in the overwhelming of alterity. Habitation is haunted with the possibility of worlds and with those worlds which have been. Grammar and canon, abstraction and naming, make up (in order to construe) the haunting of the world in words and of words in the world. Tristan Tzara writes: "I think of the heat that language weaves/ around its core the dream they call us by" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 499).

To the extent that writing hopes to survive, it hopes to be judged as much as possible. The value of the classic, Kermode writes, is asserted by "a more or less continuous chorus of voices" (1975, p. 117). Canonisation, and continued inclusion in the canon, is the result of continuous judgement, the character of which is determined by the weight and force of all previous surviving judgements97. If history consists of judged judgements (Lyotard, 188, p. 8) then this is no less the situation with that abstraction, literature, which we define by the contents of the canon. Canonic logic is unavoidably at work in the logic of writing.

Poetries are in the paradoxical position which Bourdieu assigns to "permanent revolution" (1993, p. 188), the position of having to "exclude from poetry all that makes

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97 The industry which judges Shakespeare, for instance, is in no danger of finding his works to be outside of the canon, or any "complete" arrangement of canons. The case of Shakespeare illustrates the point (possibly the furthest point) beyond which it would be immeasurably more difficult to keep an oeuvre out rather than in.
up the 'poetic' ". What we call poetry is poetry because it is beyond the gates of a city which is encroaching on the foreign space outside. André Breton writes: "The embrace of poetry like the embrace of the naked body/Protects while it lasts/ Against all access by the misery of the world" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 479). However, whenever its borders come to take charge of its others, new borders constantly devise themselves. There is always a new outside, there are always new refugees. The principle of avant-gardism is not so much that of seeing what art is, of its nature, beyond; but rather what art is immediately and practically beyond – generally the art of the last epoch, now resettled in the city as a part of its establishment. Poetry comes to that which is dislodged, dissuaded, which is collected to be discarded, discarded to be collected and so on, ad infinitum. Poetry's process is endless scavenging.

As speech is the beyond of haunting (and so the making of what will next haunt), poeisis is likewise an involuntary and spontaneous event, an Orphic facilitation. Poësis is a process in which one is unable not to look, even when looking means that love must be cast back into hell, that one must be torn apart for love. As such it enables and disables practice and community. It lives in a circle. In Sonnets to Orpheus Rilke writes:

Though they destroyed you at last and revenge had its will, sound of you lingered in lions and rocks you were first to enthral, in the trees and the birds. You are singing there still.

Oh you god that has vanished! You infinite track!
Only because dismembering hatred dispersed you are we hearers today and a mouth which else nature would lack.

(1949, p. 85)

The tearing apart of Orpheus (rejection for his constancy) was made possible by his inconsolable heart. He was beyond consolation because afflicted now with the permanent loss of Eurydice. He lost Eurydice because he was unable to obey the directive not to look, not to bear witness. Orpheus was torn between the authenticity of his desire (one so profound that in Virgil's account, his death-chilled tongue finds yet a voice to call her name [Georgics, 1952, p. 98]) and the consciousness of a higher order and its directive, disobedience to which ensured his undoing. His dismemberment is the punishment for the rejection to which he, who could charm the trees and the beasts and even rivers, subjects women after his final loss of Eurydice.

A limitless tropology, visited by way of Peirce and Eco and Benveniste, is in the perpetual process of inscribing a natural and involuntary community: the community of those who are or become intelligible to each other. That all beings should stand in such relation to each other is the basis of Menander's wish, that as a man nothing human might be foreign to him; likewise of Aquinas' definition of the soul as "the being whose nature it is to meet with all other beings" (in Heidegger, 1996, p. 12). A still broader and more recent version is found in Rubén Darío's dictum that "every form in nature has something to say to every other" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 89). Independent of these metaphysical prescriptions, the community of speech which comes into being and maintains itself by means of intelligibility is an accomplished fact. It neither requires nor would it be moved by any campaigns to promote or destabilise or even imagine it. Those implied in such a community, by means of a mutual intelligibility, do however exercise choices, as entitled by their power or lack thereof. They have, for instance choices in

98 "Eurydicem vox ipsa et frigida lingua" (Georgics, IV, I. 524).
making themselves more and less intelligible, not only with those with whom they are natively entitled to speak, but with others: those outside of their idiom whom they approach or shun as befits the complex of negotiations in which they relate or fail to relate. The process of these negotiations accounts for the manner in which the involuntary communities we know as languages, remain, however they appear, in a continuous process of flux. It is a voluntary community however which mediates between authenticity and consciousness and which evolves in this mediation an ethics of presence.

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Community is what lies, unselfconsciously, between differends. This word draws attention where attention cannot be maintained – to what lies between subjects as the process of their mutual self-creation. Community is the semiotic setting and event of life among humans, our inescapable sociality. What is authentic then is its invisibility to itself, its unavowedness (or the irrelevance of its avowals to how it is), its being known only by symptoms, by the metonym we call the differend. The differend is the symptom of community, the boundary by which the invisible is shown. Community is what differends show us in outline, the ineffable "we" which wastes our hopes of being who we are.

The other abstractions which the effort at its avowal falls into – nation, republic, council, club – these are necessarily flawed efforts to be who we are by knowing, by deciding, how to be. Of course these are necessary to us, as society is necessary to humans, civilised or otherwise. The efforts at deciding who and how to be are necessary means in dispelling the fiction that we are merely victims of a world-as-is, of the already-thus.

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Hiatuses infest all subjectivities, and in this manner – of doubts as to who we are – is acknowledged the difficulty of approaching a community of the self: In like manner poetries face us with the problem of how to sustain or enable a community of dissent, one which is not only subject to its own doubts but actually exists for them. If poetry must doubt the possibility of its having purpose, has it at least the guarantee that such a lack is approached by means of doubt? Dada was the original of that reflexive modernity which dealt (or feigned dealing) with itself as phenomenon in just the terms it brought to bear on society and on art in general. Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes writes in a piece titled "Artichokes":

Dada, having only a few years or months or days to live, looks for a lawyer to draw up its last will and testament. ...

Dada doubts everything. They say that too constitutes a principle. No, doubt is not in principio, but even if it were thus, if dada believed in doubt, exactly that would prove that there is no principle. (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 337)

Interrogating poetry's relation to society in a way which brings into question the efficacy of a poetic function, Otó Orbán's poem, "Sinking Orpheus", written for Sándor Weöres on his 75th birthday, begins:

The sober mind is annoyed to discover that poetry's utterly functionless. Defending the defendable, it sings of the doormat and it puts it by the door: the dying poet lies on his side on the ground and writes in the dust with his blood the word: heimat!
But should this scenario fail, for lack, let us say, of a Struggle for Independence, he is still permitted to sing of the scheduled reforms –
the government's or the opposition's – whichever appeals to him.
The sober mind, as we know,
(to use its own favourite expression)
with its indispensable aids to survival,
the various clichés for use in case of fire, flood or earthquake,
resides in the collective unconscious, or numskull.

(1993, pp. 37-8)

But a sober mind, precisely because it is annoyed with poetry's lack of purpose, may yet succeed in attributing one to it. Orbán ironically reminds us that the death of the poet might open a field of intentions, such as is confused by our not knowing whether it is poetry or the resident of the numskull which sings of the doormat it puts by the door. The poem as process and artefact blurs the canonic personae which go into the making and the keeping of the poem. In the second stanza of "Sinking Orpheus" Orbán writes of the everyday creature who:

was with me one minute, nowhere the next, wavered and rose and then fell through the mysterious medium in which
a gabbling angel dictates down the phone, and the poem is ready for printing and from the thick bog a slippery presentiment floats to the surface
serrated teeth, reptilian neck, and shark's fin,
most monstrous of monsters, the soul.

This artist's soul, reminiscent of the abomination of which Horace writes at the beginning of the Ars Poetica, is indeed a strange concoction of personae, no community at all, authentic only to the enigma of its gabbling angel.

And yet, whatever status we allow the artist, the soul, the poem, surely we acknowledge that they do participate in a community of sorts, even if of the outside, of strangers to themselves, perhaps Blanchot's community of those who have no community. As such they are borne in a common relation to society, and to the resident of the numskull of which Orbán writes, and which they threaten by the means of the very rejection to which they – artist, soul, poem – are subject. Their community depends specifically on the rejection of that critical habitus which exists to exercise judgement over poetry and to conceal itself from the exercise of such judgement. And yet their community depends on that habitus and on the fact of judgement just as surely as judgement depends on its objects: in this case the poem-candidates for the canon. From the point of view of the production of poetry, here then is a principal site of ambivalence: to depend on what it must reject and threaten, i.e. the process by which the canon is kept.

The monstrous concoction of soul Orbán offers us demonstrates the arbitrary nature of the community which coalesces as both bound by differends and covering over where a differ has been. Myth and metaphor, the making of words in common, depend, however they are motivated, on the exercise of arbitrariness. The truth of a community is of a recognition in common which naturally generates meaning. The confusion of patriotism and its intellectual weakness is the assumption that a community is the result of a meaning it exists to generate. We did not, by and large, decide how to be a people. Rather we find ourselves in a certain position, with a particular range of meanings and actions constitutive of and available to us. History has been largely received as nationality thrown into question. Those antics, conventions and the like, by which we play at constituting ourselves as such, mainly function to conform to the observation that the doormat is by the door.

The (canon-conscious) poem as process, which commences in the knowledge of a contingent destination, though appearing as if on the outside, is as limited as any other discourse to the stock of signs constituting its milieu. But at least in recognising its situation, as an (always compromised) art of the outside, it has the opportunity to make
betweenness its own community. Such a community would in its process articulate an ethics of presence for the larger community in the cracks of which or outside of which it falls. By such means poetry would, despite itself, be performing a function for the numskull which, yes, it too inhabits.

Community of Futures

A poem lives if it lives as a passion of traces. It is in those terms that Orbán declares poets the "haunters of the future" (1993, p. 18). Poem and those personae which make it and read it, do not survive above or aside the patterns of assumption - canonic patterns, grammatical patterns - from which the poem is cast. The personae whose work it is to understand the poem, are, as I have argued (in chapter 3) never fully knowned. Yet, if the politics of the canon are necessarily hidden (unconscious in the terms of Jameson's thesis [1981, passim]), it remains the case that poetry allows, by means of indirectness, a way past those traps which stand in the way of the completion of knowledge/s. Thus, poetry allows futures which could not have been without it. What requires the faith of assumption is the metaphysician's received world-as-ever-thus. The faith in doubt required of the ironist is necessarily contingent. Modern, especially modernist, poetries, despite their failure to agree with each other, have often defined themselves and their national community, if not as functional, at least in terms of the world changing work of words. In Marinetti's "Manifesto of Futurism": "We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the earth, along the circle of its orbit" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 198). In Tristan Tzara's "Dada Manifesto on Feeble and Bitter Love": "Dada is the chameleon of rapid and self-interested change" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 304). Tzara's efforts to undermine the pretension of a purpose or a place for poetry or Dada are themselves, predictably enough, undermined by the character of his own assertions:

dada is the dictatorship of the spirit, or
dada is the dictatorship of language,
or else
dada is the death of the spirit
which will please many of my friends. Friends.

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 303-4)

Death and dictatorship are the leitmotifs of the community at its own throat which Dada very generally showed Europe in a likeness of its own image. In its more extreme manifestations (for instance in the cut-up techniques which Tzara promoted and which writers as various as Er Malley's creators and David Bowie have adopted) the Dada poem which cannot communicate, by means of this refusal and disavowal of itself, is as or more polysemous than any intelligible text could be. By such disconcerting means as these, or the defamiliarisation of the Russian Formalists, texts model and draw attention to the invisible communities of those for whom speech sounds may be understood. Rejecting these as such they invent a more temporary community, of those who cannot be understood.

Communities of arbitrary and anti-social metaphor, rather than papering over differends, could have the effect of multiplying them, of locating them in otherwise indivisible entities, for instance in the body as in Anatol Stern's "this throng of raging bacchantes is one centimetre of my skin" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 260). But the body could be even more crowded and with the here-and-now of the world, the events by which Modernism itself was transformed, as illustrated in Apollinaire's poem "The Little Car":

276
The 31st day of August 1914
I left Deauville a little before midnight
in Rouveyre's little car

With his driver there were three of us

We said goodbye to an entire epoch
Furious giants were rising over Europe
The eagles were leaving their aeries expecting the sun
The voracious fish were rising from the depths
The masses were rushing towards some deeper understanding
The dead were trembling with fear in their dark dwellings

The dogs were barking towards over there where the frontiers are
I went bearing within me all those armies fighting
I felt them rise up in me and spread out over the countries they wound through
With the forests the happy villages of Belgium
Francorchamps with l'Eau Rouge and the mineral springs
Region where the invasions always take place
Railway arteries where those who were going to die
Saluted one last time this colourful life
Deep oceans where monsters were moving
In old shipwrecked hulks
unimaginable heights where man fights
Higher than the eagle soars
There man fights man
And falls like a shooting star
I felt in myself new and totally capable beings
Build and organise a new universe
A merchant of amazing opulence and astounding size
Was laying out an extraordinary display
And gigantic shepherds were leading
Great silent flocks that were browsing on words
With every dog along the road barking at them

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 128)

The new and totally capable beings which Apollinaire feels in himself may have some setbacks to suffer but they represent the aesthetic of an age suddenly keen to show itself and to make its own way. Perhaps a best example of the culmination, in the thirties, of the spirit in which the past as accomplished fact is set aside in favour of taking possession of the future is in Auden's (later disowned) anthem for the Spanish Civil War:

Spain

Yesterday all the past. The language of size
Spreading to China along the trade routes; the diffusion
Of the counting-frame and the cromlech;
Yesterday the shadow reckoning in the sunny climates.

Yesterday the assessment of insurance by cards,
The divination of water; yesterday the invention
Of cartwheels and clocks, the taming of
Horses. Yesterday the bustling world of the navigators.

Yesterday the abolition of fairies and giants,
The fortress like a motionless eagle eyeing the valley,
The chapel built in the forest;
Yesterday the carving of angels and alarming gargoyles.

The trial of heretics among the columns of stone;  
Yesterday the theological feuds in the taverns  
    And the miraculous cure at the fountain;  
Yesterday the Sabbath of witches; but today the struggle.

The poet in this work has an undoubted role in the struggle as the one who, afflicted with yesterday's belief in the absolute value of Greece, begins by whispering, startled among pines, of his vision, wishing for the luck of the sailor. Tomorrow will be for "the young poets exploding like bombs" but today remains to the struggle, this poem in its here-and-now an act enabling it. And why? Because:

The stars are dead. The animals will not look.  
We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and  
History to the defeated  
May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon.

(in Cunningham, pp. 97-100)

The century is not short of declared and decisive roles for poetry. But what the century has shown is that efforts at deciding either how to be or what is to be are a risk to those near them. Mandelstam, survivor and finally victim of Stalinism, in his "Last Poems" offers an antidote for Auden's "Spain", the life of resistance of the poet who becomes society's victim:

If our antagonists take me  
And people stop talking with me;  
If they confiscate the whole world —  
The right to breathe and open doors  
And affirm that existence will exist  
And that the people like a judge will judge;  
If they dare to keep me like an animal  
And fling my food on the floor —  
I won't fall silent or deaden the agony,  
But will write what I am free to write,  
And yoking ten oxen to my voice  
Will move my hand in the darkness like a plough  
And fall with the full heawiness of the harvest...

(in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 396)

*

Do we reconcile these images of the poet as becoming legislator, of the poet as the victim of the operation of law? Is there a truth between the fiction that we decide the world and the fiction that we have no deciding? Lyotard writes:

The subject is therefore neither active nor passive, it is both; but it is only one or the other insofar as, caught in one regimen of phrases, it pits itself against a phrase from another regimen, and seeks, if not their reconciliation, then at least the rules for their conflict, namely, the subject's forever threatened unity.  
(1988, p. 65)

Pound framed a similar problem in his manifesto, "Vortex":

278
You may think of man as that towards which perception moves. You may think of him as the TOY of circumstance, as the plastic substance RECEIVING impressions.

OR you may think of him as DIRECTING a certain fluid force against circumstance, as CONCEIVING instead of merely observing and reflecting.

(in Rothenberg and Joris 1995, p. 527)

Such differends are at stake as much for the rationalist sceptic as for the clairvoyant. They are the basis of lotteries, of all forms of gambling. They set off Modernism with a throw of the dice.

Poetry's authenticity is in the bearing witness of selves to differends, such as lie between communities, between their disparate and becoming realities. Poetry bears witness to a continuous manifestation of loss: the manner in which the world, by means of words, conducts itself away from words and worlds that were real and which haunt the here-and-now. Lyotard writes of the real: "a swarm of senses lights upon a field pinpointed by a world" (1988, p. 50). If the real is the weltanschauung of the unavoidable community in which mutually intelligible subjects participate, then poetries are acknowledged as picking holes in it, as picking the scab where the real heals together; that place where, by means of a metaphor, differends vanish.

Poetry is a theft of words in which other thefts are shown. It is along these lines we may frame poetry's rejection of the economic world, its rejection of those real-world premises from which it does not extricate its own dependence. In W.S. Rendra's "Prostitutes of Jakarta – Unite!" the least organised and most exploited segment of the workforce is exhorted by the most articulate segment to do, allegorically, what all of the people being screwed ought to do:

The politicians and senior civil-servants  
are a tight bunch of rogues  
Their congresses and conferences  
wouldn't go without you  
You who must never say no  
because of the terror of hunger  
and the yoke of poverty  
and your long futile search for work...  
You are a part of the proletariat  
they have created  
Still  
Regret as you may  
But don't despair  
or allow yourselves to be sacrificed.

Prostitutes of Jakarta  
Stop being ashamed  
When I read in the papers  
how those clowns persecute you  
accuse you of being the cause of the nation's disasters  
I am enraged.  
You are my friends  
I can't have this  
God  
What clownmouths  
What foulmouths  
They have even politicized sex...
My sisters. Unite.
Take up sticks
Wave your bras on the ends of them
Carry them around the town in procession
waving them like flags they have disgraced.
Now it is your turn to demand
Tell them:
That recommending the persecution of prostitutes
without also recommending
marrying them
is nonsense.

Prostitutes of Jakarta
My sisters
Do not tremble before men
When quite easily
you can strip the fakes
Double your prices
let them flounder
Strike for a month
soon they will be committing adultery
with their brother's wives.

(in Aveling, 1975, pp. 27-33)

Is this easy advice for a man to give? Is this the voice Rorty (1989, p. 94) insists on as required by those oppressed who cannot speak for themselves? Where do we draw the line between solidarity and Syed Manzurul Islam's *othering the other*? We ask again: does poetry make difference by proclaiming a new world? Or, can it only render itself outside of worlds, by proclaiming difference? Is the voice of the poet that of an authentic outside/r? Is the community of poetry a nomadic one? Or is it one which goes through such motions in order to make possible its later canonical inclusion?

In Deleuze and Guattari's vocabulary, does this war machine live with the intention of achieving a place in the economy of a state apparatus? The opposite of a fifth column, poetry then could be the barbarian legion, the legion which with its special knowledge is best able to defend the empire from barbarians. But for Deleuze and Guattari the nomad exists only in becoming. Once under the State's sway then it might be assumed that barbaric cunning would quickly be lost. What "history does is to translate a coexistence of becomings into a succession". Deleuze and Guattari write that "collectivities can be transhumant, semisedentary, sedentary or nomadic, without by the same token being preparatory stages for the State, which is already there, elsewhere or beside" (1987, pp. 430-1). But if the State (or canon) is already elsewhere or beside then how is it refused? For Bourdieu, the economic universe which art inhabits is one:

whose very functioning is defined by a "refusal" of the "commercial" which is in fact a collective disavowal of commercial interests and profits, the most "anti-economic" and most visibly "disinterested" behaviours, which in an "economic" universe would be those most ruthlessly condemned. (1993, p. 76)

Yet he argues, these (behaviours) "contain a form of economic rationality (even in the restricted sense) and in no way exclude their authors from even the 'economic' profits awaiting those who conform to the law of this universe" (1993, p. 76).

In *The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed* Bourdieu writes that the "economy of practices" in his "autonomous sector of the field of cultural production" amounts to a reversal of the economic world "in a generalized game of 'loser wins', on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies"
That destruction of every voice and point of origin with which Barthes (1977, p. 148) associates writing, becomes itself the condition of the possibility of writing's origin and community. Sartre writes "the permanent possibility of abandoning the book is the very condition of the possibility of writing it and the very meaning of my freedom" (1989, p. 37). Rejection then is the originary and reflexive possibility of writing which exists only on the basis that it may dissolve itself. A first condition in which the canon-inhabited author lives out her or his judgement on the canon is the possibility of total rejection from the outset and from every setting out thereafter. By way of her/his own works s/he can withhold what little is in her/his power of the canon's next possibility.

How then do we account, from this negative possibility which the permanent threat of rejection constitutes, for the fact of aesthetic expression itself? Hegel writes of the need from which art springs, that it "has its origin in the fact that man is a thinking consciousness, i.e., that man draws out of himself and puts before himself what he is and whatever else is" (1975, Vol I, p. 31). Michael Dransfield's poem "Like this for Years", despite "the failure of language" and the fact that "no good comes of singing or silence", rejects rejection in favour of an ultimate commitment for survival:

In the cold weather
the cold city the cold
heart of something as pitiless as apathy
to be a poet in Australia
is the ultimate commitment.

When y've been thrown out of the last car
for speaking truthfully or mumbling poems
and the emptiness is not these stranded
endless plains but knowing that you are completely
alone in a desert full of strangers

and when the waves cast you up who sought
to dive so deep and come up with
more than water in yr hands
and the water itself is sand is air is something
unholdable

you realise that what you taste now in the mornings
is not so much blood as the failure of language

and no good comes of singing or of silence
the trees wont hold you you reject rejection
and the ultimate commitment
is survival

(1987, p. 50)
Is a reason necessary or possible for such a commitment? Shu Ting writes in "Perhaps..." a poem dedicated "for the loneliness of an author":

Perhaps these thoughts of ours
will never find an audience
Perhaps the mistaken road
will end in a mistake
Perhaps the lamps we light one at a time
will be blown out, one at a time
Perhaps the candles of our lives will gutter out
without lighting a fire to warm us.

Perhaps when all the tears have been shed
the earth will be more fertile
Perhaps when we sing praises to the sun
the sun will praise us in return
Perhaps these heavy burdens
will strengthen our philosophy
Perhaps when we weep for those in misery
we must be silent about miseries of our own

Perhaps
Because of our irresistible sense of mission
We have no choice

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 298)

*

Because a community is bounded by differends we can say that it depends on rejection and that its truth must be a lie (or at least be misunderstood) from the outside. This is especially so from the point of view of those who bear witness to the differend which a community builds over. Such bearing witness always risks (whether it attempts in its own right) the foundation of a new metaphoric and a new community. It involves the becoming foreign of those bodies which, by this means, inhabit prospectively a community which cannot yet be theirs. Such a community would in its turn have buried differends, could in its turn lose its borders and eventually its self, to other such burials. Community then reveals itself in the image of Fortunatus' purse: where outside and inside unceasingly become each other. Someone else's sovereignty lies under the risk of erasure merely by virtue of being someone else's thought. And is it not already erased, in the manner of an orientalism, by the means which make it someone else's, by its always already having been othered? Can community then exist only from the outside? Is it always mythic, a greener grass? Or is it only ever where we are?

