

Hello, ruel World

BY PAUL MAGEE

BA hons (Melb); MA (Melb)

a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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2003

comprising

Cube Root of Book
The 14th Floor, an Hypothesis
Unaustralia, A Study of Heads

prefaced

and

postfaced

by

Leninheads

certificate

of authorship / originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate:

acknowledgments

This work has always been dedicated to my sister Bridget Magee.
 She acted, played flute and wove tapestries.
 Each page as you read turns in this imaginary prayer wheel.
 Rest well, sister.
 Inspire me.

the artists who make you think the world anew, because through their frames. As well as all the people in my bibliography I want to thank film-makers Pedro Almodovar, Luis Buñuel, Ingmar Bergman, Lars Von Trier and Jacques Demi for messing with my mind, beginning at age sixteen. You're Gods.

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John Leonard saw something in my poetry, and has convinced me to keep looking. Years of work have gone into the manuscript here, much of it by John, who is an editor-critic of world-stature. There's always something better, you have taught me that, John, at a time when my poor legs were failing me. Much of the philosophy here has been derived from a consideration of our collaboration, which has been a powerhouse. Thank you for your faith in the primacy of poetry, my friend, it guides me in what I do.

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My siblings are unreal. So's my Nana.

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Elizabeth Campbell always reminds me that anything can be a poem, anything at all. Instant life. Thanks for teaching me things, and hanging out.

I often stayed with Nick Gateril and Mari in Sydney, while visiting UTS, and they could always be swayed to swing into holiday mode and party around. You two are such trippers, and so in love.

When I saw Vera Mackie last week she told me of an installation artist who suspended himself, completely covered in mirror ball mirrors, naked from the ceiling of an art gallery. And then she proceeded to theorise gender through it. Thanks for the kookiness, and for always teaching, reminding me.

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Ania Walwicz reminds me just how insane everyone is, but some of them are bores anyway, that artists are completely abnormal, that life has a dark edge. And it's fun. Ania I think of your one-woman *Sprechgesang* opera about Princess Diana's eating disorder / obsession with marrying a prince. There was no orchestra. And all the stage was black.

Klaus and Suzanna and Claudio hosted me when I was newly launched back into Australia this last year, and we all talked for hours every night, as in the past, this time about a German internee playing mah-jongg in a detention centre, and his patents for the machine that would turn air to water. Klaus also read the second book of this thesis, and gave invaluable advice. Klaus, you're an extraordinary colleague, teacher and friend.

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Ed Meystowicz for his collection of two hundred different national varieties of cardboard, for his theatre of living, and for living it in a house surrounded by pictures of famous political leaders, including, most notably for me, Gorbachev. I got the idea for Leninheads from it.

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The people at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia have been really sweet to me, let me hang out, turned up to my papers, given me wonderful new directions, but I theorise all this at greater length in book 3 essay g below.

To all the freaks I bumped into in Amsterdam, Finland, Russia, Chicago, Athens – the woman on the train from Meteora, a costume designer, who imagines how she would colour co-ordinate all the new people she encounters, the artist – San Francisco, Carmel and Hawaii. I want to thank Hawaii for being there, and inspiring me to move to Brisbane. I want to thank Bertie.

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abstrac:

Hello, ruel World

The analytic component of the thesis approaches major questions in Cultural Studies, Philosophy and Social Theory through an investigation of various forms of creative practice. I approach the question of *agency*, for instance, through a study of stage actors, who must recite set lines, and yet feel empowered precisely by the opportunity to act through them. Investigation of the author's own work as a poet and novelist serves to cast light upon *ideology*, ie. how one might use a constrained language and yet feel empowered to speak new things through it. I apply these investigations to Althusser, whose famous essay on the total power of ideological interpellation is permeated with theatrical metaphor. I suggest that Althusser is repressing the creative component of everyday life, something social theory has ever found hard to theorise.

I proceed to suggest that the place where such processes are analysed is in the philosophy of science. The work of Charles Saunders Peirce on the experimental method is, my investigation uncovers, surprisingly geared toward the investigation of creativity. In science one has a method for, and an extensive literature on, discovering new phenomena. My thesis is that the experimental method of modern scientists, and the creative method of modern writers, both geared toward the production of things that are at once new and true, is largely the same. I use Peircean semiotics to argue that creative composition is about listening to the languages spoken all round you, and transcribing their objective contours. So as to have effect on others. Which is just like science. And in both instances we are endlessly spoken through at every moment by the myriad languages which interpellate us. Whence creativity (for those who are open to it).

My three portfolio pieces are:

Cube Root of Book: a series of one hundred and thirty two poems set at intervals along the descending spiral of a Fibonacci number sequence.

The 14th Floor, an Hypothesis, an experimental novel, written quite literally as an experiment; i.e. having written the novel, I then wrote up a prac-report detailing what I had learnt about the performance of writing, including the above.

Unaustralia, a Study of Heads, an attempt to show the relevance of these findings to Cultural Studies and other related practices. It centres on my new reading of Althusser, and is flanked by mini-ethnographies of creative practice, including the above.

The poetry is presented as a major new creative work.

The experimental novel/ book of philosophy as a substantial contribution to knowledge.

Hello, ruel World

By Paul Magee

book one

$3 \sqrt{\text{book}}$

by
Paul
Magee

Index to the Poems

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2, -3, -6, -8, -16, -21, -42, -55, -110, -144, -288

Chapter 9

1296 But what else is left
to halt this falling
unprophesied night?

801 **a shout**

495 There's no Hell on earth
like that we give each other
for nothing have this poem

306 Total recall
the date the year
and other related things like
relationships
rings of age
for things that don't grow on trees
include happiness
cracked
like a glass framed photo
and sing along
with tomb swinging

189 They hew us from sex, we're born, we survive
put out an eye, they transplant us, we survive
roots pushing their way through the soul into soil

Leaf-shading we provide our own shade
till cut down to tables and chairs, seeming
semblances of life, stay alive

even onto this paper, this white
this skin's sharp feeling wooden flesh
life sits on us, like ink.

117 an olive branch
signalled Noah's determination to survive the move
it landed from outside him: peace

some scissors, sticks and stones

make a house
 it's a basket
 they put love in
 these fish swim from my fingers
 from your toes
 the miracle is that we ever thought it was finite

72 I will tell you the whole truth, Trojan King, whatever may become of it, he said, and I won't deny my Peloponnesian roots. That's the first point. For even if Fate has left Sinon a broken man, she shall *not*, in all her cruelty, make me practise deceit. Perhaps some word got into your ears of Palamedes he was Belus' son, Palamedes, he was famous to the stars. With a false charge of treason, a snake's allegation, and only because he'd once opposed their war, the Greeks struck him down for death; but now they mourn his absence from this light. He was the man to whom my impoverished father sent me from my earliest years, to act as his companion-in-arms against you to come fight here. While reigning safely, he stood tall in committees of the kings – as did I – earning their respect and our power. But when Palamedes was struck by the envy of that two-face (believe me, I know) Ulysses, and sank down from the world above I drowned my days out, in broken spirits, in shadows, in grief at the destruction of my innocent friend, but raging inside. And mad as I was I could not hold it in; I swore that if I ever returned to our Achaean homeland, at the first opportunity, and in the midst of our victory, I would avenge him; and so I targeted their hatred upon me. From that moment, I date the beginning of my fall; Ulysses now began to terrify me with accusations of the unspeakable. He started to spread his lying tongues about me in the crowd, laid traps for me, sewed teeth against me, plotted with skill relentlessly and then, with Calchas the priest in his pay - But why am I telling you this wretched and pointless tale? Why stop time? If you think that Greeks are all the same the sound of Sinon's name alone will suffice; execute him right now. That's what Ulysses would want, the Greek leaders would even pay to see me gone.

Virgil, Aeneid II

45 to personify the head you need a face
 feet to do legs and shanks toes

each door is a lock, each key a prison
 friendship is terrifying because it's you utterly

I get up and dress to visit (grave, my friend)

no worse than a tree that grows, breaks, breathes

- 27 It moves houses
 by force of its stare
 face full-sail
 to the journey of dead flowers
 to Eskimo kisses
- 18 Smoking one final cigarette
 for an ashtray overflowing
 for the morgue, for my sins
 a pack of twenty
 brighter than death
 a bunch of twenty flowers
 a bundle of twenty sunsets
 an incandescent torchlight
 twenty variants thereof
 a burning in the furnace
 my limbs in fire
 I forget about death
 I see that cigarette therapy
 has acquainted your poetry
 with the colour red
 said the stethoscope doctor
 Stop sucking on that syringe
 give me your hand
 put your tongue on the match
 your motor skills seem fine
 will I give up?
- 9 When to the sessions of sweet silent
 sessions of sweet silent sessions
 of sweet silent thought things past

Chapter 8

1152 . . . only the testosterone
 was somehow inhibited. She became herself, unaware
 that she could never have children. Adoption had failed her
 and her husband. She didn't quite explain why. But her features
 being slightly more masculine were all the more feminine, her biology
 teacher explained. The devastated seventeen-year-old girl
 still to menstruate, now finding out why, broke down
 and the teacher showed her, to calm her, the genes xy
 in a sample of her blood, and repeated that masculine features
 actually enhanced feminine beauty, tall and striking, now forty-five
 divorced. Her husband, never knew that his teen love was
 a man, not only on the inside, but all through till she told him.
 For how can you hide from your truth, in a body, when it's not
 even you? The marriage survived through trauma, and died.
 The woman and her teacher were reunited after an ad-break

by the producers, and she cried, in her body, she cried
 at her secret, to its first sharer, the human body, her teacher:
 the experience of learning that we never knew who we were
 when first stolen inside. She repeated the child of her woe, a story.

712 There are hundreds of homes
 for us here in my mind
 said one bee on the verge
 of psychosis

440 Now I shall describe the gifts of air-born heavenly honey.
 Attend to this portion too of my poem, Maecenas.
 I shall sing of vistas to amaze you in the world
 of little things, their great-minded leaders, their customs
 and callings, their nations and battles, all in order;
 my work treats of a slight theme, but the glory will be great
 if the adverse powers allow it, if Apollo hear my prayer.
 First one must find a place, a home for the bees
 free of the wind's advances - for the wind forbids
 food to be brought home. Do not allow sheep, or
 little head-butting goats to trample down the flowers,
 keep baby cows, wandering in the plains, from shaking
 the dew free, or wearing away the grasses as they grow.
 Keep the painted lizards with their stiffening spines
 far from the rich houses, along with the bee-eaters
 and the other birds, Procne the swallow among them
 whose breasts bear the marks of her own bloody hands.

For they lay waste to all around. They fly off with bees
in their mouths, as sweet snacks for their merciless young.