For Levinas speech founds community and it does this by giving; it explains us with respect to itself; it is a kind of teaching (1969, p. 98). Community is for the literate, however, the between of language and civilisation. Yes – there are others, outside of civilisation, for whom there is a sociality, one which the literate mind is inclined to believe that it can comprehend. But, from whichever direction it is approached, the same gulf lies between literate and alterate minds. Community may be before, after or in civilisation. It cannot be before speech. None of these questions of anteriority matter, though, for us for whom community is inscribed as a civilised potential of ours. We do not succeed in meeting on equal terms those who lack the privilege of a history. Where there are such meetings terms are imposed by the party which brings to the meeting an historicising consciousness of itself and its others. This is a lesson drawn from Derrida's insistence on the anteriority of writing. Civilisation is that state of mind which declares itself conscious and privileges itself with a view built over other frames of mind.
Barbarism is defined from its outside as a state of mind which preys on its civilised other; it is how thought regards the outside it makes of itself. In *The Ethics of Travel*, Syed Manzurul Islam offers an ethical prescription, the purpose of which is "to actualise the virtual encounter and become other". It consists of three parts: "the obligation for the irreducible alterity of the other", "the just conduct of not making a victim of the other by de-legitimising its phases" and "becoming other in encounter". These, Islam writes, are the prescriptive imperative of the cross-cultural relationship or discourse (1996, pp. 114-5).

How should poetry deal with such a prescription when its work is to uncover how a word, a metaphor, tells us to be? Perhaps Islam's conditions function as a description of what poetry does do in its business of bearing witness to differends. "Becoming other in encounter" is the becoming foreign of the body which lives as a theft in a community it denies in order to make its own. As indirection of consciousness the poem is a gift to a community which cannot yet be because the poem will make it possible, complete it or allow its completion. Perhaps it is the kind of unknowable gift which W.S. Merwin foreshadows in writing of a most certain and intimate unknowable event.

For the anniversary of my death
Every year without knowing it I have passed the day
When the last fires will wave to me
And the silence will set out
Tireless traveller
Like the beam of a lightless star

Then I will no longer
Find myself in life as in a strange garment
Surprised at the earth
And the love of one woman
And the shamelessness of men
As today writing after three days of rain
Hearing the wren sing and the falling cease
And boding not knowing to what

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 272)

Death being the ultimate community in the dissolution of community and for which no prescription or avowal makes difference. Death entailing the incomprehensible dissolution of the self of which Orpheus reminds us.

**Canonic Personae**

Whether speaking or listening, I project myself into the other person, I introduce him into my own self. Our conversation resembles a struggle between two athletes in a tug-of-war. The speaking "I" abides in its body. Rather than imprisoning it, language is like a magic machine for transporting the "I" into the other person's perspective.

Merleau-Ponty (1974, p. 19)

I propose the notion of shifting personae to engage the ambivalence of subject (and object) positions and to explain the possibility of community. Perhaps a best example of the blurring of subjectivities and of subject/object relations is in the opening of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*:
The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd...

A book has neither object nor subject...
A book... is unattributable. It is a multiplicity. (1987, pp. 3-4)

Among shifting personae no position is pure, all are evanescent and overlapping (barbaric and mongrel). There is no pristine place from which I might choose to write or to read, no unsullied normative. To be funded, rewarded, to be unannointed, to write against the odds or against the grain, in comfort or in discontent, to write showily or secretly, preciously, prolifically, to write without a care for the reader, to write blindly (hoping to become invisible), or with an eye on the canon; these choices, however much volition there is in them, are illustrative of the fact that there is no unmotivated writing. None of these positions exist outside of relationships which make all writing possible and sometimes impossible. There is no writing, one might say, able to exercise its authenticity by means of having no sense of itself. All sorts of poetry and theory (all sorts of discourse) are always invading each other. That is in the nature of the living word, the word which unfolds in dialogue and as the interaction of languages (Bakhtin 1994, p. 119); that dialogue which, as Levinas writes, "proceeds from absolute difference" and has in language "the power to break the continuity of being or of history" (1969, pp. 194-5).

The mythic freedom and openness of art which Flaubert celebrated (in a letter to Louise Colet in 1852), depends on the construction of an aesthetic (meta-) subjectivity outside of life and whatever constructs it:

This is why I love Art. It's because at least there, in the world of fictions, everything can happen; one is at the same time one's king and one's people, active and passive, victim and priest. No limits; humanity is a jester with little bells that one jingles at the end of one's sentence, like a street performer at the end of his foot. (in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 175)

But this game of Art with a capital A, as the outside of the real of life, is a reflexive game. It is one which is subject to its own subjecting, one where position is confounded with disposition. It is a game which exercises the betweeness and slipperiness of words, the doom of their diaspora, in the cause of confounding what Bourdieu describes as the space of possibles. The ideal, expressed by Bayle in the republic of letters, of a subjectivity to which all are subject, manages to elide the problem of subjections within the self:

Liberty is what reigns in the Republic of Letters. This Republic is an extremely free state. In it, the only empire is that of truth and reason; and under their auspices, war is naively waged against just about anybody. Friends must protect themselves from their friends, fathers from children, fathers-in-law from sons-in-law: it is a century of iron. In it everyone is both ruler and subject of everyone else. (cited in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 163)

Bourdieu reminds us here that the subject of the work of art is not one of these characters ("the producer who actually creates the object in its materiality") "but rather the entire set of agents engaged in the field" (1993, p. 261).

We may describe the personae which inscribe the possibility of writing (and its survival) as canon. The canonic personae comprise the community of habitus in which writing is practised. These include such varied functions as writing, teaching, reading, reviewing, editing, anthologising, workshopping, mentoring, funding, judging, selecting, supporting (in various ways), badmouthing, gossiping and on. While thoroughly entangled with each other (and at times indistinguishable) as a result of being, as it were, splits in a continuity of subject (of the work of art), all of these positions may
be broadly aligned as leaning more or less in the direction of, on the one hand, making the canon, and on the other hand of keeping it.

The classic co-dependent stereotypes here invoked are those of the idol savant artist who cannot know what s/he is doing or with what prospects of success and who thus is a victim of the critic/judge, that dry stick who cannot make anything but whose business it is to know the value of other people's productions. These two present for us as the literary avatars, respectively, of authenticity and consciousness. In fact they are more like moods of the one personality than antagonists in a meeting. The differend which makes up their community is the constant work of protecting and violating borders, especially those between them. But as we have seen, these personae, which appear in their operation to work by means of excluding each other, in fact depend on the community of their differend. They make a language together and by misunderstanding each other, so that their misunderstanding is what will need to be understood by those who come after them, by those who pass beyond them by means of a judgement.

Canonic logic, in tending to present the field as a unified one, drowns personae – the very personae on which it depends for its life. The monolithic logic of the canon establishes one reading position, that position which is formed by the reading of the canon. And yet the characters which the canon contains are, by and large, diverse and unpredictable. We know how they behave once their texts are finished. But they are not finished, they haunt those after them. They are available for this haunting because they are canonised. To assume, as Kermode does in The Classic, that the naïveté of texts as to their future readings allows them to become classics (1975, p. 130), is to assume that the centuries of judgement which keep the canon have been uniformly pluralist and democratic. Yet he is arguing such a view with an imperialist foe of only decades before his own, in the form of T.S. Eliot – a maker and keeper of the canon if ever there was one. It is difficult to swallow the idea that the canon should have generally over time buried without a trace, as insufficiently naïve, all that did not survive. More likely that, rather than the canon providing a home for the open text, the openness of particular stories or characters over time and for us now, is the result of inclusion and retention in the canon. Canonisation – or more particularly the revisiting it implies – ensures that texts are opened to the contexts in which they survive. The point is not that Homer and Joyce play respectively with a flat and a round character. What is remarkable is that there is a sense in which they play with the same character and at opposite ends of the one canon.

Paradoxically, from this example one can see that canonic logic, while imposing a vertical and hierarchic community on those (personae) under its sway, may have the function of opening all of the contents of a canon to the whims of a community (such as that of poems) which specifically exists not to have a function. In Kristevan terms we could say that a bivalent logic, imposed on the productions of literature, has nothing to allow but the work of ambivalence. Ottó Orbán concludes his poem "Sinking Orpheus":

Orpheus the diver. He scrapes the skin of the age and it scrapes him, but human suffering is merely the air in his cylinder, the essence of his mystery is this: that the depths are a freight on his poems: down in the depths is a shadow, a ship that went down, around it no coins, no amphorae, only the darkness within things, and within that still denser, the darkness of genesis, infinity contained in a mere point of fire — though infinity’s not made of points: everything wavering, only the wind, only the whirling, only the flux remains firm... Seekers of treasure, we circle a sunken star with its torso of light, while empires stream by in a pearled string of bubbles, and above us the ocean of time is pulsing with light.

(1993, pp. 37-8)
Efforts at reclaiming a significance from the wrecks of the past, efforts at a canonic sentence, serve to recover only the darkness within things. And yet there is a kind of mastery to avail those reading in the canon, a mastery founded on the reciprocity in which Orpheus and his age scrape each other. It is both difficult and futile to imagine fire on the ocean floor. And yet a star is sunk there, light pulses above us. We are in these delusions, in the facts which betray them, as in the air of suffering which fills this diver’s cylinder, a sort of community: a community of impossible subjects which only exists where community is impossible. Such is the Orphic position to which the bearing witness of differends brings us. Such is the canonic necessity of surpassing the contents of the canon. By means of this necessity the canon lies open to what it cannot contain: its foreign becoming body – its future. And so a circuit of text and flesh sustains the positions from which these are read, from which these are written.

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In *Desire in Language*, "The reign of literature" Kristeva tells us "is the reign of market value" (1981, p. 58). It is under this reign that we distinguish a canon as vessel from what it contains at any one time. And we note at once the paradox that while the work of art, notionally often that of one worker, would be deprived of an intention equally by its destruction or survival; the canon, as repository of judged judgements and as the work of no one in particular, cannot claim to be so deprived. Its intentions are as those which Le Doeuff has attributed to philosophy in her formulation that "the philosophical creates that which it represses":

This is first because that discourse which we call "philosophical" produces itself through the fact that it represses, excludes and dissolves, or claims to dissolve, another discourse, other forms of knowledge, even though this other discourse or forms of knowledge may not have existed as such prior to this operation.

It is Le Doeuff’s contention that what philosophy "labours to keep at bay" is not capable of definition:

It is not and cannot be defined, perhaps because it is precisely the indefinite, or alternatively because philosophy is just the formal idea that discourse must involve exclusion or discipline, that admissible modes of thought cannot be undefined. (1989, pp. 114-5)

The rational discourse which reigns over poetry might as well describe its other thus. Its (albeit unconscious) efforts are to direct those indirections of consciousness which the canon as vessel contains. But whether or not one can generalise to the study of literature Le Doeuff’s pattern of intentions which remains hidden from philosophy, it will be objected here that the monolithic canon I have described is an ahistoric, idealised entity, set up for critique and that in the real world we are free as readers to move in and out of a plurality of canon/s, of varied directions at once (to suit personae all over the place). Lyotard writes that:

history consists of a swarm of narratives, narratives that are passed on, made up, listened to and acted out; the people does not exist as a subject; it is a mass of thousands of little stories that are at once futile and serious, that are sometimes attracted together to form bigger stories, and which sometimes disintegrate into drifting elements, but which usually hold together well enough to form what we call the culture of a civilised society. (1981, p. 134)

Such, I would argue, is the anti-canonic pressure to which the canon is continually (and especially now) subject both from its contents and from the clamouring outside. But what survives canonically from other centuries has survived other pressures and may well
survive those of the present. Lyotard writes of the meta-discursive position of the world's current economy:

Capitalism is so godless that it has no respect for any one story, and its power is such that there is only one exception to the rule: it does care about the narrative which tells how narratives are told, listened to and acted out. (1981, p. 141)

There is yet for Lyotard a "canonical story which attaches... value to the autonomous value of the narrator, and which subordinates the activities of the narratee and the narrated to it" (1981, p. 141). Where should we find that narrator?

An ironic survivor, the voice expelled into that destruction Barthes foreshadows in "The Death of the Author", is not the voice of anyone in particular. Nor can we say of it that it is no voice at all. Rather it is one which, standing for none, assumes the privilege of standing for all: a voice necessarily lost in the attempt at finding its way back. It is our voice (the voice of everyone in particular), canonised in the anonymity of great names which no longer belong to anyone but are a public property (Kant's subjective universal, Eliot's tradition).

That voice which is noone's voice, nobody's voice, precisely because of its disinvestment (the slipping away of the subject which spoke it), is actually by this (ghostly) trick able to be everywhere and at once, able to stand in for the sort of ubiquitous narration we have been used to associate with an omnipresent and omniscient god. But has this place from which to narrate become that quintessentially modern position, of God as the one topping the list of missing persons after the Great War (Manning Clark, Vol VI, 1987, p. 104)? Is His the missing voice heard all around us? And is there only one such voice? Is there a feigned anonymity in this default monism? If we listen for voices such as are displaced, perhaps they are as the ones Coetzee imagines in Waiting for the Barbarians: cries of the dead in an air full of sighs, never utterly lost, never properly retrievable, open to many interpretations. Are these voices the voices of foreigners? Are they bearers of witness? Are they recognised by us? Are they our voices, uncannily our own? By what turns shall we know them?

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Canon is the ineluctable literary context against which and in which new works are written and tested. Unlike poetry it is concerned with measurement and its logic tends decisively in the direction of a unity of limits. In one sense the canon is an inclusive (if hierarchic) arrangement of all texts, of the total textual environment - i.e. an arrangement with no outside, no other - a sort of feudal universe, lorded over, complete, vertical. Importantly there are canons, which describe different and separate universes of text, which have an outside, an other, and in which value operates on a principle of exclusion. Despite whatever horizontal or democratic intentions they profess in relation to each other, they remain, internally, vertical structures and will inevitably be drawn into hierarchic relations with each other. That is, if there are canons, it is in their nature to be contained in one, the outside of which, as we have seen, serves as a proof that there is no outside of the logic of containing in which the canon does its business. Canon is the continuous negation of Lyotard's dictum, in The Differend, that: "The history of the world cannot pass a last judgement" (1988, p. 8). The canon is always complete. And, as with civilisation, a judgement comes after it, lays it to waste. What is canonic is the circle which we cannot step out of to begin.

The canon and our speech are each equally the exercise of an eternal recurrence in and against which poetry is written: "The poet is haunted by a voice with which his words must harmonize... A poor poet would be he who never heard that inner voice" (Malraux, 1954, p 335). But speech is a labyrinth, of motivations lost in forward unfolding. The canon's completion reduces a labyrinth to a list.
The literature of the world evolves as a re-reading of us, of our collectivity. It is easier to see ourselves as the re-reading and while that view is not without efficacy, it ignores the fact of presence and absolves us in determinism. Our faith in the canon is then as our faith in any words, in the manner in which they come for us. It is an unreflecting faith in a totalisation, that in a consciousness with words, rather than of them, we can make sense of ourselves, each other and our becoming. We demonstrate this faith by conducting ourselves out of the said into our saying and the saying of others.

Canon is to the community of literature as *langue* is to *parole* — a prescriptive meta-awareness in the service of common sense, defining the one reality-for-all-time appropriate to the circumstances. It is a hierarchic arrangement, with an inside and an outside. Its outside is always below its inside; what remains outside always threatens what remains inside. It is hence in the interests of everything canonised for the outside of the canon to disappear as quickly and quietly as possible, to become, in short, irretrievable. But either this cannot happen or its having happened is irrelevant to the facts of what can be known. There remains in each case the fact of an outside to show where the canon is. As in the case of that other, already chosen sign, metaphor, the synchronic stasis of a community-as-given is defeated in its unfolding through time.

**Whose Community?**

We are here because of (and despite) crimes against humanity, crimes which allowed us to become, which allow us to continue. The question of guilt relates, not to what we ourselves never did, but to our unavoidable life long complicity and collaboration against the truth, that collaboration which characterises lives lived in the absence of any intention to act: lives which fail to dissent, lived in the graves of meaning on top of everything. This question of bad faith is notwithstanding the fact that others may have hearts as dark as ours, is notwithstanding the ceaseless exchange of bodies between the community of excluded others and the community of excluding others. Freud, in "Thoughts on War and Death" writes that:

> the primitive history of mankind is filled with murder. Even today, the history of the world which our children learn in school is essentially a series of race-murders. The obscure sense of guilt which has been common to man since prehistoric times, and which in many religions has been condensed into the doctrine of original sin, is probably the outcome of a blood-guiltiness incurred by primitive man. (1952, p. 763)

To be situated by crimes past is an aspect of the human condition. It is the universal ethical *in medias res*. No one arrived at their present position through a lineage of exclusively pure volitions, consensually exercised in conditions of equal power and sentence. Religions obviated such ideal intersubjective conditions with the idea of an imposed and therefore necessarily hierarchic harmony. Knowledge of our position is in this way ethically immobilising. To the extent that we act, it will always have been out of ignorance. Nietzsche's guilt as the mark of reactive thinking, the bad conscience of Christian invention, he regards as the condition of peaceful society (1977, p. 116).

We wonder, as the Claudius of *Hamlet* wondered, whether he could find himself pardoned and yet retaining the offence. The canon, in profane as in sacred literature, is thus as the receptacle and validation of the crimes by which we now mis/read and in

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99 To borrow Jacob Glasheyn’s phrase (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 439).
which we are mis/read. And yet the immensity of the crime enabling, the powerlessness of individuals in the face of it, the security of a collective amnesia (these in the forms of myth, religion, legislation) - all haunt the propensity to act. The future fades into our fading to past. We are impossible to pick apart: as victim, as perpetrator, as ignorant, as fully knowned. There is a community of differends where individuals, all haunted in like manner, blur. In Paul Celan's "Fugue of Death" we find the apotheosis of such a community as Hegel's master and slave together make up.

Fugue of Death

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
drink it and drink it
we are digging a grave in the sky it is ample to lie there
A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden
hair Margarete
he writes it and walks from the house the stars glitter
he whistles his dogs up
he whistles his Jews out and orders a grave to be dug in
the earth
he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink in the mornings at noon we drink you at
nightfall
drink you and drink you
A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden
hair Margarete
Your ashen hair Shulamith we are digging a grave in the
sky it is ample to lie there

He shouts stab deeper in earth you there and you others
you sing and you play
he grabs at the iron in his belt and swings it and blue
are his eyes
stab deeper your spades there and you others play
on for the dancing

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at nightfall
we drink you at noon in the mornings we drink you at
nightfall
drink you and drink you
a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He shouts play sweeter death's music death comes as a
master from Germany
he shouts stroke darker the strings and as smoke you
shall climb to the sky
then you shall have a grave in the clouds it is ample to lie
there

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death comes as a master from
Germany
we drink you at nightfall and morning we drink you
and drink you
a master from Germany death comes with eyes that are blue
with a bullet of lead he will hit in the mark he will hit you
a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
he hunts us down with his dogs in the sky he gives us a grave
he plays with the serpents and dreams death comes as a master from Germany
your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith

(1972, pp. 33-4)

Death is what dwells between the oppressor and the oppressed. It is the manner of their community. Where there is no justice to come between them a poem may bear witness. To witness is a decision among undecodings. A poem is the community of this witnessing and in it the oppressed may show their way, may evolve the solidarity of knowledge by which liberation is effected. Celan's haunting phrase "it is ample to lie there" shows us a beyond of irony in which what is said overpowers the situation which saying represents. What is there for the dead but lying there? But these words are neither from nor for the dead. At least they cannot be entirely so. It is by deciding to witness that poetry grasps hold of the future. It is by such decidings, as in Jayne Cortez' poem "Rape", that words may change the world:

What was Inez supposed to do for
the man who declared war on her body
the man who carved a combat zone between her breasts
Was she supposed to lick the crabs from his hairy ass
kiss every pimple on his butt
blow hot breath on his big toe
draw back the corners of her vagina and
hee haw like a California burro

This being war time for Inez
she stood facing the knife
the insults and
her own smell drying on the penis of
the man who raped her

She stood with a rifle in her hand
doing what a defense department will do in times of war
And when the man started grunting and panting and wobbling forward like
a giant hog
She pumped lead into his three hundred pounds of shaking flesh
Sent it flying to the Virgin of Guadalupe
then celebrated day of the dead rapist punk
and just what the fuck else was she supposed to do?

And what was Joanne supposed to do for
the man who declared war on her life
Was she supposed to tongue his encrusted
toilet stool lips
suck the numbers off his tin badge
choke on his clap trap balls
squeeze on his nub of rotten maggots and
sing god bless america thank you for fucking my life
away

This being wartime for Joanne
she did what a defense department will do in times of
war
and when the piss drinking shit sniffing guard said
I'm gonna make you wish you were dead black bitch
come here
Joanne came down with an ice pick in
the swat freak motherfucker's chest
yes in the fat neck of that racist policeman
Joanne did the dance of the icepicks and once again
from coast to coast
house to house
we celebrated the day of the dead rapist punk
and just what the fuck else were we supposed to do

(in Hoover, 1994, pp. 337-8)

Imagining the other way, the other world, has been the legendary, if clichéd, work of
fictions and poetries, as celebrated in Frost's "The Road Not Taken". But it is also, as in
Cortez' poem above, the work of poetry to witness where there is no other way, to
witness a necessity which, if it speaks for justice and against a silence which amply lies
there, yet has nothing utopic about it.

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Writers, artists of any sort, have the clearest responsibilities where agendas are
unspoken. Art perhaps in this sense shares the goal which Wittgenstein has identified for
philosophy, that of supplying remarks on the natural history of human beings, remarks
"which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes" (1994,
pp 200-1). In poetry's case there is a vocation to tell what is meant but will not be said,
to speak the silence in which the crime goes on because it goes on covering itself in the
manner of those accepted facts which are always before our eyes. In Australia the effect
of the *terra nullius* doctrine is that the land has been emptied (albeit retrospectively) of its
ethical contents: realising this means realising that there is no ethical basis for the state.
In this circumstance the only way to build the state, if there ought to be one, is from the
outside in.

If Aborigines are the new fifth columnists in Australian society, the agents of a
barbarism which the big owners (of land, of capital) claim as foreign to our way of life,
then we should remember that poetry begins inside an idiom, but Platonically, in the spirit
of an expulsion, with an affinity for the outside. As that discourse, that version of
events which has been shown the door, its job is to live up to a fierce mongrel logic, a
logic of reconciliation.

In Australia today, in the great amorphous debate which is emerging over the
culture of identity and rights of possession, it appears more and more to be the case that
the languages spoken (and unspoken) by the antagonists in this debate are mutually
unintelligible. They represent the differend between two mythologies: *terra nullius* and
the Dreaming, of land which is possessed and land which possesses. Both are claimed as
aboriginal myths in that they both posit their bearers as the autochthonous Australians,
inheritors of a right. But, in the terms Lyotard articulates, the differend between these
positions throws into question the very idea of rights of inheritance. This is because just as “it is in the nature of a victim not to be able to prove that one has been done a wrong”, so the perfect crime consists, not in killing the victim, but in “obtaining the silence of the witnesses, the deafness of the judges, and the inconsistency (insanity) of the testimony” (1988, p. 8). This scenario assumes that the law is able to stand between plaintiff and defendant. While this may be becoming true, such a separation has not been constitutive of the law in this case, but rather of the image it has promoted of itself. Witness the alterite symmetry proposed in Governor Davey’s proclamation to the inhabitants of Van Diemen’s Land (in chapter 2). Lyotard writes that a plaintiff loses the means to prove having been done a wrong, “if the author of the damage turns out directly or indirectly to be one’s judge” (1988, p. 8). If in the colonial world this can be generally claimed as the pattern, it is because one law buried another, buried the differend between it and its other100. Because it is in the nature (or de-naturing) of laws to be one. And it is in the culture (or it could be said, the grammar) of ones to have others, to be stood outside of and neither to comprehend the differend beyond themselves nor the differends within: enabling as they must have been of the synthesis by which the law became one.

In *Strangers to Ourselves* Kristeva writes: “The foreigner is within us. And when we flee from or struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting our unconscious – that ‘improper’ facet of our impossible ‘own and proper’ “ (1991, p. 191). For Kristeva, as we have noted in chapter 2, psychoanalysis is a journey into two strangenesses: that of the other and of the self (1991, p. 182). Kristeva asks us how we could tolerate foreigners if we did not know ourselves as strangers.