Virgil, Georgics IV

- 272 Eyeliner
mirrors
the weather
a tear
photographs
concrete
keys
dead leaves
the four winds
- 168 These noises scraping as fingernails on blackboards all around me
a classroom this room my vase that sings in tune
out of tune in tune
no table
the stage is constituted by the shattering of a vase
- *
- Mouth the hand that comes out of this mouth
by itself
- a whole keyboard I spat
by someone else in myself
- to play deaf with yourself
or to write with two ears
- that's music (at my desk)
or to write with two hands
- 104 residence for no one's sweet
nothings minus one plus one
four subtracted from four (ears)
for lease and ease of access one body
read me out of this uninhabited
a skin stretched like gladwrap round
all that cosmetic surgery
she beats her dashboard, drives a
hermetically sealed car to my station
praises the isolating quality of
tinted windows in traffic

my mother died recently
 and no one (zero) need know
 when you get there that you've cried

64 I paint my nails icy blue
 I drag on an outfit
 I paint my eyes the rosy hue
 of broken glass
 off my dress you bitch
 I'm you

40 Portrait of a portrait as a young portrait

24 You're an actress
 playing both parts
 of Peléas
 and Melisande

You're on the spot
 and can not sing

There are no words
 and you must kiss
 on-stage
 to an audience
 of
 your very self

16 Drink to me with broken eyes only and I'll not look

8 All these milestones
 millstones round my neck
 a necklace sewn into the flesh

glitters in the mirror, another's
 self image hates me under bright lights
 of flesh, can the plastic plastic
 surgeons

cut out ugly successes, make faceless
 a clean canvas, skin smooth as paper
 that blots out green day - I feel sick

Chapter 7

1008 All roads lead to other roads

623 *metamorphoses of brain damage:*

The man who mistook his wife for a truck
 they had a similar stress gradient
 she bore her load of life badly
 he lacked all emotion; his frontal lobes
 had worn away like a brain-shaped
 eraser; he'd lost that pencil with which we write
 out the chorus of everyone else's responses to life
 and sing along. I can't love you anymore she wrote
 to him while in hospital, ever grinning
 it's like you're there and not there
 I don't care, he told the camera of his accidentally caused
 lack of empathy, and she cried
 on camera, and no one lied

the doctor looked on kindly
 the camera and film crew watched
 and so did I – in whose shoes (dress,
 fingers, accident, blank screen or eyes)?

and another:

'Rate your sadness for me,' she said to the woman, who was
 trussed in a plaster cocoon like a broken leg
 sensors and receptacles suspended from her to the ceiling

('I want to make you sad,' said the scientist
 in her white like-a-slightly-longer-dress lab coat
 'and to measure your frontal lobes')

'About a six' came a voice
 whose bruise was real, if practised
 large eyes staring out of old fruit sockets at the screen above

her, her words hanging spiders of text, set pain
 ('I'm a monster. I hate myself,'
 the depressive wrote, with her fingers

typing out her saddest thoughts, quote unquote)
 then while she was looking back at her thoughts
 they radiographed the sadness of her brain

'I'm sad that you're sad,' the scientist then said
 in her wordlessly-white, paper-white lab coat
 'but I'm glad that you were sad for us';

like a child, the monster woman was still
 sad but pleased to be pleasing, a little
 healed, you could feel the plaster wearing lighter and

 the power of science

385 Some God's elbow escarpment holds this town in to
 its azure seascape, its fresh mown green back yards,
 Hill's hoist, sea-saw waves and sky-blue time

a shivering pall over the death of our dead friend
 whose loss we have gathered to forget, whose loss
 to forget, bright eyes embrace me, you've arrived

238 Fishing for sharks
 a ring of teeth
 round your neck
 their eyes like egg whites
 boiled wider than fear
 who are nicer than people
 many more people
 are injured each
 year by their own
 underwear
 continues the professor
 lecture theatre widening with laughter
 like a maw

147 *a quartet of curses*

Dean wanted a cigarette. I suggested
 he watch *The Curse of the Phantom Limbs* instead:

They're interviewing a woman and her stump
 which feels, which she feels, pain
 in the fingers, though she lost it from the elbow

A hand typing in the distance, next door, on the computer

An artist interviews her too, takes photos, digital
 images and then virtuals

the woman's imagined pain in, pixelling a massive swollen hand
 the hand that grasped the wheel - this is imprinting
 on a stick-thin arm coming out of the stump: a map of pain

the artist paints

Another is a man with no arm, but his phantom
 body map has a huge thumb, a thumb for an arm

The typing stops

Dean didn't need a cigarette. He wrote a letter instead
 touch typed like us

*

A man lost all sensation in his right arm
 from the motorcyke smash, but his phantom hand still gripped in pain.
 The eyes. Their phantom pain. The arm ungripped

(its ghostly impossible grasp. What else are phantoms
 but. And so is art. This is imprinting the scientist said print. The
 homunculus in your brain is more you than you. Which remaps)

when he placed the one left in the black mirror box.
 In a mirror your right arm is your left
 a reflection of the left. So you see

both limbs, one virtual, one real, move perfectly now, as if the motorbicycle
 had never cut the other off. And patients start to cry
 And to lose all phantoms float away pain

to where?

*

while the black mirror box has a video restorative effect
 on me too, like a phantom picture of what's virtually real
 or a TV set (you coffin box) up turning into a pathway
 to Heaven, and all our lost souls idiots

*

a cigarette
 paints phantom lungs

91 There in Russia they keep their herds shut in stables, you'll see
 no grasses in the fields, no leaves on the trees appear.
 But the land is mounds of snow, shapeless and deep

in cold, it rises as you walk all around you. It's always winter
 the North-west wind is always breathing in frost.
 From morning, the Sun, his horses reaching for the far skies,
 never succeeds in scattering the paling shadows; his car rushes
 to bathe in the red mirror of Ocean, and night the shadows revives.
 Bridges of ice congeal, of a sudden, from flowing rivers. Whose waves
 then carry wheels bound with iron on their backs. Having
 once served ships, they now pave a way for open carts.
 The cold causes bronze vessels to leap apart, clothing stiffens
 when put on, they cut off blocks of frozen wine with an axe.
 While pools, in their depths, turn solid ice, fierce icicles
 make caves of uncombed beards, and the snow
 all through the air, is all this time falling.

Virgil, Georgics III

56 The body of Bethesda: the tain of sky that floats overhead
 and the walking tracks vein the land with life

inroads, humans, ring up in the mind
 their binary codes, the lizard beside me, DNA-determined

he motes in the eye my *silence of nature*
 as if the divorce I'm getting over meant as much to him

as the light at each tick of the clock of the sun
 on the pool of Bethesda, silence settles, no one
 was or ever will be at home

35 Walking around a
 corpse makes
 the path of our
 conversation
 difficult, trippy, little
 jumps in grammar
 over - excuse me

21 *Sydney postcard*

that bleary-faced old faith of me supping on the sober
 the podium dancers were podium dancing

and the night did away with all thought of the night
 yet Daedalus found it easy to fall into the Sun

did his skies slip from knowing

did the soles of his feet come undone

Hyde Park spreading out its dark rug of grass
to eternity

an eye enters the harbour smashes a mallet smashes down on her face
my hand touches your breast like the wheels of the train go round and
round

14 Cleaning my teeth with a truck

7 I ate the best minds of my generation, rot
dribbled down the sides of my chin
and not throwing up
To what sight
do you shut that eye off
do you dream it to death
do you drink it all down
to one black painting
that swallows the frame

Chapter 6

864 My father died
three years to this day
or another like it

I could have jumped into the grave
like Ophelia's pond, like Hamlet

I had a coffee instead
with someone I hate

Frogs leap and play in the mud the rain
do they have no skin for drowning?

534 and the cursed father, no longer a father, said 'Icarus!
Icarus,' he said, 'where are you? Where am I to find you?
Icarus!' he kept saying, till eyeing the boy's wings in the waves.
Deploring his own creations, the father buried his son's body
in a mound on Icaria - that's how the island got its name. And while
Daedalus was placing the bones of his poor boy in the grave,
a chattering partridge looked on from a muddy ditch,
applauded with his wings, and in song testified
to his joy. Only recently transformed, he was the sole
bird of his race still, his fate an everlasting reproach
to you, o inventor. For Daedalus's sister, unaware
of how Fate would call, had apprenticed her son to him:
Partridge, a boy of twelve years, his mind open to learning. Already
he had cut rows of teeth in sharp steel, taking for his model
the backbone of a fish. Thus he discovered the saw. He had
bound with one knot two steel legs; one would stand fast
while the other, at a constant distance, would draw in
a circle. Daedalus, jealous of his nephew, threw him
from the holy citadel of Athens. 'Partridge fell,' he lied.
But the boy, whom Athena adored for his mind,
was caught by the goddess and returned as a bird,
feathers formed in mid-air, the force of his mind,
already birdlike, slipped into feet and wings, his name
alone remained. Not quite. For the partridge, despite his wings,
does not trust himself to heights, nor lodge his nests
on the tips of tall branches. Near the ground he flies,

lays eggs in hedges and, ever a memory of his ancient fall,
fears heights.

Ovid, Metamorphoses VIII

- 330 Son, I want you to have my
 so cattle are branded
 so one dreams of foreign lands
 through these windows
 one day we'll fly
 and find you again
 leaving the relics behind
 and ahead and all in pieces
- 204 snakes
 because we don't have hands
 or control
 over anything
 not even our language
- rivers
 which are the same
 as serpents sinuously
 shifting surfaces over time
 and land, and sky
- the rainbow
 and its refractions
 is the subject
 of a scientific treatise by Spinoza
 these words too
- 126 I lay down my loss by the Elwood canal
- whose memory is long
 whose lines run to ripples
 whose tide is all time
- I lost my father here, or somewhere like it
- he had love in his lightness
 he had words for all weathers
 he had time for low tides
- The moon reflects on my loss, this dark night

- 78 Photos take on words and speak
for the dead who took them. He left me
 a camera, single lens
reflex colour film inside, that I
 remembered, three years later
to open and bring to light. The next
 day returned twenty-four prints
in a surreally damaged pink light
 stained as if sun set and I
cried, when I saw none of him. Thus he
 had documented, for
insurance purposes, the last house
 in which we lived, twenty-four
photos, light damaged, of a Perth house
 that wasn't home enough to -
Setting chemicals images things so
 cruelly; then I felt my eyes
hold him in its frame: *You are my house.* -
 draw perspectives in, messages,
spirit traces, absences and my
 dear Dad for a while ensued.
- 48 An average suburban sowing among fields of houses,
cars, concrete, occasional trees, eyes sewn up, gently
unsewn once more, cyclically, on the road past sorrow
- But how high is the city of Melbourne?
 the tallest building?
 and if I lose the law of gravity, going up
- just when will I stop living here
 The sky begins at our toes
 It's so easy to die
- but words presume that you won't
 disappear
 how do you die?
- 30 The orchestra, dressed the colour of night
floating on black water
- immersed into a wall on the back of my throat
 in Novosibirsk on the twenty-third of August 2002
- Hold it to your chest, your absence

invoke it at all moments

a life-saving cavity
an instrument around it resounding

when life is missing
and he comes running through your chest

his eyes, your aorta broken heart
(giving up reading, listening to music,

playing)
he becomes your death. Now sing

18 The dispute between Summer and Autumn
 entailed much suffering

The heat burst back with ripe fruits
twigs hardened and pointed

A brilliant day seemed
to fall too soon

The day of your death
too soon

Like Autumn it will pass
as leaves rustle, old papers
drift past, pass us by

12 Cutting my face while shaving
 is
 cutting my face while shaving
 in his mirror
 deflects my father shaving
 too close to curb
 shatters and that is my face

*

Teach me the meaning
of the simplest words
without using an
example

*

(Here
optic nerves
dangle
they are open poppies
in the evening
air)

I must have blinked

6 Telescope the dark heavens in
to a dark star, five hundred watts, your
eyeball light burning, light up my confusion

A tongue plummets to this Earth of death the rock of Lazarus.
Swelled in his
throat it speaks

All this time melted over morning
tea and
my dead

Row boat no it won't
like silence oars words
You

Chapter 5

720 Few botanists are fluent in both Chinese and English
 which is why some of the plants are not fully identified
 in the South China garden, though the *paeonia suffruticosa*
 first grown in imperial gardens, are known and named
 for their showy flowers. A national passion, they bloomed
 from 700 AD, at the Festival of Ten Thousand Flowers, perhaps rivalling
oroxylum indicum, One Thousand Papery Seeds, whose pods
 grow to one metre long, in ostentation and display
 while the seeds (each pod contains thousands) would
 become fans for emperors, for the wealthy, for the memory
 of you that now unfurls as I chance upon this winter
 garden soon to become spring (as will the Californian garden
 the rainforest, the basil plantings, the Chinese windmill palm
 used to make coats.)