Levinas writes of a gift which founds community and explains us with respect to itself as a kind of teaching (1969, p. 98). But what kind of a gift is it when the words are not or cannot be received, where nothing is shared or understood of the gift? What kind of a polltax which can never be reciprocated? What kind of teaching where the student is deprived of language? Aboriginal Australia, read and written as a silence and emptiness, never had the opportunity to welcome strangers or to offer them such a gift as Levinas imagines. Is this opportunity (to offer something of our own) now available to that community which never allowed it before, which could never receive but only seize? Can we go by the way we never came? Whose law would authorise that?

Lyotard believes that “the activities of thought have a... vocation: that of bearing witness to differends” (1993, p. 10). This I would argue is also, not the duty, but the essential activity of an ethically engaged poetry. Such a poetry is a community in bearing witness to differends. This bearing witness is achieved by becoming foreign. Bearing witness is what the body of foreigners cannot help but do. In Lyotard’s terms it implies an art of not knowing which in turn constitutes a resistance (1988, p xvi). This recognition necessitates neither a descent into obviousness nor a flight from polysyemy. Nor should it excuse the withholding of compassion from those who know none. Bearing witness to differends is not a means of subjecting them to a new law or totality. Lionel Fogarty’s poem “Ecology” may present such an effort to witness and to reclaim a space, to claim an Aboriginality, in such a way as to not lie under or impose a totality. Its method is, in part, to blur turns in the intersubjective circuit, thus to centre the human agency which, as languaged artefact, the poem does not evade:

I am a frill necked lizard

100 Lyotard writes:

a Martinican is a French citizen; he or she can bring a complaint against whatever impinges upon his or her rights as a French citizen. But the wrong he or she deems to suffer from the fact of being a French citizen is not a matter for litigation under French law. It might be under private or public international law, but for that to be the case it would be necessary that the Martinican were no longer a French citizen. But he or she is. (1988, p. 27)
roaming, providing
I am refuge by king brown taipan
highly delightful sea bird
catches the flint of my star skin colour.

I
Am we pelicans of woodland brogla
traditional yamming
yes roots, nuts
differ to geese, hawks, quails
that number plentiful.

Still I am dugong,
kangaroo, cockatoo and grasshopper too.
Yes, I am a termite, better still
butterflies are my beetles, wasps friends
You are natures crocodile
even pythons are not inadequate, nor geckoes.
We are goannas
after salt water got grounded.

I am death
harmless.
You are tropic cycles
swamps got bad affinity
says who.

Now a dingo arrives
that diet attractive a woof woof
later bush tucker
needs a barramundi.

Later I am digging sticks
then I am seeds winnowed for damper
I am club, woomera,
an agile well-balanced bandicoot
flying fox and an ABORIGINAL
our systems woven from an eco-system
so don't send us to pollution
we are just trying to picture
this life without frustration.

(in Gilbert, 1988, pp. 163-4)

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Blanchot's community is not only one of making but equally one of unmaking, of "not doing", of "unworking" (1988, p. 23). His unavowable community is one which:

by opening unknown spaces of freedom, makes us responsible for new relationships, always threatened, always hoped for, between what we call work, oeuvre, and what we call unworking, désœuvrement. (1988, p. 56)

In a circular logic differend and community propose each other. A community is when humans participate with each other. What is between borders, however it absolves or undefines itself, is some kind of community.
What sort of community can poetry or its makers achieve when the work of art is torn between conforming and not, between making and unmaking sense? However art conforms to its canonic necessities, however canons bend to the shape of what they next contain, community is the canon's structural opposite. Its principles are horizontal and metonymic. It is always beside itself, never arrived, never over or under. The frustration of community and of everything we share, of everything which is between us, is precisely in this failure of community to coincide with itself.

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The work of making and the work of choosing/keeping the canon are contiguous and in some ways homologous. The makers of poems have no other model outside of their practice from which to derive an editorial process for their work than those processes by which works like theirs have been given or deprived or have had truncated/disturbed a place in the canon. The keeping of the canon has no model outside of its practice but the deciding which goes into the finishing of individual works. As énoncé, canon and work participate in the same illusion as to how stillness is attained. This is the illusion of Macleish's declaration, critiqued in chapter 1, that "A poem should not mean/But be". To the extent that canon and poem are able to be considered in their own right these have no model and no context outside of each other. Nothing becomes by merely being, nothing merely is. It is only together, as a two sided track, that we are able to speak of the context which canon and its contents share.

And yet while we say that there is no model for each but the other, if we allow the two completely to co-incide, there will be no model for either. This blurring, however desirable it may be, is a real risk to both processes. The industry of standing between the reader and the author (and in which neither of these parties is able effectively to withdraw consent) is doomed to survive in the fact that however these are made or are allowed to overlap, they ultimately remain the only two necessary positions. The industry of standing between reader and author is likewise frustrated by the wandering of these personae.

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Authorial wandering is a tropic refusal to settle or find a last frame, it is a telling which, whatever credulity it immediately demands of its audience, always opens onto a new story or a new telling, by virtue of which it acknowledges, not the particularity of its own antecedents, but the fact that its context is canonic. Living myth in an oral culture we guess may have been like this. The crippling dependence suggested by Bloom's clinamen amounts to the necessarily mistaken baton passing of those who are falling into an ever narrower hole.

A culture tends towards coherence in its manner of resolving against aesthetic wandering: in the forms of decision that it chooses to assume, or that it cannot help but assume, where these are given it. Such aesthetic wanderings are away from past knowledges, knowledges passing. That is to say that the objective stillness of accounting arises from a subjective base of experience and practice, practice which entails a testing and a passing of limits. A canon's resolving against indirection performs a function for a

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101 The idea is developed from Lucretius' concept indicating the swerve of the atoms: the randomness and mistakenness on which nature depends for its productions (1952, p. 17).

102 This is not to suggest that cultures are mono-cultures, rather that they define themselves and their canonic inclusions, by way of limits. Canadian literature, for all the similarities of its situation, is not Australian literature. The current debate over the inclusion in anthologies of poetry in languages other than English, and especially Aboriginal languages, furnish instances where this manner of resolving is disputed.
community which cannot otherwise know itself and it may perform this function in the service of a textuality (such as poetry's) which disallows itself a function.

But the canon's accounting only succeeds in numbering the virtues by which it designates itself as the place of greatness (a singular place). It does not recognise itself as the place of the word between (a vector or movement, a non-place), such as all words are. So the canon is a kind of faith which makes and owns us and, if we agree with it (as does Bloom's Third World coming to understand itself through Shakespeare [1994, p. 38]), we may be forgiven our foreignness in this ready-made home, the heimlich of word, of text. We may forgive ourselves because the canon will then be all our own work. It will bring to life those ghosts which acknowledge us.

Yet the mistakenness entailed in authorial wandering (necessary to the production of literary works) is not the mistakenness of divergence from the ideal to which the canon and the next thing it implies, conform; but rather the sort of mistakenness which anyone experiences in trying to explain a new place to themselves. This is the mistakenness of a Columbus who will not recognise the New World he is in. It lives or dies in the work uncorrected. If it is to be a mistakenness from an historic point of view then we note that Deleuze and Guattari declare the multiple narratives of Nomadology to be the opposite of history. History for them is always written from a sedentary point of view (1987, p. 23). Like Columbus, the artist of any persuasion, to the extent that s/he is canonised, is the agent of a future agenda, to which s/he can have no privileged access, however it is later claimed that s/he was ahead of her/his time. But it is not primarily in relation to that unknowable agenda that we claim that the artist is mistaken. Mistakenness is necessitated by the impossibility of knowing the true nature of the work's relation to its material. Merleau-Ponty describes this position in terms of a wrong-sidedness:

It goes without saying that language is oblique and autonomous, and that its ability to signify a thought or a thing directly is only a secondary power derived from the inner life of language. Like the weaver, the writer works on the wrong side of his material. He has to do only with language, and it is thus that he suddenly finds himself surrounded by meaning. (1964, pp. 44-5)

All the words with which we approach the business of making with words are from the wrong side of the track; the poem (and any work of art) and its metabusiness interanimate to achieve a community, if they can, on the basis of such a reversal. The problem for metabusiness is that the authenticity of transcendence is always frustrated by its being said somewhere, by its having to refer. Perhaps this problem was never more clearly demonstrated than in "Mayakovsky's Suicide Note":

1

She loves me, loves me not.
and scatter them, I tear my fingers
as one tears, broken,
superstitiously,
and scatters all over

May

103 Malraux writes:

The notion that great works of art teem with the future (stress being laid on the notion of 'promise' this word has acquired) is due to the outlook of our civilisation, which tends to regard itself as a conquering civilisation; but great works are, in practice less bound up with the future in this wider sense, than with a limited, immediate future. (1954, p. 412)
the little wreath of daisy.
Let the haircut and close shave
reveal
greyness,
and the silver of years
pound.

I hope,
I believe:
I shall never be
one
of shameful prudence.

2

It's two o'clock already.
I guess you're in bed.
The Milky Way
a silver river
in the night.

I'm in no hurry,
no point
waking
troubling you
with telegrams.

As they say,
the incident is closed.
The loveboat simply
cracked up against circumstance.

You and I:
quits,
no use listing
mutual grieves,
miseries,
hurts.

Look at how quiet the world is.
Night
has levied a tax
of stars in the sky.

In such moments
one gets up and speaks to
ages,
history,
The whole cosmos.

3

It's two o'clock...
I guess you're in bed.
Or maybe you're
also up with this thing.
I'm in no hurry.
No point
waking
troubling you
with telegrams.
There is something terrifying in the calm assurance of the poet at work till the end which is his own work. One's own death at one's own hand, fashioned with poem for footnote, does not escape, but rather assures and cultivates, community. In a related final fragment, published as "Unfinished" in the Selected Verse, Mayakovskv writes of the embodiment of words, of their force ringing through centuries:

I know the force of words and warning they can sound
I don't mean those which draw front-row applause
But words at which coffins break lose to pound
the ground this way and that with heavy paws
They may be cast out publishers ignore them
But words forge on tighten their belly-bands
ring through the centuries and trains come crawling
to lick and fondle poetry's horny hands
I know the force of words They seem a petal flung
Under the heels of dancers just a trifle
But man possesses backbone heart and tongue

(1985, p. 268)

The bringing of worlds into being (work of backbone, heart and tongue) is a collectivity in which the body and the outside are in the condition of perpetual reversal we know as community; that community which Irigaray expresses as *infinitely neighbouring*, and which we have noted, for Levinas lives in the epiphany, in which God is reached through the *face of alterity*. This interaction is what ensures that, however civilised we become, we will always, to the degree that we know anything of our selves, find those selves foreign.

Regardless of what alterity assumes of us, of our words, of the community of their failing to get across, their failing to leave well alone, we live in an assumption of foreignness which is as good as the heeding of a prayer.104 This itinerance of wishes provides an endless spring of scavenging. Becoming foreign is the impossible work of scavenging self, forgetting whose skin one is in.105 Dialogue (however foreign to each other its partners are) is the act of faith and doubt which institutes, restores and allows the word between as community.

Speech models the failure of sentience to ever catch up with itself. Just as Levinas tells us that consciousness tears us away from the *there is* (in Lechte, 1994, p. 117), so in speech as it unfolds with others an authenticity is established from the defeat of consciousness because the sentience which lives in speech cannot take in all that is meant. The ongoing of speech is thus always borne in mistakenness. That mistakenness by which we makers of context manage never to be fully apprised of our haunting, provides the specific breach which enables authentic freedom. Hence the need for all of the abstractions (grammar, semantics, the canon) which serve to take in meaning. When Levinas writes that "the word is a window; if it forms a screen it must be rejected" (1979,

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104 Which we may intimately relate to the ongoing process of creativity in which humanity participates. Levinas writes: "The meaning of prayer can be found only in its relationship to God's need of the prayers of the just to bring the worlds into existence, to sanctify and elevate them" (1989, p. 234). The bringing of worlds into being is a collectivity (the same as that which Marx designates without recourse to prayer in the Eleventh of his Feuerbach theses), which depends, in either case, on a dialogue with a silent partner: in one case God, in other the world as it exists historically.

105 Such is the mystery which underlies the foreignness of both Dionysus and Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*.
p. 205) it must be replied that unfortunately we are not privileged with the means of judging between these. We speak and judge and go into the future, certain only of a degree of mistakenness wherever we apprehend these processes. What forges community is the failure of the reflective/reflexive capacities behind speech to keep up with any of its manifestations. Herein lies the fascination of the transcendence in which speech participates; that the between of us remains perpetually beyond consciousness, that what we say is always beyond the means of apprehension which are at our disposal; that we are, if in community, always beyond ourselves.

What makes the body foreign is in the unavoidable borders the body makes in and of and by itself. Rilke writes:

Choose to be changed. With the flame, with the flame be enraptured, where from within you a thing changefully splendid escapes: nothing whereby that earth-mastering artist is captured more than the turning-point touched by his soaring shapes.

(1949, p. 111)

The borders which make the body and which articulate its place in speech at once make it foreign. Community exists then only in the circle of alterity by means of which bodies apprehend each other only ever from the outside, in the gap which sensate experience broaches and makes common.

If poetry finds no community but the one which Blanchot suggests, of those who have no community, we may argue that this is because it is the art of being lost between, because it is (or rather it has long since become, in the movement from Romanticism to Modernism) an art of homelessness, the art (to go back to Plato) of the one disallowed from the city. The particularity of its dissonances establish the frame in which are found those affinities and disaffinities which work at making community.

In dreams, Cixous writes "foreignness is absolutely pure, and this is the best thing for writing. Foreignness becomes a fantastic nationality" (1993, p. 80). Dreams for Cixous are states for which there is no transition, states in which we experience an "extreme familiarity with extreme strangeness" (1993, p. 80).

Language is the site between us in which we become participants in a community which opens onto rejection, the risk which has, as Blanchot writes of the community of lovers, "as its ultimate goal the destruction of society" (1988, p. 48). Does a differend paper over that risk? Is in its place a word, a phrase indispensable? Nation, republic, legacy? What type of community is the invisible wishing to name, to see itself, to say its differends by unpronouncing them, by making that is, unintelligible, those who disagree with it?

If, as Merleau-Ponty writes, "through the action of culture I take up my dwelling in lives which are not mine" (1964, p. 75), then must there not attend this action a risk of eviction, of being to told to mind my own business, or at least of earning the resentment of those less adept with signs, those less able to articulate their position in culture? And as if this were not itself sufficient risk to the prospect of culture, there remains the fact that this imperial self of mine may be met with an other which similarly claims a right to dwell in what does not belong to it, and perhaps specifically in what I have thought of as mine. However the last half millennium appears, the imperial view was never the exclusive privilege of Europe. Witness Po Chü-I's poem, "After Collecting the Autumn Taxes":

From these high walls I look at the town below
Where the natives of Pa cluster like a swarm of flies.
How can I govern these people and lead them aright?
The betweeness which makes possible culture also constitutes a risk to which it is subject: the risk of violence. It is in the exercise of this risk that civilisations build and threaten their others and as well the calm they cultivate, the idleness for which they live.

The mistake of phenomenology – we could call it Europe's mistake – is to assume, over the splits in and between subjects, too easy a passage of transcendence. The mind Marvell imagines as one which, transcending its pleasures and resemblances, creates "far other worlds", may indeed have the effect of "annihilating all that's made" (1972, p. 101). But what it mainly cannot help but annihilate is its others. The mistake with which the human rights campaigner may have to contend is not so much in having generalised a particular polity as virtuous, but rather in assuming that her or his freedom is welcome, that our freedom will welcome us wherever we go.

If freedom is Europe's gift to the world, we may straightforwardly employ here Sartre's dictum: to give is to enslave. To give, he writes is "to appropriate by destruction while utilizing this destruction to enslave another". For Sartre "the craze to destroy which is at the bottom of generosity is nothing else than a craze to possess" (1989, p. 594). The context of these remarks is a discussion of two sides of possession (we may gloss these as ownership and haunting) which meet in the assertion that "a ghost is only the concrete materialization of the idea that the house and furnishings are possessed" (1989, p. 587). For Sartre the possessor is the one I meet in and through the object he possesses. Generosity is a destructive function and destruction "realizes appropriation perhaps more keenly than creation does, for the object destroyed is no longer there to show itself impenetrable."

The flames which burn the farm which I myself have set on fire, gradually effect the fusion of the farm with myself. In annihilating it I am changing it into myself. Suddenly I rediscover the relation of being found in creation, but in reverse; I am the foundation of the barn which is burning; I am this barn since I am destroying its being... to destroy is to recreate by assuming oneself as solely responsible for the being of what existed for all. (1989, p. 593)

The totalising mind rewrites the world in the name of its freedom and by means of the illusion that the world was a blank slate to be inscribed. Of the result of the world-making transcendence Marvell describes: "Annihilating all that's made/ To a green thought in a green shade" (1972, p. 101), how can we not ask — whose thought, whose shade?

These destructions are in the spirit of rejection in which artwork and canon participate in order to have a world theirs: they abolish the past and other worlds that these might be made objects in their image. The process of the canon provides just such an object (as it finds in itself) for the ideal consciousness which knows only and entirely what it ought to know: itself. But does a practical consciousness know its self when it knows know other selves? Or do consciousness and community turn out to be the same track?
Levinas claims that the welcoming of the Other is the consciousness of my injustice. But what if the Other should not welcome me? What if the face should not summon me, what if it should turn away? There would still be these words, whether windows or screens, and they would still lie between us; move with us by the means in which they are made infinite and by which we offer to ourselves our choosing, our desire. Desire in any case cannot escape the permanent seesawing yearning of exile — to be elsewhere in my home, and to know the foreigner’s face in the body in the mirror. Blanchot’s “impossible community” is one which can never be finished and which always and necessarily risks disappearance.

Community is merely the consequence of the fact that, wherever speech goes on, there is nothing but collaboration, voluntary or otherwise. In this sense then community is the becoming of that unsuitable place in which we ourselves are always becoming. It has — by virtue of this evanescence — the unknowable status which Socrates, in the Cratylus, attributed to a transition always going on (1952, p. 114). Brecht echoes Valéry’s “pervasive delight” in the dictum that a work of art is never finished but abandoned (in Block and Salingar, 1960, p. 29), beginning his poem in “About the Way to Construct Enduring Works”:

How long
Do works endure? As long
As they are not completed.
Since as long as they demand effort
They do not decay.

(1976, p. 193)

It is in that failure to decay (corollary of never arriving), which can be said of none of us personally, that we discover a community which condemns itself and in which we are, as Sartre claims, condemned to freedom.

The problem of community may be best expressed in the fact that it is not only we humans who are condemned to our freedom. For Lyotard the animal is the paradigm of the victim (1988, p. 28). In dealing with the effects of our freedom we would stand towards that most unavailing of our communities, that with which humanity never ceases to build its most fundamental differend, a gulf over which it is only our own words which we can hear. If consciousness was the characteristic of mind/fulness which served as a vehicle for that centring of ourselves in which all species have come to be threatened, then what the decentring now required depends on is its lack. In the mythology of the modern world it is Copernicus who begins us on this means by which we may learn to dwell among and not over. Robinson Jeffers writes in his poem "Carmel Point" of the extraordinary patience of things:

This beautiful place defaced...
Now the spoiler has come: does it care?
Not faintly. It has all time. It knows the people are a tide
That swells and in time will ebb, and all
Their works dissolve. Meanwhile the image of the pristine beauty
Lives in the very grain of the granite,
Safe as the endless ocean that climbs our cliff. — As for us:
We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
As the rock and the ocean that we were made from.

(in Milosz, 1996, p. 34)
lives of the poets

head down among them
scrubbing for fame
for justice
come bitter to end
set of marks upon paper
whom honour mocks, pride

all lives to come and now partake
shot through with premonition

to speak as of the dead
pretending till the wheels fall off
then I'm not there at all

never checking the mailbox
nonchalant grudging
we know them in
continuity

cursed to curse others
thrusting the old penumbra forward
unfolding hopes
horizon biding

*

how vast rejection
lays on Ø
how bright in the pages of luck
the small are lauded unsufficing
we must make them care
issuing forth as in stride
where they lay hard at mirrors
hearth warm by

among the all spoken
and once and for all they are the avowed
sporty in their new diaspora

what if a thousand or more must pass
of drought and plenty, told-you-so
careful of your cupboard with them
whom hunger owns
will deliver your private particulars
into the generality

will see the need
eyou'll lie in wait
mastered of an arcane art
all impostors
all come back
forgotten where from

somebody's demon, angel, boredom
somebody's last day on the job

rid schools of guessing after
as suicides escape themselves
whom exile never thought
escaped into eternity
which is a mark itself
which version and of what escaped?

and I, too, forth and back
a charmed life
sunshine holds
and scars
a rhythm under
bullied into unbelief
inflicting saddest incarnations
faithful yet I'll be

you fat poor
and you thin rich
I stand before you
in a minor key
diminished for occasion
elsewhere bound
and hunted home
overlapping undeclared
a prospect of cage soul deaf

from readers how we harness dread
- the threshold of the legible, a flesh of sin
death won't believe

here by Titans
in inertia
edited among oaks
exalted of acorns
I stand a great unaccounting
lonely
my years all of summer
yours of cold

for habitus
a dying genre
sans craft
or any god's breath
nor word to call mine
all these ways haunted dumb
unacknowledged
alone feeding hump
or worrying which
sublime, in affliction
consummate
and unbegun

*

play up! play up! o milky sap
how boys uncharm
begintimate
a fair sun sat
the trade in ambiguity
the nation woke aside deciding

ask me o rabble
see my credentials
words which worked themselves to death
from away the green grows

make money or it's made of you

you thin rich
and you fat poor
work for your border
for one there is meaning
and the others
you whom charity leases to life
I stand before you equally
in best manners
deep in oeuvre
    we who live under puzzle unmaking
tormented with answers
passages home
    brave flesh from its turns
who know the evasions, proud borrowing
nothing personal – brave reader under the pile
    it's a job
deriding
invisible work
    which breaks no rocks
    which mends no light
indelicate of speech however
    no standing angle grub for spite
the language not invented yet
    sea tiring up
    till no whim
    I follow fears
for the lies of the poets are legend you know
apocrypha
(that smell? well once you know we were on fire
    for charity they pissed on us but not quite quick enough)
*
concert of sense
the world was stuck which now has shifted
I'll rot for the same sins as you
    that's solidarity forever
unconvincing
grandeur deluded
words are a circle
    in which we give chase
and in which
    we are given
    stairs of smoke
each comes to build
machine to make me
I will cure
must write as if greatness were burdened with me
hardened to spite
and too clever

come to my fattening
come all you friends
love hurts us that we might love back
bear me your ends
we all get to stick our big paws in the sack

go humble and slow
and means will get you
the mighty stand above all work
they have perfected unemployment
which never was a cause of shame
for them or their society
penury was what they hid
however manifest, by baubles
fate lay thick
still now when they toil at feigning leisure
that we may call their founding lack
we make a world for their spat thanks
so white we live to court derision
block and stall
make other sense
or that there's none at all yet
nothing is forbidden me
knowing
odd socks
myths of dry self
and folded to flame

give me the odds doc
I'm wearing it anyway
dogma defines me, there's no easy out

o testes heavy with their burthen
yay pendulous with child

we could do more to lessen ourselves
old age sells us off in a scribble if

/ it's all a draft
until I'm gone and then
please call them relics /

numb to the palate
die uncast
and day dissolves
assume a truth
in working lies for what they're worth
    a cosy fall beside assumption

fighting the carcass fled of spirit
catharsis sweats and pollen dry summer
eye upon the seeing self
o forms of my abandon
    the lie in wait of lines
and just as well the wait and see

acknowledging luck
    the foreigner lives
    in a knot undeciding
    which no words will do

all mattering ear
    must build a right roof

    change of hands
wash of sense

    we're in the long run
selves to blame

it's raining in the walls tonight
raining up in heaven
    or drill a hole
further than others
throw to the bottomless
how it goes down
no sight of ends
still we might burn a bit
half blaspheming
    or wishing
we could

*
adulators! detractors!
leave me alone

**anoint yourselves**
the way out is the hall of glass
where a bird hits again and again

hammering home in the grip of the made

sunskinned they flock
bonded in tongues
let’s have their breath baited
paws ripe applause
some swooning, some envy
mainly just pride
that we are theirs
and they are sung for

ours to abolish
cook up another

my soul is bare
my way is clear

years into the work
under you’ll see
pale flesh past bitter far fetch

a most general beyond
– Chico’s finger
which lifts from the keys
briefly points transcendence out

imagine
lost to strength
why not?
legions of tampering floodgates

the fidget books of modesty
such as this is

the washup and when to roar
stroke my main so forth

kings, queens for our inch
and hearts ripped, heads
century sewing the scone back
all you see is stitches
despite of all the deities
my feral friends and I agree
and in a distance safe from scorn
ourselves a human sacrifice

but I won't go
psst – over here – some backsheesh

this one poem and its other
their method to deflect

all those ruins
cost something you know
the starving don't knock them up
just for fun

there's no plot
nothing like that to lose

not needing to be here
or strike a truant attitude

I only want to poke about

*

hello
alone with my maker

overnight
they spiked the punch
with acid
and they took away my pen
they strapped me in the zipper

I saw the harbour gods you bet
spectral ferries by the wash
Joe sang and he stood up time
the city woke about its way
its any lyric told the pain
the world through me like salts

SWEAR!
spoke the old ghost under me
roaring from Wynyard down
picking through tides done
beasts from the heart
over the staring edge till blink

a bravery which sailors seek
to know which wave they will embrace
assured the world ends everywhere

*

Salute our assumptions!
Salute the unsaid!

anyone buys a ticket
wins
    last breath scribbled out
    for chips
you who are left
can bet you will yet

    and in contention here
    the fate
of these faithful
careless of odds
Thermopylae mob

    a noble 500
    from every walk
    and gender
    leaning
    long to rave under us
    gathered on a hill of hoists
    (new Golgotha)

they waltz the threads of the old flag to tatters

    pulse quickened with
    every average drug

    titanic unfeeling
    calling all bluffs
    these simple exempted

Noble 500!
number you now
effacing, disparaging
phatic communing
    thieves of pretence
    selling hearts door to door
throwing their spanners
souls from the twintub
ready to hang

Faithful 500!
and I your lost brother
among us
the heat-seeking fatwah

a grovel for pittance
and home by the hearth
pin through the chest
on the butterfly paper

they root like dancers
drink like fish

burn off before the dry sets on
dig a ditch till the brain is all blisters
this way for honours
and out
cripples, sluts
have at you

sound of one eye
clapping onto another

phrases to keep warm
need never agree

in a cave
keep the fire
fearful it goes

Adorn me! Exult me!
Inhale me!
my peers
Give me that crown!
Thrice I will have it!