You need the warmth
 of the untranslated to survive the world. That tree
 there has no name, it just grows, like a day we chase
 to keep up, it's a tombstone - contrary to appearance
 tombstones are never inscribed, words fail us
 we just pretend to have names

445 Merri Creek is she happy, washed-up, plastic?
 The aftertaste exists it's real
 It was some other bridge
 mirrors, daily

Put a knife
 through the eye
 of the Sun
 with a twist that says
 you're not real
 but your death
 the real recyclable
 floating garbage

that you could build a house on
 and swing from the rafters
 like a creek-jumping child
 with bottle-top treasures for eyes

275 You're distant
 in the distance

or up close
next to me

Your eyes are worlds
as this Earth
is an ocean

You glance away
to watch the sea

170 So many, over so many lands, through so many bodies of water,
I've travelled, my poor brother, to attend your funeral
and present you with the final gifts you'll receive. I've come
to speak to your voiceless ashes in vain, now that chance
has snatched you from me, o my brother, o poor brother,
so unjustly torn from me. In the meantime, but that's all there can be
and by the beautiful custom of our forefathers, accept what
was given to the dead: these lonely funeral gifts of wine, milk
honey and words, they're dripping with a brother's tears.
And for all the future, my poor brother, fare well, but you've gone

Catullus, Carmen CI

105 A bleak question mark
(suddenly starts
to shift
in response
to your reading
takes on tone
colour
complexion
sunrises
confusion
then
semantically
sunsets)
Time grows
in circles
by the hour
as a suicide
or stone in water
sets off rings of
phone call rings
in circles
phone calls ring
us in tears

last night?

65

how I

the town crier, proclaim grief

how every table I set it on, disappeared

how people die now and then, they're no support

nor are trees, nor even leaves, the bare books just outside
how do you bring a dead person up to life?

with your teeth you eat

40

My body was racked by demons for a long time
they stretch you by the fingers
ever so slightly as you're writing
forking love on your soul
sharpening up the pencils in your eyes

entertaining suicide

an

instant stage, bright lights, train smack through you
that threw you into this traffic with life

now

and I realise as I'm writing this that I'm rewriting my sister's suicide note
that she never left

25

Chic peas are older than beans, than trees with
edible leaves, than all other domesticated crops.
Hummus tastes back to the first farmers, chance discovered
I suppose - it's before history - you eat it
with a paprika garnish and a sprig of green leaf
something modern like parsley, a tablespoon of olive oil
and all of human life; it's just a symbol, a story,
tombstone teeth, and the memory of breathing
the last thing to die, is to die

15

You suicided all my poetry was written on your skin first
line
second line
third line a tight rope tight knife

At the private hospital they hid their ailments

from each other
bed-side tables
bursting with tears

The hospital library is little
but the books expand beyond the shelves
drowning lips kiss through the page
and open worlds in your palm

I walked in to the locksmith
who speaks Russian to me: как ты поживаешь?
I'm fine, thanks
I was unlocked

by the memory
of the teeth
of the lock
I became when

my hand drawing close
was released from its scream
faced into the day
I opened doors your death lightly

10 And her hands are kneading our love
a doughy bankruptcy that smiles
lumps of love in the face mixed up
she hurls us like clay malformed

5 My eyes went missing in action
my sister
talked computers, possession, dogware, love, commitment

only to be told that if she was well enough to commit herself, she was well enough to look after herself. Beds were needed for the involuntary cases. Perhaps for cases like herself, involuntarily committed

and I all of thirteen handed her to the police
I'd like it all back
Have you ever betrayed someone?

Once, after I had spent hours convincing her just to stay in the same room with me, to put the scissors down, that the dog hadn't been programmed by our parents to spy on us, that I wasn't squeezed up against the wall like an eggwhite eyeball, that the television was our friend, that the police now arriving weren't the police, Bridget knowing full well by now that I had been deceiving her, that I was handing her over to them - that's called commitment - stopped on the threshold of the room from which

she was now being led, the prospect of yet more months in the sick heavens of psychotropic drug stupor ahead of her. On the threshold she looked back. I was a mess in a chair, my face in my hands. 'I love you, Paul,' she called back to me, like the ghost she now is, 'Do you love me?' And I, like the ghost I am, couldn't answer.

Chapter 4

- 576 Mia unclasps her new umbrella
its pictures of people, shopping people
Pokémon sort of people, presses
the button and shoots the rain
red little umbrella, rain-shooting
and takes on the skies, cloudstorming
rainbursting, shopping people para-
chuting from the sky, little people
flying all around us the rain
- 356 Your bookcase is a hideaway for angels
who sidle nightly in between novels
and stories, poems and science, to sleep
two-dimensionally, as pressed flowers
by night, as angels, who are abstract and quiet
- 220 A pastoral poem
with a table outside
made of trees
a carpet of grass
the dead are alive
picking flowers
in every letter we write
ho little sheep, passing by
and smiling bees
- 136 This poem is

(true
or false)
- 84 The clouds are all knots inside
a Klein bottle sunset
on this strangely topological
day now night
the universe expands, it's a torus

(a clay coffee cup with a handle may be
- they are topologically equivalent -
smoothly transformed into a doughnut)

or a universe, to a kid at McDonalds

52 I hate the public, I push it away

(Observe this poem in
ritual
silence, I am its priest).

Songs never before sung
I bring to the ears
of our delicate young

men and women. Juppiter
(kings have dominion
over their sheep, but He

over kings lords it, is famed
for the Giant's defeat)
with a wink shifts all life.

Horace, Odes III

32 Who cut my ears off?
Love wonders
a lily flower playing in his blood

The lily
knows that silence
is a poem about nothing

She's free as this breeze
she's in Love, pools
of Love

20 Imagine reading this
poem in braille, even the
words that don't count you feel

12 Summer flowed backward
one year into spring
and that was fine, so fine
to see flowers grow
younger, unwrinkle, grow
greener, disappear

Love's frozen over
in fear of an answer
to the question
on its chafed lips:
what will Autumn
backward bring?

8 The stars are not seen
 by day but there they are
 let the heavens burst through
 this blackest of days

4 Shall I compare thee to a Shakespearean sonnet?
 The rain forms beads on a cosmetic cheek.
 Dark of day, what season is raging outside?
 Helen Keller understood
 lightning
 from the way ideas strike
 a match
 (with a metaphor)

Chapter 3

- 432 From steel sheet faces
 he made up conversations
 of high stress grading
- and nuts and bolts
 for tears in his eyes
- then he
 cut another corner
 sharp
- in the deduction process. We don't
 at this factory, make friends to last
- you have to bolt your face in to love
 and that will save you spare parts. There's just
- one for a man, to fall apart
- when you come close
 to his body
 and you wonder
 is it me
 on the other side
 of that flesh?
- 267 Depression
 means you're on the edge
 of a pleasure
 you don't want
 to surrender because
 it will kill you
 sing the dishes
 as I wash them clean
- 135 'Dear nurse, fetch my sister Anna here, tell her
 to sprinkle her body with river water, she must hurry
 to bring the animals with her, the other offerings, we will
 sacrifice them as prescribed. Have her come to
 the pyre, and take a sacred ribbon to cover your brow.
 I intend to conclude the holy rites, already prepared
 step by step and begun, to Jupiter of the Underworld,
 to put an end to my cares, to hurl an effigy

of Aeneas' head into the flames, and atone,' Dido said.
With an old woman's eagerness, the nurse hastened
along.

*

A shout went up to the high halls. The rumour ran
like a madman through the close-shocked city, the ceilings
of buildings rumbled with weeping, with groaning
and the wails of women, the upper air echoed with grief.
It was as if all Carthage, or ancient Tyre, had been destroyed,
the enemy was within and passionate flames twisted
through the houses of men, the houses of the Gods.
She heard: out of her mind, terrified by the incessant running
ripping her face with her nails, hitting her chest to make it real,
Dido's sister rushed through the crowd, and called upon her
dying sister by name: 'Was this why? All to deceive me?
The pyre, the altars, the flames – all for this? How am I
even to begin to blame you, now that you've left me here alone?
Why didn't you ask me to come with you? Was it pride?
You should have asked me to share Fate with you. Both of us
could have suffered the same hour, the same cut in the heart.
Instead you had me build your death bed, with my own hands
you had me invoke our ancient Gods, with my own voice.
All so that you could lie here and do away with yourself. Murderer!
You've killed yourself, you've killed me, you've killed the people
and statesmen of Carthage, you've wiped out your own city.
Sister, let me wash your dying wounds with water
if you still breathe up here above, let me catch your last
breath, as it falls from your lips.'

*

The Trojan hero, pausing nearby, recognised the dim form
of Dido the Phoenician, her wound still weeping, as
she wandered among the shades and shadows of the great forest
just like the crescent moon, which one sees,
or thinks one sees, through the clouds. Recognising her
he suddenly cried tears, and called out to his lost, sweet love:
'Oh poor Dido, so it was true, the report that you had ripped
your final moments from a sword, and died. Was it because of me?
By the stars, by those above, if there is any faith
to be held here in the depths of the earth, by that also
I swear, oh Dido, that I left Carthage against my will.
The Gods ordered me – the Gods who now compel
me to pass through these cloud-drawn and decaying
derelict zones, this depth of night where you live –
they drove me with their commands. How was I to know
that my leaving would bring such suffering in its wake

back to you? Stop. Don't leave my eyes. Whom are you fleeing? This is the last thing I am ever fated to say to you.' With words like these, Aeneas attempted to placate her spirit of its bloody fury, to soothe its savage glare and, himself crying, sought to rouse her to tears. She held her eyes fixed on a point far away from his. Her face was no more moved by the speech he had begun than a hard flint stone, or a mountain on the isle of Paros. Finally – hating him intimately and forever - she tore herself away and fled to the shaded hollow in the woods, where her former husband Sychaeus answers to her woes, where love is required. Stricken by the Hell of it all, Aeneas followed her there with his tears, lamented her loss again, and had pity.

Virgil, Aeneid IV &

VI

102 I don't mind the hospital inside my head
it operates on its own
passengers
a double decker bus
on the operating table, exhaust
pipes, eardrums, gearsticks
the tiniest bones in the body
steering wheels of the mind
a bus crash recurring
mathematically recurring
go into the accident
trace your features
chalk lines around an arm
a leg over there, life lines
turning skies into weather reports
roads into stop signs
people into handshakes
looks in the eye
you die every day
you stay alive

There are lots of things to think through
your brain for one
thought Lot's wife
think through death
and you're already dead
this tapestry
sewn up eyes, staked moments, no time

63 It was not my day to begin with:

your funeral, brilliant smog-blue day
 by the beach, my cigarette on top of the flu
 a blast of chill air through the church
 another self-killing and the underside
 of every word is anger, resentment, laughter
 strange lust - they really loved him - football scarf
 wrapped around the cold comfort coffin
 and the memory of his goodness I'd forgotten
 rips a hole in the throat of this apple-bitten day
 that was not mine to begin with, thank God

39 and walls of words to wall in
 the first person pronoun
 forthwith declared to be
 null and void in sense
 herein sentenced to
 the involuntary care
 of the missing Department
 of Missing Persons State
 of Collapse *Amen*

24 Postmarked
 and the writing on the back

Buildings arising
 pin-cushion like
 out of the night
 how many angels
 fit on top of this
 building arising
 pin-cushion like
 out of the night

Crash test dummies
 must feel this way
 at the moment of impact
 before the moment of impact
 at the moment of impact
 before the moment of impact

I'm a postcard collector
 my favourite is an odd view
 of Sydney by night
 my throat flies through my chest
 no it hasn't happened yet
 my lungs stick to my back
 no it hasn't happened yet

my legs shatter into ankles
no it hasn't happened yet

15 Doors rooms and walls make a house
or a body can I
find my home here within, where
walls and windows are roofed by the sky
like a street

9 Down forty floors
of fathoms
Front cover
title page
preface
introduction
contents
index
the end
is just beginning
to hurt
The book
of one hundred and one
suicides
begins slowly
pages one to five
new ways of dying
and then speeds up
page eighteen
haiku
car crashes
at thirty

6 The path of least renaissance

3 When you read you don't see
what you read, nor it you.
But seated again: the head, the feet
the eons between
use the chair for their back.

Chapter 2

2 This is mine now
 roses burst into flame
 from my finger tips
 glances melt into wax
 into fire

a
 boundless
 infinite ink

My hold on this world is tenuous
 at the best of times, this is one
 hand but what are hands for
 so tenuous?

*

That hand sculpture before me
 real and cubist and surreal - that
 passing stranger passing
 a painting in silence weeping
 tears, a frame of blood

4 Right now
 I'm drowning in
 one millimetre of glass

6 All at sea, I held you
 for three hours of psychotic
 squaller, her voices in my head
 my only friend, do you love me?

'You wallpapered my mind with floral kisses
 with space for windows, posters, a picture, garden
 view - why was I not happy?'

10 Nothing to say would begin with a frog in its throat
 plunging, anti-clockwise down the drain

I feel the unease of it touching the sides
 of your throat these words
 and I wanted only to scream

little baby versions of me
 in you
 in me

16 I love you my evening
 my darling, my daily disappearance, my surrender
 all alone, my black sun, my life giving night
 you give loss a wanton guise, till morning

26 the floor of the car for gears, accelerate
 out of street left right smile at strangers
 I don't live here I'm just eating air

the bridge bulwark ploughs like an iron through the water
 stands still and blurs in the silent river
 flows in creases, river, car crash and debris,
 passers by, words as I watch
 without heads and into the night

joggers jog in and out like ramrods

myself a broken bottle of a face

houseminding every word you say

*

punching the speaker in
 and the phone my tongue a soldering iron
 leaking ingots of hate
 to the receiver, receive her love slam
 you down hate of the phone

*

dutiful daughters at the laundromat
 washing the gods from their sheets
 by the rivers of idle nights, pools
 bells, desert heat, sighs
 to rouse fathers from their graves
 to sleep
 by her side as the sand

*

opening I entered was within

no space no face to
 contort into a smile for
 and dark and damp as the city
 I grew up one day in Melbourne
 hatched a bird's nest of children from
 my mouth squealing and crying for their
 love like little birds, and singing
 it's not so bad

- 42 You ask, my Lesbia, how many
 of your kissing kisses, how many
 would more than satisfy me? As many
 as grains of Libyan desert spread
 from horny Jove's sun-stoned oracle
 in silphium-rich Cyrene to
 the holy tomb of ancient Battus;
 when night puts human loves on view
 as many as guilty stars collude,
 to kiss you - that many kisses
 would more than satisfy Catullus
 for-all-the-Earth insane, and then
 the prying could not add them up
 nor envious mouths them all consume

Catullus, Carmen VII

- 68 My love, my little Sufi
 you were spinning on the spot
 with bracelets on your ankles
 and leaping in your eyes
 into bed, in your mind, when I said
 shall we kiss?

This page now
 bears the imprint of your body
 ruffled sheets, rounded shadow

Were our words too perfect?
 did they leave you no shadow?

- 110 We are as different
 as darkness and light
 when they touch

You said, yours
 in darkness and light

I said, teach me to hold on
 I'll teach you to let go
 but hold me all the same

178 You wanted me to be as absolute
 as pavement as steel-jawed as the sun
 but even concrete setting looks like
 the waves above us tumbling
 even buildings crash when you

jump

hop-scotch, with one foot in front of
 the other, the clouds wrong way
 death and dying is always success

full
 the end

but the mind is as stable as a horse that bolts

you jump
 your body follows
 it lands
 you land too

288 e.g.
 egg
 i.e.
 I eat
 n.b.
 nibble
 p.s.
 parsley
word-salad
 etc

electro-cetera shock of eating my own words once more in love
 that
 sudden
 asylum

pools of ambrosia underground
 it rained upward
 and the tendency when you leapt
 was to lose yourself in the stars
 no Icarus I swim
 through flying fish
 flying by
 The horizons harbour oceans
 of horizons
 and wake next to you

13 A lover's long lost mirror
 an ocean of blue, a life

8 Sailing through a storm in our teacup conversation
 I passed you the sugar and winked at the sky

at this other end of another Odyssean day
 spent with you, my Circe, seven years

are just one afternoon, I'm enchanted.

Reminder, that this story
 is not the life I'm living

Turning fast pages
 As days flying

that we split up
 that I split up too

from shadows
 from fingers

5 *the book of common prayer*

to have and to hold
 to hold and to have
 to have and to love
 to love and to hate
 to hate and to have
 to have and to love
 love, love is all
 you need is love
 to have and to hate

- 3 Ten years in the department of inhumanities
 I taught myself self-torture
 thesis splayed on a brick wall of words
 while I grouted it in to structural support for
 another brick and I'll finish
 another brick and I'll finish
 another brick and I'll finish
- 2 I cut in half Proust's remembrance of
 because it kept falling on my falling asleep
 head
 like a dream (all remembering)
 of a strange book to cut in half waking
 up
 to myself cut in half by
 things past
- 1 Your arms
 exclamation marks
 you blush
 you're all language
- then you tap dactylic on the table
 you adverbial you
 and your eyes are pronouns, generous pronouns that open
 and flutter

Chapter 0

0¹⁴⁴ I didn't make Siberia, the thought of queues Russia-wide
for tickets, to do anything in Russia is like eating this book -

*

the memory, though, I'd restore, like an old icon, of Yakutsk
where the Lena's seamless mirror of self-reflecting sky
accompanied me for three night-days of partying on a cruise boat
with the local Soviet dee-jays and I slept with a woman
whose child had died there. Every second year she'd return
to lay flowers, and I, only twenty, didn't understand
death or what it meant, not to have a child. Her father had been
a diplomat, her accent thick and seventies
bespoke an American youth, though life there was
arrested. A curtain on her mother's *misconstructions*; who'd
failed to stop the words migrating from her mouth.
We were together one night. I guess I was her stranger.

*

Chinese restaurant, Yakutsk, bar-room fight.
People sway like drunk drumsticks impossibly upright.
North Siberia is a Shostakovich number five, deep-fry,
played by Chinese cook soused in vodka slur
ring orchestra, stumbling to the fight.
Eat your postcards and photos, sing along.

0⁸⁹ Two days back and already the glare of the cold broke my back
in Melbourne, at the laundromat, I hate travel
that turns into here. Stop. In Moscow, at the Mayakovsky
Museum, my Russian flooded back, at an eyeball keyhole
stare into the flat where he shot through, so to speak (himself).
I'd forgotten how after twelve years of absence. Each floor is a
different colour, one red for blood, revolution, the wringer of gnats, Josef
Stalin, Mayakovsky's official fan. One yellow for fear
and collages of bits of paper and glass: documents, books
the debris of a life washed up (but how and what is this metaphor
drying out now in the machine, the me it's been
these last three months of travel comes to a rest in creases, to
lay crumpled, to feel the warmth of steel machine on its shoulders
and the absence of self we are
breathe me back. Speak:

The Pushkin Institute of Russian Language and Literature is still communist

in appearance: liquid paper grey white walls, mistakes
of architecture, taste or indifference, rise from Ulitsa Volgina
to grace the skies with their absence from the memories of anyone
but me. I lived here ten mad months (a gestation plus one)
as *perestroika* collapsed all around me and my mind
a Soviet mess of rancid porridge, chipped brick-work and learning
(you learn to count bricks, to grow up, to lose a job, to feel walls)
while I, all of twenty, discovered depression and mania,
they're the same, in Russia, for the first time, among a people
who believed, by its very absence, in a soul; and drank vodka
the drink of old believers, and resurrection (beneath these walls
a chest cavity must beat drumlike and imaginary). Today
I stepped out of the metro where it broke down
at Sportivnaya, and then flew to my old home on the outermost ring
of Moscow's Yuri Gagarin orbit of satellite suburbs; glory
to the cosmonaut, to the workers, to earthly stars, planets of love
gone kitsch, the outer space within us all: the Pushkin

no one's home

0⁵⁵

the flight of language

UM, *unaccompanied minor*, a little girl of six, Katrina, Katryona
with a passport for Lietuva round her neck sat in front
of me on the plane, began to play with a doll, or with air
‘Hey little one,’ I said, leaning over, ‘this is how the radio works’

and headphone-headed she tried to listen to the kids' channel
in Finnish. Helsinki to Chicago, where little people land, the flight
of language through space is like words: can you catch them?
‘My mom's in Chicago and my Dad pays money into a monthly

account.’ She doesn't see him. I knew a word or two (three)
of Lithuanian: ‘*Labos ritos*’ (Good morning). She replied ‘But it's night.’
‘Yes I know, but I - have you ever seen a kangaroo?’ The flight attendant
wanted Katrina to eat her airline food. ‘I only eat chocolate!’

and she did. Refusing to *behave*, which is the thing
all adults need you to be, or the plane will just crash into thin air,
a weird adult fear, as all six year olds know. We became friends.
‘Tell her’ (a little Lithuanian girl she'd found on the plane),

she demanded indignantly of me, and pointing,
‘that you're not my father.’ I did, and Katryona translated
into Lithuanian, sure proof for her barbie-hugging buddy. ‘I hate it,’
she said to me, ‘when people think that someone is my father.’