It's only the what-we-all-deserve

*

ours is the exile
returning to pictures
selves as shall be

grumblers in their making sorrow

    lay down with the tiger
    with hunger outside

the infidelity of wishes public

*

once you have been
    you will always be sad
    of the years gone without
    owning up to the world
wanting to climb all those ashes again

ethics of sentience
    heart a day's blaze
the canon loves me
    I respond
sit still while I have you
    it fails to say
cause I do all the talking
    do I?

a kind of silence drowns me out
- things lost from conversation
    scripted as the failure of speech

head full of frames
    - a crisis, a rupture
these few pills to take

meeting that fire
    in the mirror not mine
lonely swagman
    mucks in with landscape
stays the hand
o wild propensity!
    nothing hangs its hat on me

*

start my own island
    barnacle or big eruption
days still stand
under a great healing sun
as I see
alone of my kind
wrecked here
ashore
I will fashion a tongue
abstract, all tenor I mean
all meaning I tend
how memory endures of us
fallen deaf on ears

war for the victor
like fear without the retribution
grief loses me to going on

you have to be bored
or better, resenting
the where-you-are
and how-you've-been
next looming

way out in words
way in as well

time stands in us
time takes a seat

muzak camera
makes the world
an act of recognition nights
against all bent belonging
favouring in speech its figments

*

got a job
playing words
a big tent in the city

once in the world
I conquering came
forgetting a next line
last and then on

the grandmaster's limitless simultaneity

312
soil sky
ladders climb down

God's clerks offer up boots of the accused
the thankless start a new religion
in the pub of dreams
pagan
   I say
the gods will be
   as long as their names are known
   visionary gait
   steals over the sands
   the cattle wheeze paddocks

   universals are everyday folk
unsettle areas they engage

their the bottle and the dry weed's smoke
kidding us
   sour and frisky
validation
a slur to saying
   to licking the wounds
   cast my tail
to this wind lies close
   it's borders struggle
   never
   we wound workers
open the eyes

*

I am the ring
   into which hats are tossed
reciting myself
is incanting belief
   expansive method, pen's profession
my thick of all colour halo shone
breath out of nowhere
how I'll end's up above
    the city in type

paddocks and far seas
    furroughs must plough

when I find my voice
    (how pride might dare me to its rights)
I'll regulate the roar of things
    tin of the clock
    which echoes behind
something terrible forsees me
    - a step on the cracks of nothing official

    superstition's better than that
dismiss it, it bounces back
    ...one of these days how luck will have
having found my freedom
    what can be taken?
only the all I'm bound to lose

one voice stills the tide stands
caught up never imagining me
8. Heuristics

We shall be better and braver and less helpless if we think that we ought to enquire, than we should have been if we indulged in the idle fancy that there was no knowing and no use in seeking to know what we do not know.

Socrates, in the *Meno* (1952, p. 183)

But oh! my dear Ernest, to sit next to a man who has spent his life in trying to educate others! What a dreadful experience that is! How appalling is that ignorance which is the inevitable result of the fatal habit of imparting opinions! How limited in range the creature's mind proves to be! How it weary us, and must weary himself with, with its endless repetitions and sickly reiteration! How lacking it is in any element of intellectual growth! In what a vicious circle it always moves!

Oscar Wilde, in "The Critic as Artist" (1963, p. 885)

Learning is, after all, an infinite task.

Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition* (1994, p. 166)

In Merleau-Ponty's formulation of us as (becoming) the question and of the world as reply, we discover a community, inevitably of speech, the function of which cannot help but be heuristic, because it is only in such an open and dialectical movement that speech is possible. Kwant frames this as follows: "the subject who is openness to the world enters the world as a question, so that the appearing world always has the character of a reply" (1963, p. 68).

Yet we need seriously to doubt that poetry, as practice between or beyond its own or other limits, can in any way be learnable. Nor need we assume the desirability of such a hypothetical learning. There may be a writing cure, and yet this means neither that writing is all cure nor that writing cures all (cf. Sneja Gunew in "Authenticity and the Writing Cure" in Sheridan, 1988, pp. 111-23 passim). Once our words are loosed to paper, not even death can cure us of writing. It becomes our accomplished fact and must find itself a death aside of ours. That is why Mayakovsky can write in his suicide note that he is in no hurry and that there is no point waking or troubling his addressee (1995, p. 268 and in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 249-50).

Poetry, in defining itself, via Romanticism and Modernism, as a practice of transgression, as the practice of a subject continuously frustrated in the effort of passing beyond itself, raises doubts (unless it is possible to learn what is beyond learning) that there is anything learnable in aesthetic practices. In any institutional setting all of the philosophical difficulties of heuristics and pedagogy now face the prospects for writing. A question hangs over the objectivity of a standard which fails to defer to the contingency of judgement. A question hangs over the validity of a judgement which only refers to canonic criteria as they are already established. As well, the academy and the writing industry are both threatened by the prospect of "qualified", credentialed writers and the establishment of new cliques, in a field where there seem to be more than enough already. A conflict has been well attested between the needs and assumptions of creative writing and the context in which it could be taught. Archibald MacLeish writes:

The whole situation of the writing course is a reversal of the usual academic pattern. Not only is there no subject, there is no content either. Or, more precisely, the content is the work produced by the students. And the relation of the teacher to his [her] students is thus the opposite of the relationship one would expect to find. Ordinarily it is the teacher who knows, the student who learns.
here it is the student who knows, or should, and the teacher who learns or tries to. (cited in Montech and Miles, 1992, p. 69)

We might hope from these observations to establish from a pedagogy of writing (and the disturbances it offers to the usual pattern) a circle wherein we acknowledge that it is by teaching we learn and by learning we teach; or rather that in such a confusion these two become a single process and one for which we lack a name. It would be naïve however to think that any new discipline could be allowed an unfettered potential to reform its entire academic setting.

If we assume a function for writing in the academy, as indeed the academy drives all its disciplines to stand in a functional relationship with the totality they comprise, then we are forced to acknowledge overlaps and contradictions among the functions which creative writing or the writing of poetry might assume: these are respectively a therapeutic, a canonic (or canon making/breaking) and a facilitative function. In their orientation, respectively towards the idea of making selves or of making literature, these functions reflect an inversion of the function generally assumed in the read-only teaching of literature. A facilitative function assumes that creative writing, though furnishing a strictly unnecessary product, is a training for other (necessary) forms of writing, appropriate because it provides a motivation which other genres, though more authentic to "real-world" tasks, lack in the classroom. Whereas a therapeutic approach to the teaching of writing has assumed that it is the act of writing which performs a function equivalent to the building of character, the idea of making writers (hopefully "great" ones) depends on the assumption that an institutional place is possible for the process by which the characters write the plot. The former idea, I would argue, is by itself, far less subversive than the latter. It may be a decadent (and ironically) self-marginalising solipsism. The latter idea assumes an unsupportable arrogance on the part of anyone participating in it.

Here we meet perhaps the principle contention in terms of which it has been argued that the teaching of art is impossible: getting into the canon is so rare an event that teaching with this avowed end must be a more or less doomed activity. In this sense it is thought that the craft but not the art of writing may be taught. If, it is argued, only the craft can be taught, then that which is taught can bear no deliberate connection to the canon, on which its products are modelled and to which they aspire. Thus are invoked all manner of distinctions between the high and the low of cultural production.

The distinction between art and craft, which bears thus on the teachability and learnability of poetry writing, is one of judgement and emphasis. In it we may discover that part of the romantic conception of inspiration which needs to be discarded. In the case of those practices which know themselves as craft, we can say that the repetition of a technique entails a knowledged practice in which one does what one does because one does from knowing. In the case of the artwork however, we recognise an experimental method in which one discovers what to do by doing what one has not yet done: one's practice is the result of practice (and is as such unteachable and unlearnable). The attractive thing about art in this conception is that it establishes a practice for and about the rest of life. Art, as practice, frames a future, and not only for itself, from the act of not forgetting the past (its own and everybody's).

Thus it is the craftperson can name what s/he is making: it has enough anonymity to absorb the individuation which goes into its making, thus to retain the semblance of a use-value, even if it has none. The purely ornamental in this circumstance, take on ornamentality as a surrogate utility. The artwork, on the other hand, shows enough of the individuation which went into its making to bury the anonymous (including the canonic, i.e. collective) effort which made the past of this present moment of aesthetic production possible. The fact that we are able to name a class of such works paintings, specify that they fill up wall space, have a resale value and may form part of an investment portfolio, in no way undermines their status as out of the reach of any measure of utility.
Nevertheless, from the point of view of heuristics, what an institutional setting for the apprenticeship of any sort of art achieves is to break down the distinction between art and craft. The distinction collapses because it becomes clear that what we call art and what we call craft (the high and the low of aesthetic production) depend on the interaction of a method, on the one hand for knowing, and on the other for not knowing, what to do. We need to acknowledge that there is a craft in poetry writing, because however we value its expression of ambivalence, sense must always arise from a past which is common to subjects capable of understandings of the poem. We need to acknowledge that there is an art in building because it is a practice which, in human hands, demonstrates that difference arises from repetition. That art and its processes are of the world and fail to stand out of its negotiations, just as the fact that the world never succeeds in standing aside of art, is what Walter Benjamin showed in establishing the symmetry between fascism's aestheticisation of politics and communism's politicisation of art (frascina and harris, 1992, p. 306).

When we ask then whether or not work is inspired and how students of an art should go about procuring inspiration, we ignore the circular logic by which the canon and inspiration name each other as necessary conditions; we ignore the fact that there is a body of past knowledge and practice to which the becoming artist has access. However difficult the avowed production of literature and the idea of writing as a path to individuation (and perhaps responsibility) are to untangle, they nevertheless provide hidden agendas each for the other and coincide in the idea of poetry as a world therapy. The assumption in this chapter will be that when we speak of poetry writing, in an institutional or heuristic setting, we speak of some marriage of these conceptions.

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Kant concludes The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement by telling us that fine art has a manner and not a method of teaching, that it cannot be prescribed:

The master must illustrate what the pupil is to achieve and how achievement is to be attained, and the proper function of the universal rules to which he ultimately reduces his treatment is rather that of supplying a convenient text for recalling its chief moments to the pupil's mind, than of prescribing them to him. (1952, p. 548)

Kant goes on to argue that the artist's training is most appropriately prepared for by an education in the humanities, because such a propaedeutic is most likely to provide the artist with the requisite social spirit which is constituted in the conjunction of a universal feeling of sympathy and the ability to communicate one's inmost self. The true preparation for taste, Kant argues "is the development of moral ideas and the culture of moral feeling" (1952, p. 549).

Kant's view seems complacently straightforward and to ignore the disconcerting we associate with what the canon next includes. The prospects of poetry writing today are doubtful pedagogically because they require a curriculum for rule breaking, for risk taking, for undeciding and for refusing to know; and because it is doubtful (despite past experience) whether an academy can deliberately allow its anathema a place, let alone a site to grow (cf. Moira Monteith in Monteith and Miles, 1992, pp. 11-12). Of course it may not be able to help allowing such a place, but this is a very different question from the one we ask in suggesting the academy provide poetry writing with a niche. If the academy does allow its time and resources to be appropriated for writing, then we need to ask both who controls the hidden curriculum by which this is allowed and as well what it is the academy steals from poetry in this act of charity; what is stolen from its processes and from its open curricula. The adoption of a covert agenda for writing (or any other discipline) should not allow the sidestepping of those questions which situate the academy in its context of culture.
A secret place has been allowed poetry writing in the form of what de Certeau describes as the *perruque* (1988, pp. 24-28) – in the form of a theft of time, of tools, a site for the *bricolage* of making art. Could we create (and here is the contradiction – as a deliberate fifth column, means of avoiding a permanent opposition outside) a space within the institution where writing can happen, as perhaps it only ever happens *creatively*, despite its context? Then what will be the status of the unofficial space allowed writing by the academy? One of the things the English Department produced was poets. It furnished them unofficially with a means of self-apprenticeship in the form of a privileged access to the canon; an access which while avowing other purposes (teacher training, character building) always venerated the objects of the canon (e.g. poems) more highly than the purposes its own teaching avowed. The achievement of canonic status being so rare an event as to assure the failure of virtually all students against any such measure of purpose (albeit subject to decisions impossibly removed from the process of teaching), it has taken a shift from focus on the canon to allow creative writing a place in the academy. And yet the English Department did provide the kind of propaedeutic of which Kant wrote. To say that academies have always hidden such curricula as allowed the making of poets and that these furnish their best results, is not to answer the question as to who decides such curricula. We may say that the strength of the hidden curriculum is in its not needing to acknowledge that it is in fact undecidable and yet an heuristic based on any such theft as the *perruque* will be in constant danger of being co-opted and rendered harmless, canonic, more of the same (just as the canon itself must be subject to the subversion of a *perruque*). The provision of a *place* for the *perruque* then would be a contradictory conception, doubly so in the case of poetry writing, because poetry depends as practice on a mistakenness and direction which the academy (as transmitter of the canon) cannot (and yet ultimately must) allow. Just as art does not succeed in being what it sets out to be so the academy does not necessarily succeed in containing the consequences of an art by allowing it a place.

Spivak writes that: "It can be said for Derrida that, by positioning citationality as originary, he has radicalised *bricolage* as the questioning of all ideologies of adequation and legitimacy" (1988, p. 171). *Perruque* is to *bricolage* as irony is to the field of tropes, a theft among all of the means of exchange. The ironist's motivation (in lieu of a duty) is a kind of *perruque*: the theft and redeployment of meaning from its everyday homes. And in literature the possibility of the *perruque* depends on the fact of a canon, depends on there being an entity from which to effect a theft. In allowing, via the activity of poetry, a place for what is acknowledged to be mistaken, the canon and its institutional setting would face directly the future of their own practice, in which they themselves will have been wrong (thus short circuiting the historical process in which they invest). We could argue that, whether or not forced into public avowal, they do already do this, that it is a posture necessitated by any degree of reflexive awareness on their part.

Nevertheless the negative consequences of the argument which assumes that writing is unlearnable deserve attention. What does it mean to say that the practice of poetry cannot be learned and/or cannot be taught?

Does it not offer all forms of privilege to the established canonic order and to the critical habitus as means of establishing it? It suggests that, from an academic point-of-view, the processes of this order are reified and unchallengeable, as likewise are hypostasised the critical habitus in which the canon lives as practice denying its reality as practice. Giving way to the directive, never spoken, that the academy and its community may only read the canon and never write it leaves us open to the essential contradiction of canonic logic; essentially the same contradiction which dwells in the abstraction *langue*: that the stillness of the canon as pretended completion depends on practices in action – which can be ignored but never denied. The canon would make such an impossible denial of its source in words as they unfold. Canonic logic contradicts itself because while (assuming if not) arguing that the inside and the outside are finally divided, in fact it is able to leave neither of these alone. Nor do these leave each other alone. So that we may
say that not only is poetry the subject and object of canonici rejection but equally it is threatened by and is what threatens the canon. The ongoing production of poetry (the life of its process) is what subjects the canon to ceaseless renovation. Ruling out an heuristic of the practice of poetry confines the connection between learning and literary art to exegesis. This would pre-suppose that there are models but no way to them as practice (only as énoncé).

To say otherwise would be to claim the answer: that one knows the means of making writers. The resistance we strike here is not so much the limit between creative and learnable writing as between canonizable and other writing. And this limit is legitimate because a bona fide threat to the separation of powers (between the makers and the keepers) would appear to be posed by the idea of submitting both of these personae to the one academic hierarchy. In fact this threat is only apparent because there actually is a world (of readers and writers, performers and audiences) outside of the academy. So the question becomes, not whether anything is threatened by the inclusion of the processes by which arise objects of study; the question is rather, as it originally was, whether such objects can be produced in such a context as the academy.

The writing of poems (and perhaps the making of poets) require modest personae because of the real difficulty of attaining canonisation, which notwithstanding our opinions as to the credentials and credibility of the canon's guardians, remains our means of access to the world's past creativity. To call oneself a poet or to claim that one knows what they need to know (and thus how to make them) is to serve oneself up for rejection. Now while this may be the general lot of those who wrestle with mistakenness in the hope of creating (and becoming) what is next allowed, the nature of such a mistakenness is, as perhaps in science, largely experimental, and consists not so much in the terms of Kant's motto, auda sapere, as in its opposite: the poet (and the one who helps becoming poets) are the ones who dare not to know (and not to judge). We need seriously to ask whether the academy, as it is or can become, is able to provide such an heuristic environment for the apprenticeship of poets.

I have described the canon, as indeed we might describe its micro-operation in a grammar, as the arrangement of words to which breath returns. The poem I have likened to Winnicott's transitional object, one canonically mediated. I have acknowledged that while all of our words are canonically (it is thus we have them), when we fall into speech, or equally writing, it is thus we make forwards a way in the world, thus we make the world as well ours and subject to both our wills and mistakenness.

If we say of poetry then that it is a phenomenon so idiosyncratic in the means of its creation that no lesson could ever reveal these, then we ignore both the universality of those conditions (outlined immediately above) which the poem (as content of the canon) meets and the fact of the manner of investigation which reading does indeed constitute. This observation of course begs the question as to what role there can be for teaching when the only way is for the student to find her/his own way. In these terms we may see aesthetics since Kant as a kind of dare for heteronomy to assert itself over the a priori claims on which universal judgement must base itself.

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If we go along with Oscar Wilde's assertion that nothing worth knowing can be taught (1963, p. 862), if we accept that the roles of pedagogue and academy have the limited efficacy of facilitation, then our conception of learning needs also to be limited - to an apprenticeship in what goes on around poetry, to the understanding of the contextual conditions in which poetry is possible (or impossible) as practice. The assumption here will be that the writing (and reading) of literature are only ever able to be taught around. An heuristics should consist, then, above all else in allowing - in giving refuge (whether openly or clandestinely, supportively or in adversative manner) to those enquiries, practices and impulses from which creative work comes. Such an heuristics
would amount to a licence to play, as well to the making of the space in which play becomes possible.

Inside or outside of the institutional frame, to speak of coming into aesthetic practice is to deal with a self-apprenticeship, which consists in allowing the self to assert through and in the larger forces making selves. In other words – and here we run up against a regression the limits of which are both of self and of community – aesthetic practice requires a freedom which entails constituting ourselves as among the forces of our making. For these reasons the project of an heuristics is chosen here over that of a pedagogy.

In Difference and Repetition Deleuze elaborates a relationship which contrasts the operation of learning and apprenticeship. Deleuze insists that:

To learn is to enter into the universal of the relations which constitute the Idea, and into their corresponding singularities..."learning" always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between nature and mind. The apprentice, on the other hand, raises each faculty to the level of its transcendent exercise. (1994, p. 165)

Whereas learning is, for Deleuze, an infinite task, "apprenticeship falls rather on the side of the rat in the maze" (1994, p. 166). The apprentice, for Deleuze, is the one who "attempts to give birth to that second power which grasps that which can only be sensed" (1994, p. 165). Such a birth involves neither knowledge nor learning per se but is what Deleuze refers to as the education of the senses. It is such that:

We never know in advance how someone will learn: by means of what loves someone becomes good at Latin, what encounters make them a philosopher, or in what dictionaries they learn to think. The limits of the faculties are encased one in the other in the broken shape of that which bears and transmits difference. There is no more a method for learning than there is for finding treasures, but a violent training, a culture or paidela which affects the entire individual... Method is the means of that knowledge which regulates the collaboration of all of the faculties. (1994, p. 165)

A curriculum – as means of making explicit what is to be learned – may be doomed not to effect the transcendence it purports to comprehend. If this kind of understanding is unimportant to the apprentice then by what means is the education of the senses effected? Imitation and delight, we will remember, are for Aristotle the two original instinctual causes of poetry. This he explains through the fact that:

...to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning – gathering the meaning of things. (1952, Vol II, p. 682)

Heuresis (Latin inventio) is the first step in the composition of a literary work, the first part of rhetoric: the discovery or the devising of content. Learning, if we are permitted to bring forward such an etymologically founded misreading, is then the beginning of practice. With some misgivings the classical world is willing to concede poetry a place as a vehicle for learning. Despite various emphases on a role for inspiration there seems, for the ancients of Western civilisation, to have been little doubt that the making of poetry was a skilled, and therefore (for them) learnable and teachable activity. The modern world, especially in those centuries immediately before ours, has been more doubtful. Conveying all poetic power to some alliance between the imagination and inspiration, with intuition to guide the way, tends to not only make the composition of poetry something unlearnable, it makes the instances of production unpredictable and leaves the writer with the pessimistic likelihood that every next poem
will be her/his last. Hence the myriad of assertions akin to that of Henri Michaux, that the mere ambition to write a poem kills it (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 618).