And I *what's a father?* asked my mind, while the stewards flustered, all at sea

a six year old, UM, running around their knees, eating chocolate making them look nervous. The six year old (international) solo traveller settled on my lap, declined to eat salad with me, pulled my ears

as we read Lithuanian barbie doll magazines and discussed the nature of nature: 'There's people down there, right?' confirmed Katrina, pointing to the ground, 'and no one lives up there?' (a gesture to the sky). 'So that means there are towns, without any people. Right?'

'Ye . . .yes,' I replied, and Chicago arose before my eyes where I lived, at age six, first learned to fly, and that words held us up, when my father suddenly died. Much, much later. 'Iki' in Lithuanian (Hello/ Good bye). For there are towns everywhere.

0³⁴

Californian wedding

So this bed of a book I carried travelling one week cost fifty bucks, and then over the course of the wedding as I struggled to read every word that wasn't just authority, I found myself sleeping faster than her slow prose. Burning books in dreams I committed her words to the flames; waking up I opened the grate,
Poetry and the Fate of the Senses
in an unlit furnace met its fate through 450 pages, footnotes slowly dribbling centipedes of speech from the mouth.

Then next day, skin still dreaming diving along the pipes that once brought fish by pump from offshore boats to Cannery Row just as Steinbeck flooded words on the page: we're all oceans

and you, my passing love, found orchid shapes in words, in schools of fish, in the fragile folds of pink on your wedding dress visitor's breast and I, a guest like you, fell in love, or the sea or the flames of folds of the ocean's embraces: the fate of the senses is to always stay alive and occasionally to come up for air: Marry me!

0²¹

Anna Karenina

giving up offerings to odd glances, through windows of passing carriages of trains, the Gods

leap in front of us
in flames

the day depressed
for a smile somewhere got away
space dies with every suicide, and that's their gift
an empty emptiness

0¹³ Then the sky turned on its point, and night fell upon Ocean,
covering Heaven, Earth and all the deceit of the Greeks
in its huge shadow. The Trojans, splayed out along the high
walls of the city, fell silent. Sleep embraced their weary limbs
in its arms, and I looked up the word for *patefactus*

Virgil, Aeneid II

0⁸ *examples follow*

Anna H. Semyonoff also edited *The Captain's Daughter*. Her
New Russian Grammar, in two parts, Edinburgh, 1934, ends in pain:

APPENDIX: verbs: *to put, to put hanging* i.e. *to hang*
is вешать, *to put oneself in such a position* is вешаться.
But вешаться *to commit suicide* does not belong to this group,
these verbs are not very common, especially вешаться, they were not given
in previous editions, their perfectives are not reflexive,
examples follow: *He always hangs his coat in the wardrobe.*
Today he put it on a peg in the hall (the train from Helsinki
to Petersburg translates me, my grammar reminds itself
of death). *She hangs on everyone's neck* i.e. gives
herself up. More often this is used as a perfective
verb: *Winter has come and hangs on tufts on the branches* (out the
window) *Pearls of rain are hanging* (a mini-death)
The past perfect in Russian becomes an English present tense:
Falling off the third floor, he hangs caught on a tree
from the same root: занавеска
curtain, занавес (an Edinburgh curtain
on whatever's past or to come
I stare at Petersburg approaching
The train wheels leave it all behind)

*

a painting in the Tretyakov, Moscow

Conscience is enshrouded in a metallic blue black
and a figure, drawing his dark shawl in tight
but featureless, is seen from the back, his eyes

on that distant corner of frame, where the betrayal
glows golden like a fire: it's Judas, who deliberates
on whether to black back into the foreground
of night. Among us. In treasures framed.

0⁵ Peter the Great's Kunstkammer was begun in 1701
or in Hell, the crowds that gather are timeless:
an assemblage of freaks, double-heads, mermaid-
shaped foetuses with tail for legs, a Siamese twin,
that calf with five feet. Families of kids laugh and point
at each other. The exhibit was intended to medicalise
freaks of nature, to show that science, looking back in
through Petersburg's 'window on Europe,' could cast
(*mehr licht*) more light on things previously ascribed by and to
the Devil. Tongues. My guide, an Italian translation
like Petersburg itself, ushers us into the museum's
(*meravigliosamente kitsch*)
marvellously kitsch display of ethnic cultures
perhaps not realising that we're among them, but
(*cio che attrae i visatatori e in realta*)
what really attracts the visitor
are the freaks in the Kunstkammer;
(*e un divertimento*) it's a diversion
my lonely, lonely planet continues, *per tutta*
la famiglia and at this point I realise why I'm here
and hold back tears

from the window of light, because desire
is interpretation
of foreign language
we're inside
and bursting with bodies.
This room of speech

0³ *the Restoration Process*

The war in Grozny left paintings in pieces
a museum by shells shattered, a broken shore
to an ocean of soul, blood, art, peace.

The Tretyakov gallery in Moscow houses
(I remember once when the roof of our house
fell in. The chimney, blown down in a gale,
collapsed into the room I'd just passed
through, leaving a pile of dust, rubble, rain
reminding with each brick that the roof falls in
sometimes) icons of Russian art, national treasures,

the paintings which held a nation's breath
 for seventy-five years, and now respiring
 with before and after canvases
 one a Christ
 to show the restoration process,
 the gallery is exhibiting paintings saved from Grozny
 which burns with fire; God save us.
 Paintings scored with lines, torn in part, shattered
 and revived, look out and assert that art should be itself
 a restoration - I was thirteen at the time and never knew
 how that moment of collapse would come to paint
 its way into all my later lives from marriage to death
 a picture chases us - to tide us over all that gapes in the heart

waves fail and pictures are at best dressed wounds.
 Our house came down long ago
 and then you died.

0²

The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow

Trying to decide, by the colours he chose, whether Matisse was happy
 or sad, you realise that Picasso was neither. The paintings here
 do my head in, each canvas cuts us up
 like life. A portrait.

I loved this place, returned, as if to childhood, at age twenty
 again and again, to walk through Medieval doorways, on Michaelangelo's *David*,
 these full Parthenon friezes, all copies, in plaster cast to teach
 the masses the pre-revolutionary meaning of cubism, of art. Copy.

The Matisse and Picasso are real, and insofar, are also copies
 as is this day, who gave it? The deaths that have died since then
 haunt all spaces, repeat me daily, cut up, like light
 through the window carves a room in two, and sets the scene

for the gallery of copies you see daily; at
 the Bolshoi Theatre
 where orchestras, by the shape of their sounds
 teach one to love paintings. I fear for my frame: Revolution!

0¹

automatic teller machine

A night of sudden love
 her laugh, and tottering drunk, we recited Pushkin's poems of love
 right into each other's goodbyes, walking arm in arm.
 The next day, two police by my side, happy to have found
 me unregistered and ready for bribes, or a 'visit' to the station:
 документи пожауйста!

Only I pretended not to speak Russian to at least fuck up part of their day, dawdled as they took me in, forced them to wait as I, ballerina-like, paused to buy an ice-cream all the time harassing them in English till they found a tourist tout a seller of paintings - his father's, he told me, while translating a fishy law, fifty dollars in bribes, and it's better, I think, for you if you just pay.

The policeman's red pinched face relaxed as the catch, giving in obliged with a promise to bribe some justice back into things via the ATM.

A nineteen year old student of finance and business, the tout and I walked, as if in chains, caught. 'Do you paint?' I asked, if only to change pace. And he getting chatty, replied 'How do you like Russia?' and I 'I love it here!' automatically, while the policeman trailedIt's just law and order, why not love it here? I thought. Like his father, his children he told me he hoped would be painters: 'How it goes, one generation out and one in. I study finance but my children will be artists.' You're a crook I thought, an organiser of bribes, a daily sting, and that - stealing - isn't far from speaking as an artist. At the ATM

I replied, 'Tell him, I'm a poet.' So he did.

Он поет - он говорит что поет

Why the fuck do I need to know that?

The policeman looked pained, or like a stuffed pin, surprised and said, with a look of swallowing incomprehension, 'Why?'

I don't know
but it had something to do with her eyes
and this poem, that I stole for her

0⁰ words
any in particular?
yes

Chapter minus 1

-1 *for a prime minister (Philippic I)*

s-bend dweller
 s for suck harder
 God rewards abortions
 and the case now being tried
 is one of suicide who did it
 who killed you from inside
 your own throat
 they lay carpet over the depression
 and walled the walls with love
 I feel you uptight, a succession
 of dying deaths, of days
 when your face falls in
 you do all you can
 to hold up your eyes, your nose, your skin

2 I've got an eye in my bug
 A big pond in a small fish
 Look on my works, ye miserable, and repair

J. Kennett, politician (Phillipic II)

-3 What would happen if you breathed?
 a hidden lung a word swallowed
 a bird in the throat got your tongue
 for one of its young
 a look of divorce in your eyes

*

no you don't
 feel the thrill
 yes I do
Hegel says

that for modern man reading the papers
 is like saying his daily prayers
 but soldiers love
 no they don't
 those they kill
 yes they do

till they bleed *Man 75 kills wife of 50 years strangled*
 ‘ . . . on five times the recommended mended dosage of Zoloft . . . ’
 ‘ . . . side-effecting ‘the Australian people’ with agitation, anxiety
 and abnormal thinking,’ a lover’s leap
 in the throat.

- 5 Two men, their compelling flesh, close-pressed and driving
 hard. And the fascist Judge kisses, fucks and is fucked
 by the oldest of the boys, in all the equality of lust now a man,
 on top, perhaps in love, and certainly desiring
 to assassinate a right-wing prick by coming inside him: in *Salo*.
 For *Salo* is a work of freedom and love: a repressed dream.

A voice off-screen lovingly recites Pound's *Cantos* in the
 following and final scene as the Judge, outside now, and in day
 proceeds to cut out the eyeballs of his victims, to drip blood on
 their alabaster flesh slowly, and not block his ears
 to their extreme cries of pain beyond the reach of mercy,
 rendering each and every poem obscene, as children die,
 credits roll, and memory sees through the poems and torture
 to recall the dark night fuck in the previous scene, the reason.

- 13 *reprise (Philippic III)*

up your arse
 you keep saunas and steam baths
 swimming pools, floating gardens
 dolphins and dancers, birds of
 paradise, leafy bowers
 church steeples and choirs
 parks and playgrounds, outdoor adventures
 overseas travel, space exploration
 and a little bit, not much, of shit

- 21 That's your problem
 you're a government
 (you fix it
 you're fucked)
 We're all immigrants
 none of us comes from
 here:

- 34 *Mistah Ruddock's Speechrighter (Phillipic IV)*

The asylum in a desert swallows the phrase, a throat

a drain with birds circling, a gate

it's hard to think you're alive when there's nothing but blank
pages inside the pick lock of these eyes cut

poor man, didn't *conceive* those children nine months
in the public mouth, hanging off his nipples, his nose

I mass produce myself in a moment
I stamp me through myself

we all need an abort and a bucket of love
to hold it in, that, on the shelf

is my speech
it tried to fly away, so I learned it

(and you're the same)
gulp

*

prayer

A poem he never wrote reads to itself the lines on her face
the woman who returned from the ocean which sank her husband
please let them take some words as they go (lover, child)
don't die without saying our names (brother, friend, sister, another friend)
for ever - it's just a moment to God
please let them take some words as they go
for ever - it's just a moment

-55 There's more dead people in this world
 than living
 for the dead once dead stay dead
 for the living once dead disappear

89 Don't even try to ask your Gods - it's not ours to know -
 what bounds they've set upon us, Leuconoe. Also:
 get rid of your Babylon horoscopes. Whatever happens
 things are better that way. And know this.
 Whether Juppiter has many more winters in our jar
 or if the Adriatic squall now breaking on the soft
 volcanic rocks of this shore breathes our last – let the wine
 breathe, cut your hopes to moments.
 Since I wrote this, Envy and Time have shrunk away.
 Rip today from the paper. Don't ever trust what's yet to come.

Horace, Odes I

-144 *Lucia di Maribyrnong*

Everyone around me is a character sketch,
 leaden features, faces crossed out, not yet done,
 rough captions to a frown, sings the doctor

cauterising a wound. Father let me leave this house
 sings/sighs the daughter from her fortress,
 her eyes on the workman here to fence her in.

Audience bored, chatter, twitter, fat man sleeps
 The opera's not begun till the fat man sleeps to the end.
 Prima donna glares, dagger in hand, assumes the stage.

Second act - the tenor grieves his mother -
 Third act - the daughter kills her husband -
Ohime!, Orror! - on the night of their wedding

this vow-breaking wedding, a rent in the fabric
 of heaven, the curtains all falling around,
 breast-beating and screaming out tears, as

six voices in synchrony
 six reactions to the scene
 six lines take to the ceiling
 a geometry of passion
 a pin-point

(quick, check your look in the scalpel, apply make-up
 sing, swoon, slash)

Audience disturbed, chatter, twitter, police arrive.
 The opera's not begun till the police arrive late
 and arrest, rouged up, in his bloody surgical gown

a semi-coherent doctor, as he wakes
 on the park bench, where he'll ramble and mutter
 in a homeless, de-institutionalised stupor.

Lost everything, and is only starting
 to wake up, a plane flying overhead
 the sound of the freeway, all life rushing past.

233 That's *your* problem

You're a government
You fix it
You're fucked

-377

You play out death

in every breath

you take
but where

are you taking them from

is a logical proposition
followed by a question
that's a question

for someone
deader than I

chapter minus 2

-2 It's as cold
 as it gets in the tropics
 (you carry your seasons inside)
 I unpack, on the bus to Waikiki, my baggage-laden brain
 after three months of throwing away
 memories

Except her photos
 they're in the mail, travelling behind me like the Chinese
 soul I was told of in Moscow: you set out
 on a trip and your soul arrives
 a day or two later, it's a package, an image
 an opening like the photos she took on that day from elsewhere

volcano-like the flows of tropical tongues of fern
 a canopy of shade beside
 a hot pond, her hair dripping Chinese black, floral eyes -
 three months away, I remember nothing
 a successful attempt to lose my mind
 opening the photos she said she'd send in the mail

4 The last time I wanted time to end
 I fell in love with you instead
 like a boat tipping over the edge
 of itself, I was floating
 right-way up, swift sailing so fast
 that the race of your desire
 sailing away from me (with
 you) walked around the corner
 shall I ever see
 hold your
 keep

-6 A three week long kiss
 my eyes shut and
 the roof the clouds
 the ceiling the skies

as if meditating
 with my lips
 on your lips

with your lips

on my lips

I stole a kiss

10 Why does the day turn to glass and you smash to bits us while
 I from the corner
 of the room
 boxed
 in like wallpaper
 attempting
 square patterns
 to smile
 out the gloss surface
 scrape the argument off our skin.
 In a family photo.
 (Our love's strung out on distant planets like drying negatives
 we're fighting and I'm
 just not here)
 The pain in painting is flesh gouged
 inches deep
 go and pain an inch deep
 canvas
 unframe the words behind faces
 speak
 to me of love

-16 The third person doesn't exist
 he's she's your shadow
 and so are they
 and no one behind me reading over these things
 no one behind me as I write this
 but You

26 Excluded from my own funeral

-42 Burying the body backward
 she conceived
 she came

Time wants nothing more
 than to imprison the thought

Flower boxes in his windows
 eyelids in the night
 gasp, as she came

her body is the key to his lock
the house a flying

68 I don't particularly
give a fuck about you Caesar.
I've no wish to please you.
I don't even care if
you're black or white.

Catullus, Carmen XCIII

-110 You jump
your body follows
it lands
you land too

178 Since we met I've been throwing away clothes:
that dark blue German jacket, given me by Thalia
in exchange, like all beginning love;

that Guatemalan dream coat
Indian-made, and carrying something
of another world in its pockets

empty though they were; and then that
old shirt I threw away too, borrowed off a friend's back
in Moscow - he'd come to visit and I missed home.

Serpents shed their coats like lies,
the past being one of them.
You're the apple of all time, thought Adam

sharpening his hair. You join me.
We dine. Into the future. I don't need
these old ties, either. You join me.

-288 Paolo and Francesca
reading together
the Book of Hours
fell to love

Her hand touching his
to turn the page
I'll be your page

said he

Stay your hand and feel
the hours that bound them apart
unfold in
to a volume of sighs
so quickened their passion
so out of breath

Be my Paolo, sweet reader
don't turn the page
stay my Francesca

book two

a multiple personality disordered *novel*

the fourteenth floor

Love is mind's feeling of its own unity

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Your face, my thane, is as a (*cube root of*) book where men
May read strange matters

Lady Macbeth

1. novel with bibliography

introduction (day 3)

day one

is Monday
and the time is 14.05

Monday

15:22

meanwhile

I think it's unwise to use movies as a guide to reality, don't you inspector?

Marco, Terror at the Opera (dir Dario Argento), 1988 **La**

vita nuova

a suicide in three parts

g writes :]

a was of wiry build, early to middle-aged, with short hair and a medium size flaccid penis. [NB *Characters are introduced in alphabetical order*]. He leant against an ibis and surveyed the rest of the wallpaper. The walls were clothed in a series of room-size photos of African savanna land scenes: grass plains, long horizons, an occasional undomesticated animal. Hmmm. **a** leant back and surveyed the rest of the room. People of all ages, genital size and hair colour were gathered in groups around a wooden trestle table. Upon it stood a black and white Cambrook™ urn. There were no clothes in this room, nor in any of the other five rooms connected to it. The colony took up the entire fourteenth floor of the Chelsea tower. **a** leant back against an ibis, and watched nudists drink tea.

e says :]

Trying to not look like he is looking, **a** glances over the bodies in the room (some male, some female, some young, old, some blond, grey, brunette, one blue-rinse) and wonders about prospects. **a** is a professional thief, who specialises in crowd work. Sipping his by-now lukewarm tea, **a** realises the full difficulty of estimating a person's relative worth by their nakedness alone. Hmmm. Not a good day. He goes to the toilet to ponder in privatealways a good place to ponder in private.

h cites :]

If God had meant us to be nudists, we would have been born with pockets.

quoted in Magnus Clarke, Nudism in Australia, A First Study, 1982, Deakin University Press, Warun Ponds, p.10.

[[613.1940994 CLAR](#) LOST OR STOLEN]

e says :]

Following a savanna land panel over to the doorwell, itself set within a wallpaper sunrise, pelicans gathering in the marshes, **a** goes down the corridor, and on the left discovers the bathroom. Which comprises: no door, four cubicles, no doors to any of them, no distinction between male and female. There are four bodies (**a**, already myopic, is finding it harder and harder to attribute individual features to the colony's inhabitants) within, all of whom greet the thief with warm smiles from their respective seated positions. Flush.

a finds himself on a still warm seat, staring out of the cubicle at the African continent. 'Seen any good films lately?' a friendly voice sings out from a neighbouring loo.

a invents an answer. Meanwhile he reads over a schedule of the colony's rules, neatly blue-tacked to the cubicle wall beside him.

a reads :]

The schedule read as follows:

*Male erections are strictly forbidden
and result in expulsion*

e says :]

With an involuntary laugh, **a** realises that this is the one place in the world in which his persistent and tormenting erectile failure will actually be of use. 'I really liked,' he continues, 'the scene between the nurse and the policeman, the way the camera focussed in on their clothing on the floor, the way he . . .'

a takes one last glance at the rules and proceeds to the sink, where the mirror momentarily reveals, among the two still squatting, an elderly blue-rinse. The thief stifles another laugh. Which the other two catch in the mirror. 'Acts like a textile,' the grey-hair mutters.

The thief suddenly feels embarrassed ('at least I haven't got an erection') and slinks out. He remembers, moving back down the sub-continental corridor, that he is here to work, that is, to pick-pockets. At this point, **b** brushes past **a**, brushing just a little too close in the narrow corridor. He

b

 feels her nipple touch his arm for a moment, and suddenly starts to get nervous. A tiger in the corner of his eye. How, **a** asks himself, thinking his way back to the problem in hand, do you pick pockets in a nudist colony?

g writes:]

b followed the corridor past the bathroom, thought momentarily of how she would look in the mirror and continued on her way, now passing a door on the right. Inside revealed four busy males, all four in baseball caps, and two females, both with paint brush in hand. The women were painting the sills of the room a bright green, while the

men were building more sills, and attending to the rolls of African Savanna land photo wallpaper. Two of the men were mixing glue, another had a hammer and the last a saw. The shrivelled penis of the man with the hammer swayed as he worked. One of the girls was singing, her breasts swaying too. **b** looked on at the group, who smiled at her, noticing her without noticing her, all their focus on the task at hand. A nudist colony working bee. The sound of hammering, swaying and singing.

b *dreams* :]

A claustrophobic peasant cottage, or a twentieth century bourgeois palace. On the fourteenth floor. The tableau suddenly comes to life:

soprano 1 [*paint brush in hand*]:

How neat your work, how strong the sill

mezzo-soprano (trouser role) [*holding hammer*]:

I take pride in my skill

soprano 1:

Your house must always be newly renovated

soprano 2:

I'm his wife, I see to that

bass [*squatting, looking up from glue mixing*]:

And what a good wife you must be

male chorus [*in baseball caps*]:

She takes pride in his skill

soprano 1 [*in aside*]:

Why did he abandon me for her?
 This whole day is a torture
 My grief is hammering beside me
 I paint the sill with my tears

soprano 2:

Our house is always freshly renovated

bass [*still mixing glue*]:

What a good wife you must be

mezzo-soprano [*still holding hammer*]:

I take pride in my skill

e says :]

At the thought of how do you pick pockets in a nudist **b**'s tight little body just brushed past him in the narrow corridor, **a**, now on the threshold to the tea room again, starts to get nervous. Trying to forget the bodies all around him, the thief is about to step back into the tea room when a sudden thought (*male erections are strictly forbidden*) stops him on the threshold. An Ilex plant to his side, a few mosquitos adorning the wall, those soft and tremulous breasts, **a** is starting to get hard. Inside he catches sight of a pair of inviting breasts, another's muscular legs, a pubic triangle moving toward him, someone's tanned breasts and thighs, as she turns on the tea urn. A set of ruby-red lips pursed in greeting, a lowering eyelash, nipples naked and (*whatever happened to his persistent and tormenting erectile failure?*) erect. 'You must be new here,' the woman sings out from her place by the urn, 'Why don't you come in and have a cup of tea? I'm the club's social secretary.'

c *thinks* :]

b thought, and just as soon forgot, about her mother.