These notions, if not contradicted by what we know of the education and pre-occupation of poets through the centuries, at least leave these out of the story. Writers, as writing, come from somewhere (as Bourdieu has illustrated with his concepts of position and disposition). The mind of the writer is one elaborately prepared for what it will perhaps be unable to decide, that is, for its aesthetic productions. The intense apathy which T.S. Eliot recommended as the pre-condition for inspired writing (1976, p 17), is a state available to a very few, themselves the product of a highly specialised and socialised training.

As in science, there is no question that moments of insight come at times from the cultivated indirection of a relaxed mind, one which is not trying to solve the problem at hand. In short, from ‘letting go’. In the bath, asleep. Celebrated examples are those of Archimedes and displacement, Kekule von Stradonitz’ benzene chain, and James Watt’s peaceful Sunday walk which made possible the steam engine. No one would argue from such historic examples that the teaching of science is impossible.

Whether waiting on the visitation of inspiration is a romantic nonsense which serves the circular logic of the canon in making ineffable the wall which divides inside from out (no-one asks the uncanonical how they came by their inspiration) or whether it is a permanent and universal condition of aesthetic practice (which happens likewise to serve the canon in this manner) is a moot question. The issue ultimately resolves in asking whether there is aesthetically any plausibility in the claim of meaning to mean and whether practice can be in any sense intended. In other words there remains a question as to whether and to what extent a consciousness of authenticity is viable. If formal learning served merely the function of providing a background from which, in an effortless and relaxed state, necessary connections might be made and from these theories advanced, this formality would yet remain indispensable. There is every reason to believe it plays a greater role than that. We do know that whether or how often those inspirational moments out-of-the-arbitrary come to individuals, they are certainly prepared for, in the sense that they are the result of a cultural sentience (that is of right connections) which, to the extent that they are canonised, prove (with hindsight) to have been the result of, and in themselves constitutive of a kind of training.

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The I Ching (Book of Changes) counsels: “The teacher must wait to be sought out instead of offering himself: this is the correct relationship in education” (Wilhelm, 1984, p 8). And Plato, in "The Seventh Letter", likewise writes:

But if a man does not consult me at all, or evidently does not intend to follow my advice, I do not take the initiative in advising such a man, and will not use compulsion to him, even if he be my own son. (1952, p. 804)

Let us accept the most pessimistic assumption, for instance that which states one cannot teach anybody anything.\(^{106}\) At least we acknowledge that, however heurethical the

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\(^{106}\) Which we may trace at least to Socrates’ assertion in the Meno “there is no teaching but only recollection” (1952, p. 180), which is followed by the methodological intention given as preliminary to interviewing Meno’s slaveboy:

I shall only ask him and not teach him, and he shall share the enquiry with me: and do you watch and see if you find me telling or explaining anything to him, instead of eliciting his opinion. (1952, p. 182)
processes were by which it was learned, the fact is, as evidenced by the presence still with us of what the canon needs to accept as poetry, that the making of poetry has been learned because poetry has been made, and acknowledged as such, even if by a logic which wishes to deny poetry's process. To claim beyond this, that learning itself is impossible, is to shroud in an impenetrable mystery all of the processes and practices by which any expression of knowledge comes into being.

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Bachelard, arguing against the twin perils of word play and didacticism, tells us that the true poet, avoiding these dangers, "plays and teaches" (1971, p. 28). The affinity of playing and teaching, and their being named in poetry as the one vocation, suggest, far from the doubts and ambivalences we have thus far considered, that poetry and its practitioners have a natural heuristic function; further that the teaching (if we allow this conception) and play in poetry live out the reversibility of working on the wrong side of one's material. The affinity of such a two-sided activity for the expression of an ethics of presence is suggestive of the primacy Heidegger attributes to poetry in the matter of dwelling and in the means of allowing: "we are to think of the nature of poetry as a letting-dwell" (1971, p 215).

A heuristics of allowing (allowing for instance what de Certeau calls a perruque of writing) might entail the reversal of various conditions which in life otherwise militate against creative work. Such licence to play might involve encouraging the presence to waking life of dreams and daydreams, encouraging a reversal of the psychic topography which allows secondary processes to dominate, allowing irony more than a moment, allowing a metonymic reversal of the rule of metaphor, allowing chance and accidents; in short, a freer play of tropes, our travel on the wrong side of the track. Perhaps most importantly such a licence would allow the processes by which poetry comes into being, rather than those only of a canonised writing, to assert their natural connection with the unfolding of life in speech. Kenneth Koch, an early exponent of workshop methods in poetry teaching, and in a variety of settings with different age groups, etc., suggests in Teaching Poetry Writing in a Nursing Home:

The teaching was based on the assumption that there is no insurmountable barrier between ordinary speech and poetry and its aim was to help students move, easily and with confidence, from one to the other. (1977, p7)

I hope to follow Koch, in favouring the naturalness of such a blurring and the refusal of that conventional deixis which renders the presence of canonic objects in a here-and-now apart from practice.
Poetry as a Foreign Language

Writing is impossible without some kind of exile
Julia Kristeva (cited in Lechte, 1990, p. 66)

The absolutely foreign alone can instruct us.
Levinas, Totality and Infinity (1969, p. 73)

Transcendence of the self in community with others is the central fact of language and which language allows. Needless to say, it is out of this transcendence selves arise, I think we cannot say, in the first place. Becoming foreign means borrowing betweenness from beyond the self. It is a condition in which we are forced to make do with what we are able to share. Foreignness is the bricolage of becoming self. Heidegger situates this alien art in Hölderlin's lines:

...The more something
Is invisible, the more it yields to what's alien.

In "Poetically Man Dwells" he writes of Hölderlin's conceptions of God and sky, poetry and the invisible:

The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain what it is – unknown. (1971, p. 225)

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Poetry is a practice, but not the only one, which lives in what Cixous calls our "border nature" (1993, p. 145); cf. Kristeva's borderliners; which lives, as it were, beyond its means, in places where meaning piles up unaccountably, in places where bounds are lost. A concern with borders is of very practical interest in the study and applications of language development, the study of all sorts of lectal variation (and for instance of diglossia, of pidgins and creoles): the study, in short, of any manner of coming into or between languages. The most obvious instance of such a study is that of translation. In After Babel George Steiner contends that the processes of translation and of language itself, are ultimately identical:

the interpretation of verbal signs in one language by means of verbal signs in another, is a special, heightened case of the process of communication and reception in any act of human speech. (1992, p. 436)

A similar argument might be made for the proximity and homology of poetic processes and those of the language learner, both unending practices, the voluntary nature of both of which is open to question. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Far from being limited to the first years, language acquisition is co-extensive with the very exercise of language" (1979, p. 53). Language, only ours to the extent that it is shared, is the ultimate riddle of the self and alterity.

The teaching of language shares with poetry an interest in coming to meaning. The child and the adult learner of a foreign language, each serve to highlight the conditions of entry into language which are least visible in the other case:

The child uses certain words before he fully understands their signification, in the way that the adult, when learning a foreign language, uses certain locutions of
which he does not know the meaning but which he knows how to apply in the appropriate situation. (Merleau-Ponty, 1979, pp. 76-7)

In recognising itself in the unfinalisability of these processes of entering semiosis\textsuperscript{107}, poetry too acknowledges as inevitable this condition, of flying blind with words, the fact that meaning is never fully understood or controlled, and never subject to the control of any single agency: “Everything occurs in language as if the mind were constantly taking chances. Therefore, it is a question of a kind of blind mind (esprit) whose nature we will have to render more precise” (Merleau-Ponty, 1979, p. 90). Words are the community in which is shared all coming to consciousness. They are equally the means by which we negotiate and authenticate our acts.

Whereas the teacher and student of language have to make do with interdisciplinary assistance (let us liken this to bricolage), the practitioner of poetry is not only between disciplines but engages the discipline of remaining between. In other words it is her/his work to approximate something in the nature of a protolanguage or interlanguage. It is her/his work not to accept that language has arrived. This is achieved in the process of making the body foreign: a deliberate act. The foreignness of poetry to its native milieu – the heimlich/unheimlich game it lives to play – is what guarantees that the meaning with which it contends, to which it points, is always mistaken, always a theft.

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First and second language learners and the student of poetry are all finding their way in new language (are thus making language and themselves new). They do this against great odds and against a great deal of background noise. They do it risking mistakenness and rejection and loss. Indeed without realising these failures they can get nowhere. Language learners get to be wrong a lot in order to get things right (Stern, 1983, p. 354; Nunan, 1991, p. 233).

First and second language learners and students of poetry writing all practise and develop their apprenticeship through dialogic interaction with others (even where this dialogue has largely to take place in the head of the individual and with dead people). All are, we may say, apprentice meaning makers. They are testing limits to find their way. The difference for the writer of poems is that this apprenticing in language is his or her permanent condition of practice, and undertaken in a material in which writers are generally and for everyday purposes fluent; the language which they are learning will permanently need to be new to them, in order to have life; in order that is, to renew them and to be renewed by them. And because they are constantly in the process of shaping and making that language (subject to rules which they neither need nor would be able fully to articulate), a process which no one attempts or achieves in isolation, this is a constantly and necessarily dialogic process. We have to temper our romantic notion of the lonely work of writing with the knowledge that words arise from interaction and that words arise in literature from the interaction of the creative mind with the world; that literature exists for an audience, does not merely pale outside of these criterial limits, but actually ceases to be. Where that dialogic interaction which, in Bakhtin’s terms, makes the word, breaks down, then vitality is lost and the writer’s work slips back into the vast abyss of the already said. Here is the role of the reader then – in providing that breath by which words return and are made ours.

Language learners and poetry makers face a common obstacle in language: the automatic, the buried assumption, the logic which has been lost to use. But whereas the poet works to uncover these things, to show those threads which cannot be seen, the language learner (to the extent that s/he learns) cannot help but uncover connections. For

\textsuperscript{107} This unfinalisability we may regard as being in the nature of the circularity of the process of semiosis. As Eco suggests in his essay on Peirce: "Semiosis explains itself by itself: this continual circularity is the normal process of signification" (1984, p. 198).
the language learner, child or adult, of first or second language, is only partly into the systems of the target language, and thus is naturally equipped with a naivety the poet generally congratulates her/himself if s/he can emulate.\textsuperscript{108}

As in a landscape in which some are completely (we might say over-) familiar and some are complete strangers, the native and the foreigner, approaching the same objective reality of signs from opposite directions, each manage to not see and not hear what is before them. The foreigner cannot see the unknown, at least not for what it is, for what, that is, it means to those who know it. How difficult it is for any two speakers, let alone native and non-native, to share words, the specific function of which is forever being negotiated in the acts by which we make use of these words. Just as an analogue clock, though capable of offering a range of views of time, fails to offer all views, so the words of any language (tools of far greater sensitivity) offer a particular culture of reality. Fluency in the known environment is not maintained by the act of constantly naming (or of making oneself conscious of) what is there. Between native speakers the necessity of naming the constituents of the shared context is always minimised by the fact of a knowledge already shared and which must be taken for granted; and in which knowledge language has (through the action of massive redundancy) made itself redundant.

We note then these two extreme states (of absolute and nil fluency) in which perception is foiled by the nature of consciousness demanded by its context. For the stranger no amount of attention will provide a knowledge which is unavailable, as yet unattained; no amount of looking will make known what is there to be seen from the native’s point of view. For the native, on the other hand, not only is attention dissipated through the absence of any need for it, but the limits of individual consciousness and memory are necessarily outstripped by the store of collectivity which goes into their expression.

Between these two though, native and stranger, if meaning is to be exchanged, there lies a need to draw the other’s attention to a new share of knowledge. This process, whether it takes place between partners in dialogue, between writers and readers or as the inner speech of a particular character rehearsing her or his role, in fact constitutes the means by which meaning becomes, because it is only in such betweeness that the names can matter at all. This fact, to which the interaction of speakers of different backgrounds draws our attention, is totally unremarkable. It is characteristic of dialogue and we might say of all discourse. These are (at least) two-sided heuristics, in which each partner learns of the other. If such heuristics pass without notice they are not unmotivated; they may mask but not obviate the conditions of power and contention in difference. In Ania Walwicz “Australia” we find a fluent resistance to the terms of both the target language and the target culture:


But in the manner of attaining both these targets, language and culture, when the learner finds what is for the native a lost connection, the goal being proficiency, s/he comes to understand and practice and finally can bury out of sight of conscious reflection – just as we have done – the system now internalised; which goal achieved marks (or

\textsuperscript{108} This is the recovered naturalness to which Paul Friedrich refers in “Polytropy” (in Fernandez, 1991, p. 26).
more generally hides) a particular progression on the road to fluency. Fluency requires unconsciousness, but the path there, through practice and hopefully ever greater accuracy, generally draws attention to whatever signs there are of a foreign speech which, in theory, will be laid to rest at last. That laying to rest of signs of difference is never the benign and unmotivated process it is made to seem by the innocent goal of native (or near-native) proficiency. In Peter Skrzymiecki's "Feliks Skrzymiecki":

...Growing older, I
remember words he taught me,
remnants of a language
I inherited unknowingly –
the curse that damned
a crew-cut, grey-haired
Department clerk
who asked me in dancing-bear grunts:
"Did your father ever attempt to learn English?"

... At thirteen,
stumbling over the tenses in Caesar's Gallic War,
I forgot my first Polish word.
He repeated it so I never forgot
After that, like a dumb prophet
watched me pegging my tents
further and further south of Hadrian's wall.

(1982, p. 18)

By means of achieving or approaching proficiency one becomes other than one was: less a foreigner in a certain context, more aware, in that context, of one's foreignness. And by entering on such terms one cannot help but alter, perhaps imperceptibly, the context one enters, much in the manner of Eliot's canon of monuments which he considers an existing order altered by the new work of art among them (1976, p. 15).

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In terms of current models of language proficiency we could say that post-romantic poetries have the capacity to play on the whole of the continuum between accuracy and fluency (Brumfit, 1984, passim), because their initial and ultimate aim is often somewhere along the road to a language disturbance – the expected overturned, attention drawn where it was never sought, awareness brought where daily life does not require it.

These disturbances are what the language learner cannot help but make. They are the one thing the learner is everywhere, except perhaps in the classroom, in trouble for doing. In the context of learning though we know that it is the making of mistakes which mark progression along the path to proficiency: practice and correction turn error into accuracy (Nunan, 1991, p. 233). For the language learner, that correction, though we often associate it with a prescriptive nagging, actually comes overwhelmingly from the solidarity, on the matter of the rules, which natives express with each other, wherever they, refusing a consciousness of those rules, engage in an authentic dialogue. For the maker of poems too, we must say that it is an authentic presence s/he strives for, and one, as for the language learner, which we must define as beyond the resources of the system they have to negotiate. These facts of common ground, make the language learner's an interesting mind for dialogue with the poet.

If selves arise from the continual transcendence of the self in the dialogic process of community then the language classroom is a powerful site in which to locate the elements of a bricolage in which selves frame their entry into, and transformation
through, a new culture. The frustration of inadequate and fragmentary communication is highlighted in Al Zolynas' "Love in the Classroom", a poem he dedicates to his students:

Afternoon. Across the garden, in Green Hall, someone begins playing the old piano – a spontaneous piece, amateurish and alive, full of a simple, joyful melody. The music floats among us in the classroom.

I stand in front of my students telling them about sentence fragments. I ask them to find the ten fragments in the twenty-one-sentence paragraph on page forty-five. They've come from all parts of the world – Iran, Micronesia, Africa, Japan, China, even Los Angeles – and they're still eager to please me. It's less than half way through the quarter.

They bend over their books and begin. Hamid's lips move as he follows the tortuous labyrinth of English syntax. Yoshie sits erect, perfect in her pale make-up, legs crossed, quick pulse minutely jerking her right foot. Tony, from an island in the South Pacific, sprawls limp and relaxed in his desk.

The melody floats around and through us in the room, broken here and there, fragmented, re-started. It feels mideastern, but it could be jazz, or the blues – it could be anything from anywhere. I sit down on my desk to wait, and it hits me from nowhere – a sudden sweet, almost painful love for my students.

"Never mind," I want to cry out. "It doesn't matter about fragments. Finding them or not. Everything's a fragment and everything's not a fragment. Listen to the music, how fragmented, how whole, how we can't separate the music from the sun falling on its knees on all the greenness, from this movement, how this moment contains all the fragments of yesterday and everything we'll ever know of tomorrow!"

Instead, I keep a coward's silence. the music stops abruptly; they finish their work, and we go through the right answers, which is to say we separate the fragments from the whole.

(in Milosz, 1996, pp. 193-4)
None of the poem's participants appears to be fully cognisant of what is happening, of how the right reflexive knowledge could be articulated, whether it ought to be articulated. No one knows what is required, which way abstraction ought to move. The teacher doubts his own intentions. But somehow love and good faith promote all of these apprenticeships, not least of all the teacher's.

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Various modernist emphases resonate in the idea of poetry as a foreign language. We should feel more comfortable in undermining some of these. The condition of modernist man, as the eternal stranger, rootless in the anonymous city, is one of the patriarchal aesthetic whose aloneness is the only practical position allowed his elitist work as individual opposing the bourgeois conditions without which he and his productions would be impossible. Modernist man, always at the end of his tether, is superseded by a new kind of lostness: a Post-Modern inescapable connectedness, of limits which fold back on themselves, a necessarily reflexive sense of being lost in the cracks of that consciousness by which and in which loss is perceived.

Raymond Williams, in _The Politics of Modernism_ points out that the cities of strangers, which modernist artists inhabited, were the capitals of imperialism. Williams is interested in the linguistic affinities which these groups possessed for each other, in the suppression and marginalisation or leaving behind of languages. Modernist alienation, city obsessed as it was, can now be seen as having been about both Europe's diaspora in the new Europes, and the alienation of their prior inhabitants. These themes are sublimated by the inversion of their image in the city where, ironically, the wealth generated by empire means that exploitation and suffering guarantee each other at home and abroad. Brennan's protagonist in "The Wanderer" could well have been asked by the victims (and it must be admitted the beneficiaries) of European wandering (i.e. the inhabitants of the rest of the world) why he foolishly desired to go:

hither and thither upon the earth and grow weary
with seeing many peoples and the sea.

(1960, p. 156)

But what is modern in Brennan's consciousness here could be characterised as (a solipsism in the form of) the refusal to acknowledge alterity as elsewhere than in the self.

Poetry, in modern times and later, equipped with a fondness for the impossible, takes moments of seamlessness and failure, together, as its model. And the losing of the self, dislocation or dismemberment of the subject, continues to haunt what we know as poetry and to make it a language of the foreign, to make what de Certeau describes as "an art of being in between" (1988, p. 30).

For de Certeau, who urges us to make a "perruque in the economic system and to make a kind of perruque of writing itself" (1988, pp. 27-8), "popular" culture is that which is "not a corpus considered as foreign" (1988, p. 26). In de Certeau's estimation it is in popular tactics that order is "tricked by art." The perruque is work which is foreign by virtue of having no dwelling but time stolen from official consciousness. It is the opposite of homework, a homeless-work, a kind of reclamation, of something irremovable, stolen by an agency (that of official culture) which has so well covered its tracks that we cannot remember the theft, and believe rather that is we who have transgressed, who are transgressing.

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The (heuristic) practice of context for which I wish to argue is that of becoming foreign, a strategy which I distinguish from the Russian Formalists' _defamiliarisation_.

328
Bakhtin and Medvedev in their 1928 work, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1994, p. 135) are the authors of a damning critique of the Formalists' dicta about poetic language. For Bakhtin/Medvedev it is unreasonable to speak of "poetic" language because poetry is not a language in the sense that Russian or English are. In fact we use and qualify this noun *language* already in innumerable senses: philosophic language, scientific language, the language of commerce, the language of love. Bakhtin/Medvedev write of "the language of linguistics" themselves (1994, p. 144). The meta-discourses invoked in each of these cases are an abstraction of a different order from that which we engage when speaking of *natural* languages. There is little evidence to suggest that Jakobson or Schklovskii or any of the other formalists accused, had fallen into the mistake of regarding systematicity of "poetic" language as akin to that of natural languages. What they sought to draw attention to, among other things, was the "foreignness" of poetic expression to the everyday language.

Here it is that we apply metaphorically to poetic discourse this idea of foreignness: one which finds support in a number of formalist claims for poetry, particularly those of Schklovskii. The practice of the formalists in *making strange* was purposed to set the poet and poetic observation apart from the practice of the automatised everyday world. *Becoming foreign* by contrast entails risking one's own identity and niche in context, in order to examine the process by which one has become and is becoming: one's presence is risked in the act of becoming present. This is not a one-way process – context is always practising with us and on us and in us. Participating in unlimited semiosis, it locates us potentially in all places and in all relations. Perhaps it entails for poetry the kind of journey from and into delusion which we meet in Tom o'Bedlam's song:

With an host of furious fancies,
Whereof I am commander,
With a burning speare and a horse of aire,
To the wildernesse I wander.
By a knight of ghostes and shadowes
I summon'd am to tournye
Ten leagues beyond the wide world's end.
Me thinke it is no journey.

*Yet I will sing...*

(in Heaney and Hughe's, 1997, p. 129)

Our *becoming foreign* is precisely related to the sense in which, through words, we manage to have been everywhere at once. We are, even if villagers, the inheritors of a speech which is never merely of one place because no speech, however distinctive, ever arises in isolation. The mystery of Basque is that it must come from somewhere, somewhere no mnemonic technology has been able to retrieve. And so with all words, with any, we are ultimately unable to know the precise paths of their haunting; there is with each word a point beyond which its past cannot be retrieved. If that eternal selfhood which has been imagined as the soul founders on the shoal of memory then the proof of this is in the failure of a history of words. It is only in words that such a meta-awareness (as of selfhood) requires to be conceived at all, perhaps as proof against what threatens the most essential facts of sociality. Inexorable dissolution – and thus, as well, continuous formation – of the self was the common theme of Hume and Buddha, perhaps of Democritus. What gathers into our consciousness is the failure of memory on the grand scale. What our consciousness scatters like seed – as words, in their making, their iteration – is the pattern of identity framed by the necessity of reduction: the fruit of that past failure of memory. By means of this failure we can perhaps account for the apparent ubiquity of a homeostatic adjustment of past to present, regardless of prevailing technologies.
As if in the exercise of a universal subjectivity, at every stage we are apt to speak as if the whole picture is where we are – as if poetry is a matter of inspiration or of technique or of judgement, when it is really to do with that same impossibility in which language is concerned – of meaning many things at once. The wall of sound (that impenetrable mystery of context), of which the non-native is made aware in approaching a target language, is exactly what poetry must seek in the everyday. This is not a process of "making strange" but rather of apprehending what is already thus.

* Becoming foreign is that exile which forces us to deal with our own abject – it presses us into an archaeology of the self as practice – forever throwing up a new beginning beyond which we are forbidden and therefore, as Orpheus, we cannot help but look. As in the world the refugee discovers the beyond may lie outside of the troubles of home and yet constitute no sort of refuge. Such a world is imagined in Naomi Lazard's "Ordinance on Arrival":

Welcome to you
who have managed to get here.
It's been a terrible trip;
you should be happy you have survived it.
Statistics prove that not many do.
You would like a hot bath, a hot meal,
a good night's sleep. Some of you
need medical attention.
None of this is available.
These things have always been
in short supply; now
they are impossible to obtain.

This is not
a temporary situation;
it is permanent.
Our condolences on your disappointment.
It is not our responsibility
everything you have heard about this place
is false. It is not our fault
you have been deceived,
rueened your health getting here.
For reasons beyond our control
there is no vehicle out.

(Milosz, 1996, p. 304)

* Becoming foreign can only ever be a work of recognition, of the strangeness of the self which is lost in the effort of regarding with other eyes; of offering its eyes to others, that they may see out of their foreignness the paths which lead away to home.

These efforts at becoming foreign entail as well the recognition of the past of one's becoming, those means by which I am possessed and have possession. It is not these means but rather their recognition (in the effort at a memory longer than my own) which bring me into the *face to face* with the other, even where that other has effectively ceased to be a presence. Alterity in this sense is an unbounded haunting, an infinite falling away of echoes, of cadences in which I must listen not to hear my own voice. Jack Spicer writes in *A Textbook of Poetry*:

The ghosts that poems were written for are the ghosts of the poems. We have it second-hand. They cannot hear the noise they have been making.
Yet it is not a simple process like a mirror or a radio. They try to give us circuits to see them, to hear them. Teaching an audience...

An argument with the dead. That is what these pauses are mainly about. They argue with you that there have been no beauty, not even words...

Poetry comes long after the city is collected. It recognizes them as metaphor. An unavoidable metaphor. Almost the opposite...

They are merely angry at their differences — the dead and the living, the ghosts and the angels, the green parrot and the dog I have just invented. All things that use separate words. They want to inhabit the city.

(1975, pp. 170-6)

The country (or city) in which I assert my authority in this ultimate act rescinding it, this listening not to hear my voice, is one in which I cannot become indigenous. I may however be able to make myself a barbarian. There is, that is, an outside of the law yet, which the restitution of past wrongs cannot appeal to. Levinas writes in Totality and Infinity:

The infinity of responsibility denotes not its actual immensity, but a responsibility increasing in the measure that it is assumed; duties become greater in the measure that they are accomplished. The better I accomplish my duty the fewer rights I have; the more I am just the more guilty I am. (1969, p. 245)

Herein lies the pastoralist's (and the prime minister's) nightmare: indigenous claims will always be the thin edge of the wedge, the crime enabling can never be expiated. I do not succeed in wishing myself away any more than a photographer of wilderness succeeds in erasing the track by which s/he came and which s/he does not show. If the land were emptied of invaders tomorrow, if the descendants of the invaders were to divest themselves of the spoils, what would they be giving back, how would the land returned resemble the land invaded? That land no longer exists. How would we tell its new old inhabitants (and their means of possession) apart from their dispossessors? Indeed how can we now? When everyone puts the empire behind them, when nobody wishes to be a colonist, how viable (and for whom) is the indigene's persona? Oodgeroo Noonuccal writes in her poem "The Past":

Let no one say the past is dead,
The past is all about us and within.
Haunted by tribal memories, I know
This little now, this accidental present
Is not the all of me, whose long making
Is so much of the past.

But the past is never simply chosen or simply recognised, aside from an accidental present. For those whose fate it is to live out a differend, for those victims who must also expiate, by their resolve, the crime inflicted on them, haunting will never be unidirectional:

Tonight here in suburbia as I sit
In easy chair before electric heater,
Warmed by the red glow, I fall into dream:
I am away
At the camp fire in the bush, among
My own people, sitting on the ground,
No walls about me,
The stars over me,
The tall surrounding trees that stir in the wind
Making their own music,
Soft cries of the night coming to us, there
Where we are one with all old Nature's lives
Known and unknown,
In scenes where we belong but have now forsaken.
Deep chair and electric radiator
Are but since yesterday,
But a thousand thousand camp fires in the forest
Are in my blood.
Let none tell me the past is wholly gone.
Now is so small a part of time, so small a part
Of all the race years that have moulded me.

(in Gilbert, 1988, p. 99)

"Now" may constitute a small part of time and that fact is important to the reality of claims of indigeneity. It is important to an understanding of the scale and meaning of dispossession. But it needs equally to be acknowledged that means of access to the time prior to dispossession is by virtue of present knowledges and technologies. Becoming "one with all old Nature's lives" may indeed be the work of a dream. But it is a dream which has been worked over by hauntings other than those thus here reclaimed. Others have, in their genealogy, sat by a thousand thousand fires, in forests elsewhere, which share an absence with the forest here imagined. And there are other dreams which infest the consciousness of black Australia, dreams such as those suggested in writing by Robert Walker (1958-1984), before he was beaten to death in Fremantle Prison:

Unreceived Messages

Am I dreaming?
There you are.
Here am I.
... But your gaze
Is beyond me.

You are speaking,
Your words are clear.
I am speaking.
You do not hear.
Inside – I move disturbed.

"I know you"
You echo: "I know you".
I reach out – but touch not.
My body still – still my body,
And still again I have failed
To communicate.

My feet are walking,
My mind recalling the words we spoke
To one another – but not at all.
Sorrow seeps through my shell
Touching me – and I turn with joy.

In the line for lunch
I drift into oblivion again,
Weary from my efforts

332
To reach you – to know you
Like you say you know me.

The key turns – the day dies.
And once again I am born.
A child gasping for his first breath of life,
Crawling weakly from a plastic egg
To surface in a prison cell.

The pen – automatic
Like the beat of my heart.
Pain – a stranger to me –
Stops all but my heart.
Acid tears burning chips of egg shell.

I feel
And write life in every stroke.
The threat of death in every still moment.
Time circles above me like a vulture,
Then crawls on like a dying man.

Sleep – the semen of death
Draws me into its lust.
The night dies – and once again I am conceived
Oblivious to the life outside of my shell
For again but a foetus – awaiting release.

(in Gilbert, 1988, pp. 130-1)

Time circled Robert Walker like a vulture. Oodgeroo Noonuccal saw herself living on
time’s iceberg tip. Was adopting a tribal name for her a way of reclaiming some of the
vast continuity taken from her? Both longed for a return to conditions prior to those
mediated by the words in which their longing was expressed. If European Australians ask
what sort of country makes me mine(?), they acknowledge that pride still shows in the
cracks now, shows the pragmatist works by considered rights, distressed at the fraying
of the law which made my country mine. The kingdom of vast regrets remains one. It is
the bland voice resigned to its spoils, to its great good fortune, which consoles itself
saying there’s no going back. And yet, as Lionel Fogarty writes in his poem "The
Worker Who, The Human Who, The Abo Who":

In our quest for living
as an entity
we belong to messages
we belong to day to day realities

(in Gilbert, 1988, p. 159)

Subject to the absence of limits which dwells in the universality of the judgement I now
cannot help but exercise, what I omit to recognise is that only the other can belong, can be
placed. I myself am doomed to the exile of an everywhereness in which my civilised
consciousness over and above the world and my place in it is exercised at the expense of the
possibility of dwelling (of being of) anywhere in it.

Such a recognition imperils as well the indigeneity of the other, threatens it with the
prospect of reduction to, not merely an atavism of my present state, but its barbaric
outside (an outside, that is, which knows enough of me to threaten me, to be my own
outside).
Poetry stands as a differend in the gulf of unintelligibility which is constituted by those languages (and we should say lects of any sort) which are foreign to each other. The dialectic of our age entails the challenge of passing beyond the differend between civilisation and barbarism into the condition foreshadowed by Menander, in which nothing can be foreign to us. This would be the (now impossible) condition of worldwide indigeneity.

Except for the hymn singers and praise sayers, the laureates and anthem-grinders, poetry's community has been established (following Romanticism and Shelley's Plato into the Modern) by tradition as on the outside, in exile. To ask how can that outside be taught or learned or even become, not belonging anywhere, is to ignore the facts of its presence (the facts that is, of its being learnt everywhere, of its teaching itself).

Poetry, all literature, is reflection on (in Bakhtin's terms, refraction of) the conditions from which it emerges. The general and permanent condition of the spoken animal is dialogic and polyglossic. The betweenness which we attribute, as intertextuality, to particular discourses, is characteristic of all instances of discourse: language is between people as languages are between peoples. We may say (with Nietzsche, 1993, p. 41) that poetry casts off the supposed reality of culture. It proposes a barbarising of the inside of a language (thus culture) such as is unavoidable for those coming to a culture (and language) from its outside. But poetry does this from the inside and in the spirit of its enabling, with all the resources of the particular language which haunt this next considered saying. Poetry makes itself foreign because it takes what is within its grasp and sets it at distance. It takes itself apart with doubt, with undeciding. From the inside, then, poetry draws out the exile of words, confounding as is with as may be. Poetry, as fiction, is a gamble against common sense. Such is the nature of daring not to know.

Bakhtin credits the novel, via Dostoyevsky, with rediscovering the polyphony which is the natural condition of human voices when they arrange themselves in conversation. Mythic, monologic and automatic instances of language and literature all participate in the rule of unspoken assumption in the interest of and with the effect of reifying the status quo as that which goes without saying. They are all in the manner of what has generally been considered concealed by ideology. The dialogic, the de-automatising, the poetic, similarly are, in the terms of this analogy, in the manner of what has been considered liberating, de-mystifying, as if exhuming the truth from the very process of its burial. Foreign speech is one in which nothing can go without saying. The mistakenness of the foreigner where s/he gets beyond her/himself in words is demonstration of this. The foreigner only gradually becomes responsible for the words of the language s/he has borrowed. Poetry, too (paradoxically because of the degree of native skill expected of it), exercises, as does the foreigner, a practice of becoming responsible for words, one in which, indeed, nothing must go without saying. In doing so it merely plays out as practice the fact, to which Sartre alerts us, that the meaning of my expressions always escapes me (1989, p. 373).

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Between languages, or we could say in the betweenness of language, is the critical space for poverties, if only because we know nowhere but in language to be between subjects (subjects becoming in language as such). The analogy between poetry and interlanguages — if we may broaden Selinker's (1972) formulation to include all systems of approximation by which subjects enter into language/s — draws attention to a similarity of practices, which informs the function of all language, and not of any exceptional or exclusive variety alone, because all language is between subjects. Or rather: language, for practical purposes, is the all between subjects. These various betweennesses, inherent in the action of language, all point to the negotiation of alterity which lies between participants in discourse. Sartre claims that the body constitutes the meaning and limits of my relations with others (1989, p. 361). He writes: "The Other
looks at me and as such he holds the secret of my being, he knows what I am. Thus the profound meaning of my being is outside of me, imprisoned in an absence" (1989, p. 363). My relations with the Other, for Sartre, constitute a circle we can never get outside and so "my project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the Other" (1989, p. 363). Just as the language learner's situation foregrounds (and also produces) both the difference and the bridges between cultures, so poetry draws our attention to a familiar language (one we know as our own) as if it were a foreign language. And surely all language is foreign to the extent that it depends on the circle I stand in with the Other. It is in these terms that Sartre can write that "the fact of expression is in the stealing of thought" (1989, p. 374) and that I constitute my language as a phenomenon of flight (1989, p. 373). Poetry slows us down, makes us look at words twice, as if they were no longer ours. Paradoxically it is in this apparent movement of our own words away from us that we are able to reclaim them and to make sense of a haunting which was always there with us.

We may shy from assigning any task to poetry and yet acknowledge that poetry cannot help but effect inside a language — by in Jakobson's terms, orienting itself towards the expression, through an "indifference to the object of the utterance" (1994, p. 146) — exactly what happens inevitably for subjects between languages. This inter/subjective event is the breaking down of assumptions and the spelling out of the reality of a culture, in terms which to approach this task, must necessarily be mediated by the fact of an outside. Because the language in which we are native as individuals is borne of a transcendence (interaction) become immanence (the system in the words I speak without thinking of the system), we may say that poetry exercises the between of subjects in language as if this substance (though their making and of their making) were foreign to them. Poetry then is a reflexive step, we could say intention, in the self-making of subjects.

Of such a step we need to ask how can this outside, the diaspora in which poetry postures, be anything but a simulation, when we know that the resources on which (a canonic, i.e., a surviving) poetry depends are the full resources of the language which it represents (or is given to represent) as literature. How can poetry but be in bad faith when it fails to acknowledge its own enabling consciousness? What is authentic in poetry, as in all discourse, is the failure to acknowledge what enables it, a failure of consciousness, which makes us all mistaken, especially as to who we are; which makes us subjects foreign to ourselves. Poetry then is the failure of an effort at self-consciousness, characteristic of that reflection which Sartre names as diasporic (1989, p. 157). Poetry's diasporic posture is as genuine as anyone's belonging. Poetry, I would argue, is, as any discourse, in bad faith when it denies itself an ethics of presence, when it refuses the failure of knowing which bears it. It is as we all are in order to transact the business of everyday life, which is for one thing full of equivalences and other relations which never could have been negotiated in good faith.

Marx was able to write, in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", that the beginner has only assimilated the spirit of a new language "when he moves in it without remembering the old" (1978, p. 595). Fluency, in the terms elaborated by Marx, depends, however momentarily, on a forgetting and becoming foreign, which here entail each other. In her essay "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value" Spivak links certain observations of Marx and Saussure which bear on the issue of foreignness and the process of coming into a language. She notes of Marx's concept-metaphor of the foreign language, "the highly sophisticated suggestion that the value form

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109 Note here that recent researches (Stern, 1983, p. 372; Ellis, 1986, p. 186) would suggest that a facility for code-switching might be a facilitative factor in second or foreign language development and that therefore we might expect speakers to move most freely in a new language when they retain fluency in their native tongue. It might yet be true, however, that the forgetting of one idiom remains essential to the moment in which a shift is effected into another.
separates word and reality (signifier and signified), a phenomenon that may be appreciated only in the learning of a foreign language." For the Marx of The Grundrisse it is erroneous to compare money with language: "Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign language in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; but the analogy then lies not in language, but in the foreignness of language." For Spivak:

Saussure shows us that, even in the mother tongue, it is the work of difference that remains originary, that even at its most "native", language is always already "foreign", that even in its "incorporeal essence", the "linguistic signifier"... is constituted not by its material substance but only by the differences that separate its acoustic image from all others. (1988, p. 165)

If poetry makes its own language foreign, it need not do this by being deliberately difficult but rather by doing with it what has not been done before, by thus lifting us out of a mode of communication where everything is taken for granted, into one where, as Tynianov suggests, there is constant struggle among the various factors of language (cited in Bakhtin, 1994, p. 147). Such a poetry is one where assumptions of all sorts are suddenly deprived (whatever they reveal beneath) of at least a first cloak of invisibility.

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The reader of poetry hopes to be, as the student of a foreign language inevitably is, bracing for the unexpected; expecting, that is, to be shown, in the act of its overturning, the assumption thus far unseen. But the language learner (native or foreign) and poetry's permanent apprentices approach this overturning from opposite directions. The language learner's uses and attempts at use, are prior to that knowledge, and its burying, which are characteristic of native proficiency. They are prior to a desensitisation to the form of meaning, such as is borne of having heard a thousand times, of having spoken a thousand times; that knowledge and the necessity of its fading which Mallarmé described as the worn coin placed silently in my hand; the necessity we may say of hearing without attention.

The language learner's efforts are based on, what is from the general viewpoint of the language they are entering, a more or less severe restriction of resources and methods. At first nothing is automatic because there is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness of system. At first it is a struggle to mean anything. The language learner is able to stumble upon something new because her or his language is not fully formed by the patterns of assumption which operate unconsciously in the fluency of the native. Thus the language learner may stumble on (or into) mistakes which interest the avowedly conscious attentions of poetry's apprentices. And thus there may always remain something charmingly foreign (and other than accent, something in the turn of phrase) in the speech and in the writing of the long-term resident of another culture. And equally something grating, an annoying failure to live in the terms of the adopted idiom. The language learner may uncover or create errors which interest the conscious attention's of poetry's apprentices because the poetry maker too is interested in what charms and grates in language and if s/he wishes to escape from the fact of meaning's erosion in pragmatic speech must acknowledge an impossible position which is both beyond and before the wearing to which Mallarmé refers. Beyond and before, because poetry is, as we have noted, both the effort at and the defeat of consciousness.

110 We know that "chunks" (unanalysed phrases able to be employed automatically), because of their ease of use, begin to be learned early on, that consciousness of system is later abstracted from their use. Errors made in the process of applying idiomatic or unanalysed phrases are among the most common and "poetic" mistakes made by non-natives and children.
The passages beyond (or within) the mundane which aesthetic uses of language attempt, always, however they disguise themselves (as imitations or revivals), consist in attempts at a speech which has not yet been spoken. It is a necessary condition of such attempts that they retain a maximum of awareness of those echoes which they can neither fully avoid nor fully remember, those echoes and nuances which naturally adhere in the choice of words and their arrangement.

And it is from this point of view (that is, from the point of view of a knowledge, if not full then fluent) that the errors of the non-native learner of a language (and often children) seem charming or poetic. As we have said the language learner and poetry's permanent apprentices (at least in part) approach from opposite directions the object of the expectations they are to overturn. The language learner finds rules by breaking them but the poetymaker finds rules also in order to break them.

The coming into a language of the child or non-native can be imagined as closely homologous with the becoming of languages both in particular and in the general manner of poetry's interest: in the creative manner. Common in both cases, whether intended or not, is what we might describe as the heuristic value of being mistaken. For the language learner a discovery of mistakenness has an heuristic effect, which has generally come to be perceived as a benefit, as a sign of progress. The utility of mistakenness (i.e. it is by being mistaken I eventually cease to be mistaken) is for the language learner, in the hope of its being the means to its own transcendence. For poetry's permanent apprentice, the condition of being mistaken is a practice which needs to be learned (and the learning of which may well be assisted by the example of the language learner) for its own sake (or for the sake of a foreign view of the self). It is a practice closely aligned with that of daring not to know. We can say that it is by means of this relation, in which consciousness fails to escape the exigencies of its own regime, that poetry absolves itself of the taint of bad faith: daring not to know does not exempt us from being mistaken, it guarantees both this outcome and the consciousness of it. Heidegger writes in his essay "The Thing" on the practice of being mistaken:

Everything here is the path of a responding that examines as it listens. Any path always risks going astray, leading astray. To follow such paths takes practice in going. Practice needs craft. Stay on the path, in genuine need, and learn the craft of thinking, unswerving, yet erring. (1975, p. 186)

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Foreign speech is a kind of mistaken speech (such is the effect of naming it foreign) in which nothing is allowed to go without saying. In his lectures on "The Psychology of Errors" in the General Introduction to Psycho-analysis, Freud tells us that errors represent the concurrence of two different ideas. Freud's subject here, while by no means trivial, concerns the slips (now Freudian slips) of people fluent in the idiom they employ. (The President of the Parliament pronounces the session closed when he means to open it, thus betraying his ambivalence about the whole dreary business [1952, p. 457].) Our subject concerns what is innermost in the grammar and lexicon of a language, those aspects of it which make it unique, which render impossible its perfect fit with the weltanschauung of any other language, which, in short, make it untranslatable, and in so doing furnish it with the status which Coleridge demanded for poetry in relation to its own idiom. What distinguishes the learner's errors from the flow they disturb, is their being drawn to attention, whether or not they elicit correction.

It is in the errors to which ever more delicate negotiations commit the learner, that the practice of these negotiations becomes possible, thus proving learning, as it is always proved—that is, only after the event. Freud writes:
Of central importance is Freud's insistence that the slips of the tongue (and other errors with which he deals) have meaning. And the meaning of such occurrences is always one which the conscious mind wishes to deny as accidental (1952, p. 467). From the point of view, both of a poetics and an heuristics of language, the meaning of most interest in the foreign learner's errors is not so much individual, but rather illustrative of that which dwells in the gap between languages: meaning which tells us about those languages, and their provenant cultures, by furnishing us with an outside of them, and which tells us about the becoming of all subjects in language, because it illustrates the ambivalent moment which we may think of, ontogenetically, as fluency; or phylogenetically, as creolisation. In that moment a certain style of consciousness (a learner's consciousness, an awareness that is, of the struggle for sense) is lost in favour of meaning (that is, the authenticity of sense).

Pedagogy and Liberation

In the case of both heuristics and poetics, we deal, as suggested, with a differend between unintelligibles. It is not a peculiarity of the language classroom that its business revolves around a differend. Rae Desmond Jones' poem "Decline and Fall" demonstrates the everyday differends on which native teacher and student collaborate in remaining unintelligible to each other:

i hate them
the truth is out! & they hate me.

them, the barbarians in baseball hats,
twisting in chairs lined up in artificial order,
and carving their loathing on the tabletops.

do you know why the roman empire fell? i ask.
who cares? a boy giggles.
that is the reason, i say.

you are old & fat, they say.
they are young & fat, i don't say.
because i don't want them to get healthy.

they can stay ugly and stupid so i can despise them.

why envy the awkward root they didn't have
or their perfect wet dreams pearling on the television screen?

outside the aluminium rimmed window
a crow strops his beak against a tree trunk
so that it will be sharp to dig
soft white worms from the dark earth.
i yearn for that brutal freedom.
the students resist my will although their heads bow,
broken for a second.
the room constricts us all.
i almost say get out.
go back to your bad videos & your hopeless dreams:
be unemployable.
daub graffiti on trains
& put as many needles in your arms as you want.
die if it seems romantic.

let there be war between us.


What sets the language classroom aside from many native teaching contexts is the fact that although the parties involved are less intelligible to each other they bring more in the way of motivation to the encounter. Whether hidden or avowed, the only curriculum possible in a language classroom, is an inter-cultural curriculum (cf. Stern, 1983, pp. 246-56 passim). Likewise, that indirection which we name poetry depends on a becoming foreign in which nothing is allowed to go without saying.

As for the affinity of an approach to meaning which dwells on or in mistakenness, Freud suggests that "it would not be surprising if more were to be learned from poets about slips of the tongue than from philologists and psychiatrists" (1952, p. 458).

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The voice of the teacher and the fully sentient voice of the adult beginning with no words in a new tongue and no way of saying are each suspicious of the other in ways that go beyond the general conditions of learning and teaching. Each is suspicious of the distance which is between them and the imaginary, impossible place to which their efforts direct them. Or which once approximated may be met with Caliban's complaint:

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you,
For learning me your language.
(I, ii, 1983, p. 1540)

Or indeed Prospero's malevolent rejoinder:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;
And as, with age, his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,
Even to roaring.
(IV, i, 1983, p. 1564)

The language on which teacher and foreigner focus is symptomatic, in both cases, of a marginal status. This is more acutely felt with the world's most popular foreign language than in other cases, because English has become the paradigm case of a language with no dialectal centre. In the case of English, the teacher in her or his own voice and accent, regardless of provenance, cannot satisfy the (perhaps unconsciously prescriptive) demand of the non-native learner to hear only what is best and most correct. Both teacher and learner have a job because English is the centre. Neither can get to the centre of English. Each is thinking of English, but thinks and speaks in their English (or their interlanguage), which is inadequate precisely to the extent that it is necessary.
These fringe dwellers are able to gather only on the basis of a trust, in which the intentions of the other are respected over the suspicions which divide them and make unattainable their purpose of becoming (in those differences they retain) parts of the one community. By acknowledging in the classroom that there are other englishes, that there will be more, we validate our language and the language of our students as it is coming into being, we blur the line between ourselves and the other, and participate in the necessarily subversive process of locating ourselves elsewhere than at the margins precisely by denying that there is a centre. In short we take part in, as Ashcroft et al suggest in The Empire Writes Back "the dialectical relationship between the 'rafted' European cultural systems and indigenous ontology, with its impulse to recreate an independent local identity" (1989, p. 195). In the terms of a simpler slogan, we manage to "think globally and act locally".

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I wish to propose here that the practical study of language for the purpose of attaining fluency – while as bound by assumptions (often puerile) as to what is good for the student and what is not, while as choked theoretically by the certainty of the messianic and the converted (as is the case with any poetry) – provides us with a model for learning how to make words work. Such a model is not weighed down by assumptions about what constitutes literary merit, about how inspiration and creativity are arrived at, about the role of the educator in prescribing correct outcomes for the learner.

Correctness in second and foreign language pedagogy is about grammaticality of a descriptive rather than prescriptive variety. It is about achieving meaning as a means and to this extent it meets the criterion we have described as truth to context. Its goals are communicative rather than canonic, its criteria objective (linguistic) rather than literary (Nunan, 1991, pp. 169, 195-8).