Now at the opposite end of the corridor, she passes through to the parlour, remembering just who she is in the process, and how her hot little body, even here, has the power to turn heads and make pauses in conversation. **b** has been in the colony for only eight months, and has already had four men expelled, including one founding member. She is a student, and comes in on weekends, mainly to use the solarium; but also to enjoy the thrill of entering a room, and, even here, having all eyes upon her. **b** likes to make male nudists, so tantric and flaccid in their power to withstand the sight of myriad bare bodies, **b** likes to make them feel just that little bit awkward.

Like on her entrance to the parlour, where the mature men sit, smoke cigars and talk about repairs that need to be done around the place. Women are found here too, included of course, and even encouraged to take part in the conversation. But there is something just that little bit male about this space. The man from the tea room, fluffy grey chest hair running down to his pubes, is sitting here, his scrotal sack nestling on the red leather armchair, insisting that the African Savanna land photo wallpaper in the solarium needs to be reapplied. 'New wallpaper every six months, that's what I say.'

Men like him can't resist a glance in **b**'s direction. And the women know it too. They're always on the look out for unconscious erectile

activity. No one knows it more than **b**, brushing back her hair, and now on the threshold to the doorless parlour.

e says:]

About to introduce himself, fully erect manhood lodged into the lintel, wiry buttocks splayed to the world, **a** realises that he is on the verge of adding yet one more to the list of his crimes in this world. He stifles a laugh. But then catches sight of a brightly coloured bum-bag. A tiger in the corner of his eye. From which a vegetarian nudist is removing a sachet of herbal tea. The thief's erection lapses sufficiently to allow him to meet the outstretched hand and be welcomed into the tea room. An ibis to the left of him, a social secretary to the right, **a**, of wiry build, early to middle-aged, with short hair and an once more medium-size flaccid penis, regains his composure. He has a plan.

a reads:]

Inside the stolen bum-bag, **a** found the following card:

Neighbourhood Watch Meeting

*Public Meetings every
Wednesday 2.30 PM
All welcome*

d is feeling queasy:]

I have to remember, **b** reminded herself, to ring about the thing.

f *reflected* :]

The room in which **c** is pretending to act has mirrors on all sides. It's like the family consultation room in the psychiatric hospital. When you look in a mirror you see your left shoulder to the left and your right shoulder to the right. Only facing in the opposite direction. As if you have just turned around. But it's not the same as actually turning around, because then your left shoulder would be to the right of the person looking and your right shoulder to the left. Only you're the person looking. This is what it must be like to act. **c** is forty one, and still very attractive, only she doesn't like to look too closely in the mirror. Not so much in the psychiatric hospital where she works, nor even this acting studio, but rather in the fourteenth floor flat she inhabits, which only has the one small hand-held mirror. She only takes it out to check her make-up before going to work, or before coming here to pretend to act. To pretend to act because the play is still in rehearsal. To pretend to pretend to act because she isn't actually acting her part, which is Gertrude, but rather that of Ophelia, who swooned for real last rehearsal, blacked out and fainted. **c** is reading Ophelia's lines today, and thinking of mirrors and how much she dislikes them. Usually she doesn't think of them here. But today, playing a much younger role than usual, all the walls feel like hand-held mirrors and she's the person looking. Which makes her act like a bitch. I wasn't meant to say that. Only I feel that my head has a telephone booth in it and there are people trying to tear out sheets of the white pages to wrap bodies in anonymous lists of citizens starting with the letter **k** which doesn't exist. I wasn't meant to say that.

h cites :]

Suddenly you have a role to play and a task, the performing of which will highlight everything in its path. When you are given a difficult role to do - whether as an actor or in life - the effort that is summoned up is also going to throw out much that was of value before. Suddenly the task makes men of us: we are engaging all our equipment, all our mental faculties and courage to deal with it, and in dealing with it we also find much in our pre-role life that was insipid. Or the role brightens the light we carry in our minds - the searchlight that gets dim with constant self-interest. Now it is like a fire lighting everything in its path. Beware those who are exposed to it - nothing seems right again. Everything is vapid, silly, useless and pretend; only what is vital is worth living for and the meaning of life and the values for which you lay down your life suddenly become very clear. I suppose that this is what happens to Hamlet.

Stephen Berkoff, I am Hamlet, 1989, Faber, London, pp.43-4.

[\[822.3358 BERK](#) LOST OR STOLEN]
[\[792.028 BERK](#) LOST OR STOLEN]

d whispers:]

You are Ophelia and your role is to play to his role. It is like you are playing doctors and nurses again, as a child, or even at work this afternoon. It infuriates you, once again, to have to play support to another's stage. Like sometimes fucking. Even fucking can be like working, even acting, everywhere you just end up infuriated and living without. Like you want to set fire to the set and all the world around it. And yet a part of you knows that if that flame leaps from you into him, if he feels rubbed wrong, pricked and incensed by the anger that is in fact yours, if you can make him rage with the emotions you do, you might just manage to turn him into a man who is finally able to –

(It's almost your cue)

'- to act' you think, finishing your thought, before composing your now-naive features into a pre-psychotic innocence, 'Good my lord' on your lips. His 'To be or not to be' swathes its centre-stage way through to you and your bit part; you prepare, solicitude and care on your face, to bite back. We're watching you behind the scenes, you're almost on, you act.

c *thinks* :]

*Good my lord,
How does your honour for this many a day?*

I play this line innocently, with a girlish curtsy, and am pleased to find myself capable of it. It's better to begin as a nice girl. It's better not to act your age.

Hamlet mutters an inconsequential thank you. He'll keep.

*My lord, I have rememberances of yours
that I have longéd long to redeliver
I pray you now, receive them*

Again, innocence and entreaty, a well-trained stress on the longéd. Like a good and servile actress-mistress, I know, as I come close to my Hamlet ('I pray you now') just what to whisper between the lines: 'You were a lousy fuck,' I say, in a voice so soft that it will sound offstage like I'm simply reminding him of his reply. The amateur. Hamlet's face shakes slightly, and, composure regained, he with difficulty replies to Ophelia:

*No, not I,
I never gave you aught.*

No you didn't, did you. You were a lousy fuck, you middle-aged sot, two glasses of wine too many, and you bolted at six the next morning and have tried to forget ever since. *Actors sleep around a lot, you know.* You amateur. But I'll pretend it was wonderful. My pre-psychotic girliness once more. This will get him going:

*My honoured lord, you know right well you did
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made these things more rich. Their perfume lost*

I catch a glance mid-line in the mirrors around me: crowsfeet under the powder, wrinkles forming on the hands which reach out demurely to touch him. I age and this part, which is not mine, ages me. That bastard.

*Take these things again, for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There my lord.*

This said with a sadness that I don't mean but can't help. Bastard. 'Try making me come next time' I whisper, a lot louder, and if they can hear it offstage all the better.

Hamlet's look cuts into me like a knife. He's angry now. He'll act right through me, like a window. He'll stare through me, like a man in rage, like -

Ha, ha! Are you honest?

Are you fair?

That if you be honest and fair . . .

like a Hamlet.

I did love you once.

he says, and I'm not sure if in sorrow or scorn. Maybe I like him?

f *reflected* :]

The room in which **c** is pretending to act has mirrors on all sides, and a black arras behind which the rest of the cast stand. Hamlet is speaking in anger. **c**'s face casts multiple reflections in the mirrors, while the plot of the play makes multiple connections in her mind. This is what it must be like to reflect. **c** adopts a look of timidity, and reflects as follows: Ophelia has sex with Hamlet. Ophelia's father dies. Ophelia goes insane. Shakespeare thinks that if a girl has sex with a man, she will feel that she has killed her father, go insane, and then kill herself. **c** adopts a look of entreaty, and reflects as follows: If Hamlet were a man he would fuck me every night. He won't, because he's seen me play Gertrude, his mother. He's afraid of the woman who plays his mother because he knows she can also play Ophelia, his lover. That's why that bastard bolted at six the next morning and has tried to forget ever since. You amateur. **c** now adopts a look of despair, while a stage whisper of 'I came for Horatio' is audible behind the arras. Hamlet is in fury. He races around the room. He forces out the lines:

I have heard of your paintings well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig and you amble, and you lisp; you nickname God's creatures and make your wantonness your ignorance.

c reflects timidity, entreaty and despair in the mirror. In the mirror of her mind, she sees herself and Hamlet in bed again. Her face painted young again. His desire renewed. That is what it must be like to act like a woman. I found her in the white pages under 'c'. No one has called yet.

g writes :]

b lay on her back on one side of the bed. The solar panels whirred above her. African savanna land photo wallpaper ran from the floor to the ceiling. **b** slowly ate a banana, and thought about her next politics tutorial. One bite every ten minutes. Nudists walked past the doorless solarium every so often, the males immediately glancing away. **b** had a copy of Australian Parliamentary Democracy open face downward and covering her pubis like a bikini bottom. Next tutorial, she decided, she would make a radical attack upon Social Justice Christianity. A middle-aged woman, brown hair, huge breasts and flabby thighs came in to share the solarium. She lay down and began reading a politically offensive Woman's Weekly magazine. **b** finished her banana and left.

d believes:]

A black Japanese dressing screen, scattered with delicate orange blossoms, beckons to kimono has settled in small bowl of water.

d

an open door beyond. A black silk folds near the screen. A candle in Floating rose petals. Steam rising

*like mist from the bathroom where **d** is showering. Autumnal rain. The bathroom mirror is an image of settling mist. **d**, holding a disposable razor like a paper fan, peers therein. The music rises.*

d : Un bel di, tornera, tornera.

j *cooks:*]

d, kimono-clad, exhausted, and seated so as not to swoon from the steam, lights a cigarette and puts her novel down on the matt. Not that she's been reading. She is seated on a cushion, smoke rises, her head is now dizzy with the fumes. She looks at the phone. It does not ring. Now applying make-up, eye-liner, mascara, she sees her hands busy once more. She looks out the window where a helicopter is buzzing butterfly-like outside, through the fourteenth floor skyscape. Or like a flower petal on the wind, it moves back and forth, seems to float on the breezes. A cotton-bud cloud moves in. Wiping the excess eyeliner away, **d**, still stoned from the steam, remembers she can't remember remembers it's time to eat.