Communicative language teaching, if we are able to generalise about the multiplicity of methods which present themselves under the banner of this prevailing orthodoxy (Munby, 1981 passim; Nunan, 1989, 1991, passim), has a number of things in common with the writing workshop. These include:

- student centring and a democratic spirit which allows the class in its course to drift from the teacher's control
- an experiential base and emphasis on accomplishing tasks by means of language
- an emphasis on meaning in use rather than either the isolated abstraction of form from content or a focus on traditional (i.e. canonic) knowledge
- the primacy of oral modes of communication in the classroom context, even if that which is communicated about is writing
- an optimism that life experience provides students with most of the skills which they need to take next steps

We should add as well to this list those necessary dangers implied by the common strategy outlined above – of lack of leadership, an absence of explicit models (or worse, the availability and encouragement of poor models), vagueness of tasks and of any knowledge as to what completing them would entail, a drift from the target of achieving particular goals with language into an aimless conversation, where neither proficiency nor knowledge is necessarily advanced. Gravest of all, there is in communicative language teaching and in the writing workshop a danger associated with the deliberate attempt to dispense with meta-awareness, both of the material of language and the means by which it is put to use. If the motive to dispense with these is on the basis of its history of failure then we should note such a peril threatens any style of learning. Styles of teaching which deny most strenuously any intention, draw the most suspicion to themselves as susceptible to agendas outside the ethical compass of their work. There is the danger that, in abandoning the effort at awareness such as is implied by grammatical knowledge, on the one hand, or by canonic knowledge (of literature) on the other, that the possibility of an ethics of presence is likewise forgone.
In the language classroom (and in the writing workshop) these dangers are often mitigated by the operation of unanalysed traditional assumptions, on both sides, as to the role and relationship of teachers and students (Stern, 1983, pp. 173-187, 452-496 passim). In other words, whether conceded or not, there is leading and following, there is modelling and there is a centre for correction, if not prescription (cf. Nunan, 1991, pp. 189-207, 234-5). It is a matter for debate whether the operation of such assumptions constitutes a watering down of or an appropriate check on the pedagogue’s determination to diminish her or his status (a determination which can ironically, going against the grain of the students’ assumptions, make the teacher more of a presence to be dealt with in the classroom).

Despite the dangers, one of the best things which a poetry heuristics can borrow from language pedagogy is a least judgemental approach, one where the focus is on achieving meaning, that is, on making truth to context; however this may involve, in the case of poetry, standing the notion of appropriacy on its head.

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The body comes to writing, not out of mere instinct or inclination, but from a determination which we are able to formulate and specify, from a decision to remember and to make itself remembered: the condition of dialogic utterance.

And equally in its view back into the dark of the tunnel the body forgets where it is and where it has come from. The first impossible task of writing is that of becoming other, becoming foreign – and from that studied illusion of choice we pretend a transcendence of desire and of wishes.

At the pillars of the end of the world, doubt that you are out of the open palm of the Buddha. Doubt that there is such a place as beyond. In the context of the inescapable then, and seeing how great the need, we ask what are the prospects for solidarity among the oppressed, for a solidarity which founds their world as no longer the property of those who oppress them? What are the prospects for liberation and what has writing to do with it?

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Paulo Freire in his influential (1970) work, the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, argues for a model of education as liberation which ties together many of the catch cries of progressive education in the sixties and seventies. He argues for a key role for consciousness raising:

Men emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality – historical awareness itself – thus presents a step forward from emergence, and results from the

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111 Freire’s problem-posing and thematic method has been developed in a transitional context (Latin American migrants in the United States) by Nina Wallerstein in her Language and Culture in Conflict: Problem Posing in the ESL Classroom. For Wallerstein the value of the problem-posing approach in the second language learning context is that it "uses students experiences and personal strengths to try to resolve the problems in their everyday lives" (1983, p. 4). This is a method which centres the classroom not only around the student but around the student’s empowerment, in the context of real problems – cultural, economic or otherwise, with which the learner has to cope. This is a classroom method which limits input to those contexts authentic to the students’ experience – a syllabus and methodology anchored in the here and now.
conscientization of the situation. Conscientization is the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence. (1970, p. 81)

For Freire what unites these processes is the genuine learner centring we have come to associate with the rhetoric of empowerment in the classroom:

The important thing from the point of view of liberation education, is for men to come to feel like masters of their own thinking, by discussing the thinking or views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifest in their own suggestions and those of their comrades. Because this view of education starts with the conviction that it cannot present its own program but must search for this program dialogically with the people, it serves to introduce the pedagogy of the oppressed, in the development of which the oppressed must participate.

The notion of dialogue which Freire develops for his classroom has strong affinities with Bakhtin's notion of "the word shaped in dialogic interaction" (1994, p. 76) and with the dialogic imagination Bakhtin proposes as characteristic of the heteroglot novel. For poetry and for an heuristic of its writing, the action Freire proposes perhaps entails Bakhtin's conception of "inner speech": "A word in the mouth of a particular individual is a product of the living interaction of social forces" (1994, p. 58).

What Freire proposes is a "problem posing method – dialogical par excellence... constituted and organised by the students' view of the world, where their own generative themes are found." The use of such methods ensures that "the content thus constantly expands and renews itself." The teacher, whom Freire imagines in this dialogic method, is a member "of an interdisciplinary team", "working on the thematic universe revealed by their investigation." The task of such a "dialogical" teacher is to "represent that universe to the people from whom he first received it - and 're-present' it not as a lecture but as a problem" (1970, p. 91). These methods are, for Freire, to be contrasted with the "anti-dialogical and non-communicative 'deposits' of the banking method of education" (1970, p. 91).

Inner speech and a dialogic method in composition may serve Freirean purposes in the case of the heuristic of the self-apprenticing writer. The condition of perpetual apprenticeship entails ceaseless recommencement and so the learning process with which poetry's apprentices have the strongest affinity is that of beginning (a language), the moment at which nothing is known and where there appears to be no direction. (This despite the injunction that poets understand as much as possible the manner of haunting of one's own words.) Though respectively imagining themselves as in those impossible positions before and after the advent of language, the language learner and poetry's apprentice both begin with a view, at a substance and process at once, which is equally dense and impenetrable – on the one hand because it is unknown, on the other because it is too well known.

First steps are the most difficult because they are always those of a prisoner. But they are those of a prisoner because they are not first steps. They are haunted by the means which bring them. They are made possible by whatever it is that haunts them, that which cannot be known by those who take the steps. One's first words in any language are clumsy strides across a narrow cell. There may be light outside but it is a long way off, and there are many gates to unlock to get to it. In such words one necessarily is mistaken. And one sees one is mistaken. This is why it is always so difficult to get started, this is why there is often a long silent period (Dulay, Bert and Krashen, 1982, pp. 13-26 passim) where the system of a language is assimilated receptively prior to attempts at production.

The beginner has plenty of reasons not to be confident, and whereas the adult learner of a new language can at least imagine from experience what fluency in the target culture might mean (in terms of the prospects of a sociability), the child learner,
who sees around her/him communication in which s/he is only partly proficient, has only
goût to develop an empirical and epistemological basis from which to guess, beyond
trust, that s/he is entering a system that works or that will eventually serve purposes, not
yet apparent, but which will be hers/his. And yet s/he is, from the outset, entering such a
system; its purposes are becoming his/hers long before they are known or articulated.
One does not succeed in separating a process of acculturation from a more a more general
heuristic process.

The child watching the cartoon knows these animals for people, knows by their
speech, for instance; is not for long deceived if ever there is a moment where s/he
wonders whether the beasts of her/his own world will speak. S/he embraces the other,
fictive world as s/he embraces the experience of her/his own world (indeed these worlds
fit inside each other). S/he approaches these with a credulity more of the thief than of the
one from whom a secret treasure is stolen. One is possessed and dispossessed of all
manner of things out of one's understanding. The truth about Santa Claus is not much of
a setback because one has already learned a little of the operation of truth. The fact of
having not evolved a particular kind of meta-discourse does not place the child out of
range of tropic effects. To speak, to listen, is to engage these:

That is why it is so difficult to say how someone learns: there is an innate or
acquired practical familiarity with signs, which means that there is something
amorous - but also something fatal - about all education. We learn nothing from
those who say: "Do as I do". Our only teachers are those who tell us to "do with
me", and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than
propose gestures for us to reproduce. (Deleuze, 1994, p. 23)

The only pedagogical hope for a meeting of the heuristic and practice here
imagined, is one which engages the reversibility inherent in a practice of doing with me.
Such doing is not of necessity divorced from showing or telling or from the words by
which these are achieved. It is in no way required to be a silence. In fact it is only in
telling that the inner speech of anyone, including the maker of poems, literally comes to
the other and must manifest in an effect on the world. Acts of learning and of poetry
share this authenticity with the dialogic unfolding in which words unceasingly become,
that they are performatives in which the ipseity of the world is practised. For Merleau-
Ponty: "This ever-recreated opening in the plenitude of being is what conditions the
child's first use of speech and the language of the writer as it does the construction of the
word and that of concepts" (1962, p. 197).

It is the demand for authenticity which presses what has been called teaching in
the direction of an apprenticing poeisis which is practised in its own right, and not with
any separate intention of passing knowledge on. It is an odd circumstance that, because
of the perceived gap between real and teacherly intentions, we are able to distinguish a
world as vast as that constituted in the industry of education, from another, real one. In
fact, where teaching does take place all of its value is to the teacher, who is, in the
moment of this work, avowedly a servant of the canon (even self-canonised) as the one
possessed of that which is passed on. The same experiment is repeated year after year,
the same question asked and the same answer pre-determined. So much of the
naughtiness of the student who seriously wishes to learn for her/him self must be
attributed to a desire to engage questions which truly are open, to participate in a free
dialogue, rather than one which is pre-scripted in advance by a party who has worn down
the wonder of not knowing until it presents with the obviousness of common sense.
Merleau-Ponty writes:

And so it is not a question asked of someone who doesn't know by someone who
does – the schoolmaster's question. The question comes from one who does not
know, and it is addressed to a vision, a seeing, which knows everything and
which we do not make, for it makes itself in us. (1964, p. 167)
If, as there certainly are, ways around the trap of this persona, then they involve activities other than teaching.

The unanalysed life may not be worth be living, but there is a lot of it going on, both inside and out of the industry we name education, and it may be taken as constituting more or less the first fact of heuristics: that the path to the analysed life first consists of the flawed (impossible) practice by which we see what is unanalysed and what is beyond the scope of analysis. Thus we think of ourselves beginning without thinking and know in that trap we are caught.

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The maker of modern poems, by virtue of the inherently experimental nature of her/his work, can never reach fluency in that code by which language and society (discourse and its subjects) are forever making each other. Or rather the process by which s/he works is not able to be completed. This is what Bakhtin means by the "impossibility of closure" and by "unfinalisability" (1994, p. 96). In this sense the poet deals with a legislative capacity which is never itself enacted, but which is rather an ever present latency in which the acts of poetry are constituted.

The maker of poems is driven by a necessity to understand, as is the philosopher, but, unlike the philosopher (whom Marx imagined before himself), also to unmake and remake the system which makes him/her. The maker of poems, in terms then of Shelley's legislator tag, lives out the fears Plato expressed in the tenth book of the Republic, and which Marx brought home to philosophy and its raison-d'être, in the Eleventh of the Feuerbach theses.

Merleau-Ponty tells us that the philosopher is unable to surrender to anything (Kwant, 1963, p. 82). Poetic heuristics requires the opposite discipline, a greater bravery, that of surrender to anything, surrender everywhere at once: surrender of the self to the world's anonymity. Poetry is not fussy like religion, its belief (and its doubt) are scattered everywhere, are ever shifting. Those doubts and beliefs are the making foreign which poetics entails, because it is perpetually concerned with the impossible task of at once breaking from and constructing the code in which it is made. Poetry, in this sense, as the failure of panopticism, tends toward an animist or pantheist acknowledgment of the multiple in the fact that they cannot be known (except by this totality on which we hang the sign definite article).

What is described here is not the activity of an elite but one in which the whole of humanity is automatically and perpetually engaged by virtue of the largely unconscious (or in Bakhtin's terms the largely unofficially conscious) process of communication. It cannot be helped, in other words, that the code is recast and reconceived in the process of its use. Struggle cannot be helped. Nothing stands still in language, in society or in the subjectivities formed by and forming these. We speak in order to be understood and we speak with the words we are given.

The difference in the case of poetry is that here consciousness is drawn to these (words we are given) not as a metalanguage (as in the case of philosophy, sociology, etc), not as reflection (as in the case of a language science), but in the material of the work itself. Thus it makes in-dwelling all attempts at transcendence.

To say and to be understood saying that which has not yet been said is to bring to awareness of those ways the world works which are at once most vital and most well concealed. It is the transcendent work of uncovering immanence. And it is impossible work, because it is impossible in these conditions to achieve any measure of sense – to know what to say or to be understood. Poetry lives in the reversal of flows between the beyond and within of selves. Nevertheless a vital poetry derives its life and power from the world making work of unravelling the life and power of the world.
representation and the injunction to change the world co-incide, in a practice which is only one to the extent that it is heuristic; which is only ours to the extent that it remains foreign to us.

Because we need to understand power and its maintenance in terms of consent as well as coercion, the aims of such a poetry (as we have named vital) cannot be far from Freire's hope to empower people to "emerge from their own submersion".

It is in these senses that we are able to speak of poetry as world therapy, as writing cure and as a practice of laughter.

Liberation we may designate as the middle way between a therapeutic and a canonic heuristic of writing.

*

The landscape described here shows no other map than one's own skin, a surface in and to which is lost all that would explain it. Here footsteps are felt as a tickling, a torment in which we cannot help but forget what we dig for or what we are climbing. Our haunting is such that the air is full of echoes, of voices, even our own, which though they can no longer be measured or understood, yet never can be said to have died completely away.

Lafcadio Hearn begins his volume In Ghostly Japan with the story of Bodhisattva and pilgrim climbing a mountain in the gloom, a mountain which turns out to be one of human skulls. Approaching the summit, the pilgrim becomes fearful, realising what the mountain is made of:

"I fear! - unutterably I fear!... there is nothing but the skulls of men!"
"A mountain of skulls it is", responded the Bodhisattva. "But know, my son, that all of them ARE YOUR OWN! Each has at some time been the nest of your dreams and delusions and desires. Not even one of them is the skull of any other being. All, - all without exception, - have been yours, in the billions of your former lives." (1971, pp. 6-7)

It is on just such a mountain, that according to Merleau-Ponty (1964, p. 311): "The writer's task)... is to change the life of signs, unaided and all by himself."

The effect of this task is to change the world.
heuretical

losing my way
  to the risk of allowing
  cracks are my dwelling
  love of luck

know
I am the animal
  making this track
  shaping sun
  to a burrowing over
  brave flows find the tribe of me
  path falls away from the feet of its making

as I was coming to my craft
  keyed to
  commencement, ever was
  - o luxury appointed me
I ornamented
  shame deep and sudden
  suspends the discontents of day

nag home the truth which makes you yours
  allow all guessings virtue
allow the curfews of the soul
  to dream yourself silly
forestall ending up
  a tug of words as if they flesh
  like the circles
  a fly takes to follow you home

best digging's with
your own skull for a shovel
  (act of allowing must give up the voice
stand out of its own earshot even)

skin of the earth is in me somehow
outlives my making, faith's blare
  (act of allowing must give up the hands)
give up the lacks beginning you
the learner says what the tongue can afford
must give back the brink
for this same fated
putting forever away

see the soul sideways then
a bird's eye
not square
hand made
wait
that's the charm

and in my own dream
not paying
attention

we are the unseen said

art of allowing is deaf to detractors
to all coherent interest

the writing cure
is all wounding and healing
arcs
knots tied
bitter with milking come to blows
the beasts by fences drawn

harbouring boat
and green of the bay
last stars slip, moon's done to earth
blank swimming

some things
should lie over doubt
but faith grapples
can't be sure
makes do with sincerity

the misery of knowledge
that it undoes itself
should crowd the heart
from feigning

a corner of the self exhorts
as greatness makes
  transgress
dreadful as death bed confessions
so heartfelt and so similar
  - hard to stay tuned to all that?

it's luck they sing for
luck's leeches live on
  mucking back and forth to grab
soak love into their next intending
luck lives in close shaves
  humps us home
comes to our senses
  listing all of the things
that don't matter to God

*

only tasks worth facing
make you feel small
words abstract of what?
of words?

  in my mark said
  made of all others
  hope of peace
  yet
  worlds of yet

my blundering apprenticeship

whatever is enough
unless then otherwise
out in still of winded night

whimsy buoyed
  see self recede
as if
  the body were a borrowed suit
the mind a borrowed song

smoke lulls
  ashen cloth, smile creased to flame
  our making and we rub upon
  sat in the sun
sits in us
rafters rib air
da day then
   sky steering
nothing to burn
stop stock still to listen
   for the first of hands
they build these houses still alight
*

a day without words
   such as foreigners must
or they alone with waking
   worked for haze
bobbing up mistaken

what wrestles with me
   makes me mine
– a sad outside of love

one tongue divided with itself
not knowing where
   all chase, surrender
   half home already
   half decided

blind and limping back
the sent, the set upon
dwell nowhere
willfully out of the way

   mongrel tongue
follows round
like charity, taxes
barrow come home
of earth's end
wizened up before time

stand in the me
   in all sorts of relation

lean into the picture
   the picture leans out

in drudgery blather
the unsought stand
good stead
sweet dreaming after too much wine

in lieu of madness, prayer
in lieu of heaven, madness
assumption and annunciation
great to get under again

learn to be languid
– that's my next motto
back from the grave

I am away when I am here
(the unknown lies in all directions)
it crowds the self to never settle

sea is my medicine
ointment and ink
lies under and over
and serves for my

*

becoming other
is the art of becoming

a voice over mine
and the scope of reversal

only ever       divining place
a permanent apprenticeship
I take it as a vow
as sworn to
nights I scribe
by air by eye
by hand
by hold

my everywhere owning the faithful exact
I bury a bone
I can't remember
try days south in sea
our childhood extending

world of burdens rounding on
exiled from their own among
doomed for a certain tread to time
the cabinet of echoes

*

buried in a fire of grass
bliss of the blanketed nights
when the weather's gone
grace of spat stars
an itch has hold

the nomad lives lost in the homewove enabling
cadence day
  low walls in dry stone
cliffs rise over
  the ruins begin

  for fellowship absence
all kinds of persistence
dwell in for us
bricks melt back to earth, to sun
  the memory to memories lost

I myself a sort of doom
to attract
  (measure my plenty, suck on my lacks)
last ditch of its setting by
  lulled away puzzling

*

lights tuned down
we bear our teeth
  ease in winter
lessen virtue
  that we might attain

in the guard's van now
they've packed up the cards

second guessing each other
they're pleading the same
pub afloat or on rails
  but the question is wrong
and everything
pinching
up all night
in the amateur chess hour

all comers
knowing and not
their fight to the finish

and the mind of God
(in vain seek the rest)
patiently at rounds
to prove something about free will

something sad and
which noone remembers
Afterword

My broad aim has been to approach a philosophy of words of which poetry can make use. Poetry was that star at which I have attempted not to look too directly. And if I make that hackneyed democratic defence that it was the poetry in everything which interested me, rather than merely that which has been canonically declared, if it is then countered that I must have been looking nowhere, the better to see what is all around me, my defence shall be that I was interested in everywhere in particular; that I hoped to heave my skin of words into the great between where all things, and where all of us, become.

You will say that for all the carping about empty and floating signifiers, I have taken sides against myself; more, that I have revelled in the tyranny of equivalence, and even in the act of denouncing it, had my wages paid in that coin. Then I will reply that poetry is an ambivalent art, one in which inside and outside do not escape each others' conditions. Poetry is a hesitation, for instance between sound and sight; between sound which conjures vision and sight in which speech lives.

Poetry needs a law to write against. But the perruque which poetry effects is only a theft from an official point of view. The perruque is the reclamation of something stolen by official consciousness from everyone from whom surplus value is squeezed. It can be an expression of solidarity among any such subjects and without implying among them anything other than a diversionary process (de Certeau, 1988, p. 27): a process which, in the case of poetry, not only allows, but may become the law.

The canon is the kind of theft which official consciousness and its prescriptions rely on. By the means of the survival it enables the inscrutable intentions of one age and place are made to serve the unknowable desires of another. The canon is in these terms a theft for which we should all be grateful, a theft which makes us. It becomes the repository from which are taken the everyday words, as well the avowedly literary wordings, which will alter the repository by unofficial means. The canon is the continual source of its own continuous demise: its making.

As langue and canon are officialising thefts, ones whose means entail automatic legitimisation, so that retrieval (of time) which the worker effects by means of the perruque is automatically illegitimate: this is not what you are here to do, not what you are paid for. Langue and canon take something which is or was among the belongings of particular individuals (parole or oeuvre as the case may be) and convert these into regimes to which anyone may be subject. The perruque reverses this, turning the actual order of things (such as langue and canon claim to represent) to the ends of "popular tactics" such as, for de Certeau, leave order "tricked by an art" (1988, p. 26).

Poetry lives with the carnival of which Bakhtin writes in Rabelais, that carnival in which time itself kills the old world, gives birth to the new (1994, p. 224), the carnival which reminds us of the process of rebirth by means of the grotesque, the abject of the body (1994, p. 234). The truth of laughter, the victory of laughter: these are what Bakhtin discovers by way of carnival ambivalence (1994, pp. 208-9). Between the semiotic and the symbolic, for Kristeva, poetry effects the practice of transgression. An affinity for the beyond of words is what poetry finds in laughter.

Yet, poetry's, as other words, are dialogically and diachronically contingent. The exhortations of poetry, as those of fiction, of any art, are unlike those we live by because poetry works hard at the cause of having none. And thus its freedom haunts the future. It lives out the show me — don't tell me dictum. In his poem "A Small Country:" Ottó Orbán writes:

I too was duped about poetry being omnipotent... We have no ocean? Let's invent one... I don't believe that poetry is a care package dropped from a
helicopter among those in a bad way. The poem, like a bloodhound, is driven by its instincts after the wounded prey. But the latter will change form and essence on the run: go ahead, catch the real anguish in the act. You follow the trail of probability's interstellar Mafia, the trail of the Black Hand, who had spun a gas cloud (torn from the sun) as if it were a lottery wheel – this way inside the cloud, a massacre and a tourist path could intersect. It cajoles, with a reasonable image of the future, a passion for gambling. (1993, p. 59)

The work at which poetry fails must be to realise the consciousness of authenticity. Poetry then is creativity as the manner of words standing out of knowledge in the breach of faith which is between us. Poetry must make a community of those, who, lost between haunting and laughter, have no community; not even of themselves, because it is their selves which cast the doubt in which selves catch, in which community is ironised away. The contingency on which poetry depends and to which it paradoxically draws attention in the effort of distracting from it, is the contingency of names. Poetry draws attention to the big questions about language: our uses of it, its purposes with us.

As for the question with which I began, of the efficacy in general of metabusiness for those who make poetry, one would be pressed to find a better answer than the one Henri Michaux offered in his Slices of Knowledge: "It is not the crocodile's job to yell: 'Watch out for the crocodile!'" (in Rothenberg and Joris, 1995, p. 615).

That clumsy knot which I hope here to have begun unravelling could never resolve itself as lengths of string. Rather what draws us is a set of two-sided tracks which are really one-sided, Möbius tracks, each finite, continuous, never ending; tracks which live on their others and from which, not only are those others obscured, but so as well is the path which presence compels us to travel.

In acknowledging the impossibility both of stepping out of such out-of-shape circles (out of the tracks we make) and of saying where they rejoin themselves (nowhere, anywhere), by these most crippling criteria I name, not my poetry, for it is yet to be written, but the conditions of my own apprenticeship, the light which I revise in writing, the light from which I write, here, hoping for a distance to render me sufficiently foreign.

At stake here is the effect of the becoming in one's body, to one's words, by means of which poetry achieves its effects. By such exigencies poetries dwell in the gap between intelligibles, that gap where Lyotard suggests that phrases in dispute take on the quality which Coleridge attributed to poetry in terms of its own idiom: "Phrases obeying different regimens are untranslatable into one another" (1988, p. 48). By means of exploiting this status of unintelligibles poetry does within a language what cannot help but happen between languages. By this means poetry is able to bear witness to differends which otherwise lie concealed. By so doing poetry commits to a fresh dialectical movement, the transcendence of a particular differend, the apprehension of a next. By this means here poetry is hoping.

Hoping for laughs, to spot ghosts, to come to the possibility of words mattering, of making difference; thus it is out of canonical necessity I fail to name the place where I have tripped failing to get past myself, my mouthing where the dice should fall, to make words say, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, more than they have ever said. Perhaps if we acknowledge such a possibility, then in so doing, we acknowledge that poets were the legislators all along; that, as Richard Rorty writes: "A sense of human history as the history of successive metaphors would let us see the poet, in the generic sense of the maker of new words, the shaper of new languages, as the vanguard of the species" (1989, p. 20).
Four Salutes

to the Soil

We are velocity ourselves. Our craft the invisible storm. Feel no distance tugging roots. Nor know the hurtling has an effort at stillness unstuck. Time is collapsed in its knot of abstraction, vertigo's muscles straining grim turns. Sky for a burden, sea to border. Whatever blasphemy we try at the end of the work the insects forget. Tombs of light lost, fires to harvest. In company of worms, rocks stand the tide, tilled hills, new mountains in their steam and then their withering to dust. Element we claim — to carve, to quarter, count. Such property as won't be still and won't deserve. Tattoo ourselves then all regrets. We are outlasted in ambition. Just as we lean it will come shifting, trip us in this dust and rain. Mixed with all will in the world. Up and out of clay then rise.

to the Sun

Lamp of all days that are to measure. Lit by the great fuse of time's burrow. Rubs in the wound of our seeing, our sense. Runs rings around the flood of forgetting. Goes off like a bomb while we watch. Clockwork of heaven for crows' feet and colour, flesh of the muzzle. Takes us for granted, to tasks, to our cots. Healing it hangs in the nothing of sky.

Come to the knowledge that there is no counting. There's a day we all give up the ghost. But we're dead then and these facts knock the teeth so far back that the brush is required where the shining's on now.

Rough malice and our lack of grace. Blood red among the million eyes. Deserts us to black frost. Or building boxes against light. Everywhere the altars stand, our skins are offered as we live. At the zenith we give our length in grave obeisance beating heart of sky.
to the Sea

Night’s womb and the moon in tow, a line ruled under heaven.
In shell and in our salted snouts, in paws and in paddling.
All this heaving. Says its psalm, rolls words around, comes
to verses in endless revision. Skins and our sense and our
dying away. At last land’s lapse, blue of the mirror. Hollows
us out till the meaning is loose. Casts curses and blessings,
the one tide our yearning. That’s how we get here, that’s how
we get home. Bottle we swim in marked fear of drowning.
Gathers its iceberg spoken north. Village on stilts and the garden’s
in water. Voices fall in and the rolling is bloated and breathless,
joyous under the sound of becoming. Day and night tread
into each other. Dolphins come to watch the hulls make
random circles in the glass, in the forest
of stars up above, in the blue.

to the Sky

Screen falls over us, the ink flood falls – enlarges us in casting
light. There is no shelter but this roof of all that we
exhale. Torn with trails and Krakatoa choked.

We are one layer bright in moment, pile rooftops in a tribute,
climb drifting up in arms and lungs. All wandering
orbs, day with its megaphone, fables alight.

Map of palaces is a coin flattening itself out over
frantic pedalling. Cloth washed of colour in the vast above.
We puncture of the world’s one lung. A wink, a nudge
and heaven knows our skins to slow the wheel.

Journey where truth’s half is darkness, shape
we’ve come to wax suspension. When we are up there
in the world of tricks fooling them with hollowed limbs and
unnatural, it is a show for the Immortals.

Or this is the height from which we fell. Move my arms slow
as the ants’ earth has rendered.

A view from the cage of what’s reflected. A view of our heads
in that terrible weight. When we leave our bodies at last this
is the clear soup we'll see through and which our nostrils know.

Then wind gets going for once and for all, chest pinned to the stars. Breath of bright turning, instant looking down's the drop. Throws its quarters to hands of day, hides dark bushels, folds of truth. A chart of movement in steady clockwork. Tireless traffic flagged with rules which taunt our burying in air.
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366


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I don't finish
I walk off the job
Metabusiness: poetics of haunting & laughter

the lyf so short, the crafte so long to lerne
Chaucer

by Christopher Kelen

1998

Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Communication and Media,
University of Western Sydney, Nepean
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
I have not submitted this thesis or any part of it to any other institution for any other degree

Christopher Kelen
for the noble 500 – those who read and write poetry in this country
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       Ethics of Identity in Australian Poetry, Italo-Britannica Society,
       Bologna, Emilia-Romagna
       Another Barbarian in Rome, University of Rome, La Sapienza
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       Programs, 1998
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Metabusiness:
Poetics of Haunting and Laughter

Short abstract:

This thesis deals with the writing process in poetry. It consists of two types of text – theoretical and poetic. This thesis asks, for the purposes of a poetics of writing, what knowledge of language poetry requires.

Questions as to the sources of poetry are resolved as questions asked of the ethics in which writing is possible. The practice of becoming foreign is proposed as a method of creative practice, the ethics of which demand an ambivalent poetics, of haunting and laughter.

Poetry is that discourse which stands out of the bivalency of judgement, constituting, as speech does in its unending, the delay of freedom. Reflexive practice opens onto an ethics of writing as presence (accounting for itself). Poetry is seen as a form of indirection which offers a way out of traps of assumption by daring not to know.

Tropology is structure with which to represent the world. The tropes are the play of cathexis in language. In apprehending them we assign structure to meaning. Metaphor, as myth, functions to cover differends (decodings which face ambivalence). Metaphor's nemesis is in the ultimate trope, irony. By limitless tropology we inscribe the manner and scope of poetry's indirection.

What individuals negotiate among differends amounts to their own authenticity. Truth to context, shorthand for authenticity, is a measure of words, in words. By such measures a poem works towards a community of the self as precondition for a community of selves decided how to be together.

The community of writing is made up of shifting personae whose roles blur between the work of making and the work of keeping the canon. Canon is to literature as langue is to parole – meta-awareness in the service of common sense. We, who make up this community, are constantly at the work of protecting and violating borders.

This thesis considers the prospects for a heuristics of poetry writing by way of the affinities of that process for those of (first and foreign) language learning. It contends that poetry's role is to do inside a language what the foreign language learner cannot help but do between languages.
When I picture a perfect reader, I always picture a monster of courage and curiosity, also something supple, cunning, cautious, a born adventurer and discoverer. Finally: I would not know how to say better to whom at bottom alone I speak than Zarathustra has said it: to whom alone does he want to narrate his riddle?

To you the bold venturer and adventurers, and whoever has embarked with cunning sails upon dreadful seas,
to you who are intoxicated with riddles, who take pleasure in twilight, whose soul is lured with flutes to every treacherous abyss –
for you who do not desire to feel for a rope with cowardly hand; and where you can guess you hate to calculate ...

Nietzsche (Ecce Homo, 1992, p. 44)

And ever against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness, long drawn out,
With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony:
That Orpheus self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowres and heare
Such streins as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half regain'd Eurydice.
These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

from Milton's "L'Allegro" (pp. 322-3)
A Note to the Reader

In an interview in 1984 titled "Polemics, Politics, and Problematization" Michel Foucault says:

I do not appeal to any "we" – to any of those "we's" whose consensus, whose values, whose traditions constitute the framework for a thought and define the conditions in which it can be validated. But the problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a "we" in order to assert the principles one recognises and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a "we" possible, by elaborating the question. (1991, p. 385)

It may well be asked whether one, as a writer, gets out of the process of identification (with readers) so easily. As Jean-François Lyotard writes: "We are in fact always under some influence or other; we have always already been told something, and we have always already been spoken. We are weak and the gods exist because we didn't win" (1989, p. 137).

We has become a taboo pronoun in scholarly discourse because it has come to suggest a universalist and imperial subjectivity, one which (like the royal plural) takes the reader-subject under wing and without bothering with the trouble of arguing for this privilege. The problem with foregoing the use of this pronoun is that such a strategy may achieve nothing but the concealment of the imperial motive which lies in the moment of identification of writer and reader. Such an identification is elided in favour of a harder to challenge, often agentless, passivity, characterised by the use of the "dummy-it": It is widely acknowledged... In these terms common sense, by means of an absence of modality, delivers a certain world as if it were ours ever-thus.

The we problem does not go away by saying we less or even by the act of positing the self as never part of a collectivity. Such strategies fail because we each of us are members of all sorts of insistently spoken collectivities, the most notable (and least obvious) of which is language. The dialogism of speech points to the reality that words arise in the fact of a perpetual exchange. The forbidden pronoun points us in the direction of a forbidden and utopic state: community; that state which ironically is among us as the pre-condition of our words.

Scholarly enquiry is neither the accidental result of a failure to act nor yet the effort of a lonely enquirer bereft of the guidance of others. There is an insistent identification underlying such projects, that of we the readers, whose community may even be principally antagonistic, who may be uncomfortable with even this identification; but who nevertheless have in common the fact of having read thus far. It can be said that the use of we now, a marked use, as an awkwardness of style has recovered the virtue of demonstrating an effort at identification, and thus precisely offers a place where such identifications can be challenged. To adopt we as a specific strategy by which terms of identification are made transparent and tested was perhaps the effort made by Burluk, Kruchenyk, Mayakovsky and Khebnikov in their manifesto: "A Slap in the Face of Public Taste":

We alone are the face of our time. Through us the horn of time blows in the art of the world...
We order that poets' rights be revered...
To stand on the rock of the word "we" amidst the sea of boos and outrage.
Paradoxically a fashion for historicizing (Jameson, 1981, p. 9; Guillery, 1993, p. 26; Le Doeuff, 1989, p. 15), as if that were the cure for any kind of metaphysical lapse into eternal verity/ies, betrays a similar difficulty: the relativising of knowledges of the past catches itself in a loop, which for our purposes could only be called eternal. What if our past could never be more than a picture of ourselves wondering, albeit in a well informed and best intentioned way, despite its modalities of certainty or doubt, about how we got to be here wondering? This is exactly how a literate homeostatic view takes the alleged past of oral cultures (cf. Ong, 1988, pp. 46-9 and a fuller discussion in chapter 2 of this work), as a construct which, however unconsciously, functions to serve the purposes of a present social order. It would be naïve to think that literate or print or digital societies have a technological protection from the ongoing process of revision and relativising which the effort at origins appears universally to demand. No self-respecting ironist would argue for a society which truly has access to the only correct version of its past. So where does historicizing get us and how is it an improvement on the privileged view of the past which a universal view claims not to be by making itself the only view? Historicizing shows us into a circle which it cannot resolve because its terms are prior to the objects it considers. It gets us nowhere, I would argue, unless as is fortunately often the case, it is taken with a liberal dose of doubt as to its own efficacy, this in the form of knowing a little how little we know, and unless this medicinal dish itself is never allowed to be fully digested. Such is the problem to which Socrates alerts us at the conclusion of the Cratylus:

if the very nature of knowledge changes, at the time when the change occurs there will be no knowledge; and if the transition is always going on, there will always be no knowledge, and, according to this view, there will be no one to know and nothing to be known.(1952, p. 114)

The kind of eternal and innate knowledge which Socrates imagines could never be like this. Neither, as he freely admits in the Meno, could it ever be learnable. What we think of as learning for Socrates consists in acts of memory which resort to the experience of past lives. The reality which "learning" apprehends by this means is of an eternal character. I would rather say with the Wittgenstein of the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus that logic precedes every experience and that: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (1994, p. 24). If the past shapes us — and what else but the past can — it does this by the means of memory and forgetting, such as live in its tangible signs; by means of word and image. We do not tell the past how to shape us and yet we have some choices in the process.

Any book is a sharing of a language and a world and a halt in the dialogism which was there in speech before books were possible. It is an elaborate gift which, to be of any worth, must be reciprocal, living as it does in the hope of that cliché of a true marriage of minds. It seems peevish to squander so much community and goodwill for the sake of avoiding a clichéd posture.

For the purposes of this work then let we be a kind of declaration or claim of solidarity and the line drawn by this means one between haunting and laughter; between acknowledging who we are and how we come and dissolving these in a new claim; a claim to be other than as made, a claim to make ourselves, to wrest, as Jameson writes, in The Political Unconscious "a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity" (1981, p. 19). We can make multiple authority, it can draw attention to universalising efforts and serve as a kind of hailing of the reader. At least that is how I would like my use of the first person plural to be taken, as alerting the reader to an effort at identification, thus to the prospect of community.
The other side of the inclusion which the identification we assumes, is the exclusion a reader feels when s/he cannot go along with what is expressed under this aegis. In these circumstances s/he is alerted to a differend, to use Lyotard's coinage, such as is suggested in the observation that "a universal rule of judgement between heterogeneous genres is lacking in general" (1988, p. xi). Lyotard defines the differend as "the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be put into phrases cannot yet be" (1988, p.13). As such we may regard it as what lies between the communities which are implied in a speech intelligible to its participants. Lyotard claims that society is inhabited by differends. He writes that:

there is a differend between two parties when the "settlement" of the conflict that opposes them appears in the idiom of one of them while the tort from which the other suffers cannot signify itself in the idiom. (1993, p. 9)

That situation, I would argue, obtains wherever a law is the possession of particular parties. Poetry, in such a circumstance, because it subjects its own language to the exigencies of a position between languages, plays a role akin to that of bearing witness to differends.
Möbius
Möbius

never finished
knot of our making

Contents:

frontispoem  page 7
painting the bridge  48
ticklish  99
hic et nunc  149
shed of words  191
on becoming numerous  224
instructions to the self  266
lives of the poets  301
heuretical  346
frontispoem

begin of absences
by hand, by key, by mouth, by hoof

in thick of all colour

smell of flight descending blank

    a page of hands
    drafts go through
    like doses

*

around the old fire
I start up the clock -
what tongue, what tone,
gesticulation? Weary the hunt
    of odd addition and complacence
assumption testing
makeshift heart
not knowing what embarks upon
    everything crooked in my garden
everything sideways in the soul

    listening clues
    in my vast corner

doubt's my way, my faith
in one

*

art of the track
is never arriving
to see the circle of not seeing
it must be a risk to itself
the way thousands of hands
and they are the same
make smooth the wood
doing nothing like that

alone of this reason
a thin line
like
worm
fishing
out
of
us
for
meat
- all that is offered

*

inspeech stood out of understanding
sun and its steady on
run of light's loss

    turning your eyes
    who takes the time
    to point these risks?

frames pour me on
not lost, much ventured

when I am empty & to contend with
roads are kept clear
fear fanged and fist led
full of bad seeming

    you guess the nexus musing forth

baited with doing what no one else can

as intricate sincerity
fattened forth
    stuck on one world
to speak uncommonly
of common things
in every brief
my tongue

*

what am I getting away with here? Am I?
good self, down self

when I am full and finding
for the burden of the great among
cryptic, unnoticed - rib here a ripening
(that languid first
of supersession)

pivot is bells ringing
wings beat at distance
alms for the self
sensation fading
- a poverty we live to coax

first chorus to gather
words fall to their work of failing us

great of art its own momentum
every way I jump is home

a dance of hats

out of skins
hours appoint

make sense of lack
of never quite crossing

the other mind where I am had
where seasons work their out of intending

shall we invoke then visitation
the manner of the call?
- scavenger's anthem
tail in the mouth
corners all puff
coasts are a guess

I, the rockface, surefoot, graven in up
catch at the mirror these
tops tip to me
leaves face out

path made without making
yellow beyond
and the wind packs over

to build and build and still let go
(loose walls of a town which dwelling comes on)

every day my seas rise up
dreamt home to scaffold

there pass out sighs
for the passage of spirit

as camel's eyes
needling

they lower the ropes

in ether alley
cloudwracked, unavailing
I trim my carpet to some hunch
which bears all ill away

every day
more still than the next
- a dry run for eternity

sun for a laurel
all air to buffet
and only the lonely faith of the finder
circular, professes us

*

much rush of night
most blessed day
it's dark that towers
in fear of which I found belief
must be our on forever
– there's death caught in this now of ours
and come to the rhythm of standing things still

    I pick up a child's pencil
to write as one,
addicted to what warms my back

in the end only if there are gods
    you make them as you go along
see if you don't, I dare you

    every day edges peel
this privilege and play
renouncing

and after last lamps
nap in the soup
of queues go through me

    a grip on the world
how is it this morning?

as if thus you were set aside
to make the everyday

*

    paws of earth
head of cut skies
    fish fins for peddling
fire to keep
cock hearth
    ash heart

scribble my making

    in twig of toe
    and limb of lust
in awe of all mad shambles
let everything grow wild today

cut no branch
    and nip no bud
today in this wind
taller than the eye can wish
let everything go wild today

  tame no words
  and shape no sense

let the spirits call our names
and we will all requite them

let everything wild
  in a day of big tides
let each have its say
  let us run out of words
in scratching to shape

  something
cannot be spelled
calls itself by our names

  then put a hat upon
lusts with which we're made

then sing a lightest touch
  ensouling sense

in the river runs over us
  selves unsaid

let everything grow wild today

  *

  till

  sense and touch and next intending
  all attachment which I am

  prayer irreversible
  all do this for...

  we who have worn out
the world's welcome
what tug of mind may wreck?

the planet hums home
  forward, hurtling
arc it's hitched to widdershins
  through manna, reflux
led by riffs
to rule lines under heaven

... and as always spoken for ...

on the day of my funeral
(that first of days by which I am over)
I give instructions
hovering unseen

one day and soon
a shoreline
recombining with
this pile of habits
I am
the one to scour
turning and turning
full of tides

on the day of my funeral
I accost these few mourners
– the cheerful invisible
then once in an ever so
once in a while
to find the self
forgetting

look now
no hands
this little of voice

sung skin upon paint
and all lean together

if the soul is not immortal
then the body must be free

in the end
aches have me
bigger than bones

grant me this last delusion love
in time's contractions stood

that old abandon making me
or infidelity forever
pleasure and defeat, reprise

the church of your sayso
(brick wall in the mind unmade
the speed is predetermined
and the airbag's there for farce)

*

sat up just as
the unconfessed
in the Mayfair of heaven
-their fingers shall slip through
the chests of their rivals
they shall inherit the martyr's misgivings

and what is song
but the voice of another
practised and known by terms we set
and so accept?

cast this against
untimely torn
roll up a tantrum
beat on tin lids
in rafters over me afire

if you can see the angels
that's their lookout I suppose

shaped of nature
and the door barks shut
because of and despite we are

*

o numinous machine!
o keys!

depend on the delay of freedom
in which the all lies open to me
and open because undecided
mine because I use my luck
that's how art stands out of life
to show its possibility
in everywhere it's from:
cruel democracy of fate
have you a better theory?

a pall of judgement inhabits all saying

presence - o, we are indulged
between the blur margins
it's luck that holds the horse-shoe up
and not the other way around

thank the world and my making
pitching in elsewhere
it is fear blasphemes us
hope rifles divinity

the heart is homing           god's where

unnaming of things
is everyone's work

between of word

in your walking away
is the air I am left

in my standing your silence
my kneeling benighted
hoax of the said

*

dharma

is many

a slippery school
of fated fish imbibe each other
falling for the self again

faraway's our ache

more loathsome yet, truth's absolution
- cleverness dulled with simple routine

pretending intimation
stubborn of critique
washing the paws over with fact
like a dullness
wearing behind the eye

knowing a little
how little we know
– that's our legend
won't leave us

the monstrous snoring of beginners
Metabusiness:
poetics of haunting & laughter

the lyf so short, the crafte so long to lerne
Chaucer

by Christopher Kelen
Chapters:

1. **Poetries**
   - Placing Poetries p. 22
   - Between Disciplines p. 31
   - Poetry, Criticism, Theory p. 39

2. **Waking & Dreaming**
   - Creativity/Desire p. 57
   - Myth p. 62
   - Canon, Inspiration, Homeostasis p. 68
   - Dreaming/Waking p. 73
   - Haunting & Laughter p. 82
   - Invisible Empires: Postcolonial Bodies p. 87

3. **Consciousness & Reflexive Practice**
   - Consciousness/Unconsciousness p. 118
   - Reflexive Practice p. 121
   - Styles & Codes p. 128
   - Carnival Trap p. 136

4. **Tropology**
   - Imperial Virus p. 162
   - My Music for Nothing p. 169
   - Ultimate Trope p. 179

5. **Identity/Alterity**
   - Money in Marx & Elsewhere p. 199
   - Language & Civilisation p. 206
   - The Measure of all Things p. 210

6. **Authenticity**
   - Authenticities, Reflection p. 231
   - Authority p. 246
   - Rights to Identity p. 257

7. **Community: The Body of Foreigners**
   - Community of Futures p. 276
   - Canonic Personae p. 283
   - Whose Community? p. 288

8. **Heuristics**
   - Poetry as a Foreign Language p. 323
   - Pedagogy & Liberation p. 338
in memoriam Zeus, god of borders and strangers

Proem

This work takes the form of a background poetics (a metabusiness or business about the business of writing), one which hopes to ask not, as is more usually the case, what poetry can do for language but rather what language and its study has to offer poetry. It examines the nature of meaning in natural language as the working material of poetry.

This thesis is established on the basis of grave and necessary doubts — whether there is anything learnable about the process of poetry writing, whether there is anything worthwhile to be said about the processes of poetry.¹

¹ "To begin with I'd question the worth of discussing poetry at all." Thus John Forbes sensibly began his paper at the "Foreign Bodies" conference at the University of Sydney in 1981 (Botsman et al., 1981, p. 114). Likewise I begin with the premise that there is nothing useful to be said about poetry which does not more broadly (and more usefully) concern the substance of all speech and all writing, these being the apparently limitless corpus from which poetries draw and in which and of which they make sense or nonsense. Valéry, in his essay "Poetry and Abstract Thought" writes:

Some people go so far as to think that even meditation on his (the poet's) art, the kind of exact reasoning applied to the cultivation of roses, can only harm a poet, since the principal and most charming object of his desire must be to communicate the impression of a newly and happily born state of creative emotion which, through surprise and pleasure, has the power to remove the poem once and for all from any further criticism.

Valéry goes on to suggest that while "there may be a grain of truth in this conception, its simplicity makes him suspect it to be of scholarly origin." (1956, p. 136). It is Kant, who in The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement , tells us that nothing mechanical or academic can constitute the essential condition of art (1952, p. 527), thus establishing a premise from which to argue the unteachability and unlearnability of the genius involved in the production of art. With regard to poetry, Flann O'Brien crosses the border from doubt as to the worth of speaking of it, to launch a virulent, if tongue-in-cheek, attack on poetry itself:

Having considered the matter in - of course - all its aspects, I have decided that there is no excuse for poetry. Poetry gives no adequate return in money, is expensive to print by reason of the waste of space occasioned by its form, and nearly always promulgates illusory concepts of life. But a better case for the banning of all poetry is the simple fact that most of it is bad. Nobody is going to manufacture a thousand tons of jam in the expectation that five tons may be eatable. Furthermore, poetry has the effect on the negligible handful who read it of stimulating them to write poetry themselves. One poem, if widely disseminated, will breed perhaps a thousand inferior copies. The same objection cannot be made in the case of painting or sculpture, because these occupations afford employment for the artisans who produce the materials. Moreover poets are usually unpleasant people who are poor and who insist forever on discussing that incredibly boring subject, "books". You will notice above that I have used the phrase "illusory concept of life". If you examine it closely you will find that it is quite meaningless but since when did such a trifle matter? Poets don't matter and an odd senseless bit of talk matters little either. What is important is money, food, and opportunities for scoring off one's enemies. Give a man those three things and you won't hear much squawking out of him. (1993, p. 239)