b *dreams:*]

*Lowering eyelids, with wrists and hands gesturing the motions of the aria, **d** places a delicate foot on the washbasin. A candle in a small bowl of water. Floating chrysanthemums. The music rises.*

d: Un bel dì, tornera, tornera

*Singing through the mists of steam, legs lathered and caressed, **d** begins to shave.*

g *writes:*]

Wrapping her kimono around her and fastening it tight to accentuate her little breasts, **d** reflected that cooking is all about appearances.

e says:]

d applies lip-stick in the reflection of a butter-knife, fantasises about being a geisha, swoons slightly from last night's night-club. My God, handshakes, the things a man will do to be accommodating, a gracious smile, abut now - an appointment to keep. **d**, still stoned from the, remembers he can't remember don't let them find out that you used to do money-shots, back as a man, in porn movies for fifty bucks a pop, remember you're feeling queasy, put out that cigarette, you'd better eat.

d whispers:]

Even when you're not cooking. Just making some take-away sushi. In a breeze. Whip from the fridge a platter of ready-sliced ten cm strips of cucumber, carrot, red pepper, fried egg and raw salmon. While the nails dry. The salmon is hot pink, cool and delicious. Try a little. Then some more. **d**'s red nails now reach into the cupboard for a pack of dried seaweed, bright green cellophane. Sea green. A little queasy. A glance in the mirror, instant eyeliner and smile. **d** remembers where was I like the sort he used to wrap presents -

c thinks:]

Suddenly feeling dizzy again as she does so, **d**, whose hands are these? - I have to act like a mental health -

d *whispers back:*]

Make an indentation in the rice one-third of the way in and line it with strips of vegetables, egg and raw fish. The salmon goes particularly well with the rice, and the fingernails, which then whip some Japanese Mayonnaise from the fridge in its convenient squeeze plastic container. If you can't find any Mayonnaise -

g *writes:*]

A flashback **d** remembered the tin of lube they used to pass around the dingy flat, floral still-life on the walls, stained carpet with camera crew lights action crowding in -

h *cites:*]

Ordinary video porncould betaken to task for depicting unrealistically utopian sex. Sex is regularly shown as consensual, mutually pleasurable, initiated mostly by women and divorced from context or consequences. X-rated videos are set in an erotic never-never land with everyone always in the mood, without headaches, and with simultaneous orgasms as common as handshakes.

Robert J. Stoller and I.S. Levine, Coming Attractions, the Making of an X-rated Video, 1993, Yale University Press, New Haven.

[\[363.47 STOL](#) LOST OR STOLEN]

j *paints:*]

Now take the tube of fluoro-green wasabi and apply liberally to the ready to be rolled nori-roll. It's just horseradish. Try a little. While the nails dry. Then some more. Now roll the bamboo matt, with rice and ingredients inside, and then (**d** momentarily thinks of attempting some nori-ori gami, then remembers an appointment to keep, her tongue hot and burning) lick the fold. Let sit five minutes and slice into sushi pieces to place alongside the white rice noris you already prepared forty-five minutes ago, before your shower. Arrange the white noris into a rectangle, with a round dot of red ones in the centre, bow to the Japanese TV audience, then serve to the assembled company.

c *thinks:*]

Or double-take, retreat to the kitchen like a Stepford wife, suffocate the noris in glad wrap, stuff them into your handbag, smile at the mirror, then walk out the door of this fourteenth floor flat, unfit for human habitation notice recently rescinded on the proviso that usage of electrical appliances is strictly forbidden. But not before throwing the noris which didn't stick, a left over mess of red rice, rubbery tuna, nail polish and lube mistaken for mayonnaise, throwing it all out the window to feed the seagulls, or helicopters, or passing suicides. A glance in the mirror, instant eyeliner and smile. But I don't own a telephone – I mean television, **d** thinks.

g *writes :*]

b bent over the sink, and pouting her lips in the mirror, proceeded to redden her lips with the lipstick she kept suspended from a silver chain

round her neck. Her little arse poked out, accentuating the supple curvature of her body, nineteen year-old breasts perfectly pendulous, and swaying slightly. A retired tire salesman stared at her from one of the cubicles, then quickly turned to the *male erections are strictly forbidden and result in expulsion* schedule posted beside him. **b** was in no rush. She was about to go and meet her professor for the first time. It's best to be late in such instances.

g writes:]

e found psychiatry pretty silly. But he was on his best behaviour ever since **c** caught him in the mirrored observation room with thata nervous shudder. **e** continued down the corridor. He tried to concentrate on the report again:

*scored 7*3'1'5-+:33#0 to the right of #8 on the MMPI-II, with a percentile equivalent for the K-corrected T-score of 83. High T scores are generally associated with attempts to deny vulnerability and psychopathology. However, some experts consider that the K-corrected T-score should be used with caution in identifying faking-good cases. Even normals have been known to*

ever since **c** caught him in the mirrored observation room with**e** had thought the door was locked, that it was just him, a one-way mirror, pants between his ankleshis white lab-coat, his fingers caressing her hair, a family therapy session in full swing on the other side of the glass, her tongue on hisA nervous shudder:

Even normals have been known to score highly, particularly in combination with a low 5 on the Masculinity-Femininity scale (some masochism) and a high score on the Pd1 (family discord).

d *understands:*]

'Even normals,' **e** laughed, at the sudden thought of his boss, the stupid bastard who wrote this trash, with his nervous stutter and his tendencies to stare compulsively and alternately at the breasts and crotch of whomever he was addressing.

'Normals' thought **e**, with an inward laugh, like all his laughs. **e** had always kept up appearances, always marched to the tune of the current idiocy upon which his job depended. As now, marching down the corridor, digesting this psych report:

In generalpersonality profile seems free of contraindicants, though the High Sc6 (bizarre sensory experiences) indicates a larger than usual presence of unusual thoughts

and keeping up the appearance

j *cooks:*]

e has early to middle-aged features, his sides are slightly greying, his blue eyes clinically blank and unrevealing. From another angle, the youthfulness of his face is suddenly apparent, breaking through an otherwise respectful portrait in oils like a laugh.

of a middle-aging psychiatrist, cynical and bored as *per* professional protocol.

e was married to a mousy librarian, lovely but dull. They met at the university, where she was studying nineteenth century English literature, and soon settled into the late twentieth century: dull parties with semi-academics, witty wit and desexualised dinners. With other like-minded couples. Perhaps she reserved her passion for the books, **e** wasn't quite sure. And either way their affection and love had deepened over the years to a soft red-wine sort of maturity. In **e**'s mind, their love, which was real, was like a valuable object, a collector's item; you keep a wine so long it becomes a shame to waste it, so you just hold on to the same old bottled up relationship, a warm glow on the inside and a general lacking without. If *I* were a drag queen, **e** mused, I'd call myself *Anne Hedonia*, I'd wear grey track-suit pants, and I'd be as blank as a pad of involuntary admission slips.

That's how **e**'s life seemed to him, marching down the corridor and looking over the edge of a psych report:

though the High Sc6 (bizarre sensory experiences) indicates a larger than usual presence of unusual thoughts

g writes:]

If only we could have some unusual thoughts, thought **e**, looking up and now noticing just ahead an open door, and a pair of fine nurse's legs, or rather thighs beneath that skirt, breasts and eyes now coming out from the lintel -

f reflected:]

d was thinking, or at least walking, laterally. **d** was thinking laterally because she was not sure if she had just left her flat, or just arrived here in the hospital. That is to say, the last half hour felt like one long corridor, and **d** was still walking. **d** was walking laterally because it is impossible to walk down a corridor because then it would be a chute. This raises problems in physics because **a** was simultaneously walking up the same corridor from the opposite direction. Or rather down the same corridor. Or rather neither. So **a** was walking laterally too. And thinking sideways. An admin notice caught his eye:

a reads:]

Nurses are reminded that all jewellery is to be removed from patients prior to treatment.

f reflected:]

a reasons that such a notice will only exist because the rule it states is regularly infringed. Therefore, the best place to lift jewellery from patients will be in the pre-op rooms where successfully concealed items (an ear ring in a nostril, a garnet amid the pubes, a wedding ring up the arse) will be easy to remove from the anaesthetised bodies. But **a** has no intention of stealing, he is just day-dreaming. And he has an appointment to keep.

He continues traversing the corridor in the direction of **d**, who is walking contrariwise and trying to work out if today is yesterday. Whereas **e** is moving along a third corridor, and reading a psych report, and will sire my child, and his member is more gigantic than the trunks of the elephants guarding the Taj Mahal, the name the

Christ-child has chosen for me when I am born again through His graces. The three, if continuing in the same trajectory, will collide at the T intersection of the three corridors, in precisely twenty seconds.

a reads:]

In **d**'s handbag, the following card:

*Gender Reassignment Surgery
Outpatient Assessment Unit*

*Your next session is:
Tuesday, 2.30 PM*

In **a**'s inner hat-band, the following card:

Erectile Dysfunction Clinic

*Your next session is:
Monday, 2.30pm*

In **e**'s front pocket:

Neighbourhood Watch Meeting

*Public Meetings every
Wednesday 2.30 PM
All welcome*

c says:]

e's thoughts turned to his unproblematic adolescence, the years he spent living with his parents and siblings in a well-to-do apartment, the general air of laughter breathed in by all. **e**'s thoughts turned to

the buildings outside the family flat, where he began attending the near-by university, studying medicine -

a larger than usual presence of unusual thoughts

then psychiatry, and marrying a lovely but dull girl who became a librarian. Perhaps she reserved her passion for the books, **e** wasn't quite sure. Now **e** walked up and down these same corridors, daily, just as a writer finds himself typing the same phrase, daily, a general lack of imagination glistening from the white corridor walls, occasionally alleviated by an open door to the side, a pair of nurse's legs, imagine the thighs beneath, youth still in those features, a girl's eyes flash at him provocatively – more than provocatively – as **c**, breasts forward and coming closer, now whispers directly in **e**'s ear, 'Was she psychotic when you fucked her, or just underage?'

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d *understands* :]

e startled, turns, to see **r** rushing toward him with a copy of the A-K White Pages; **f**, the 16 year old in-patient who seduced him, her tunic unbuttoned and opening, those gorgeous eyes; who seduced him to follow her into that room, just to see what she wanted, really, and then -

a moment that a woman will never experience when someone just grabs your cock and begins sucking it, and you don't know what to do but let her do whatever right now and as long as she wants, and she's dragged you into the mirrored observation room and you, she's so young, and her hair in my fingers, her head in my hands, as she took me into her mouth and -

f rushes closer and begins calling out to **e**, who casts a terrified glance at **c**, nervous shudder now returning to plumb through his body like an elevator -

b *dreams:*]

c trained in dance, voice, movement and nursing. She has starred in many amateur productions, since her first roles as a child actor some 35 years ago. Stage credits include Hedda Gabler, in Richard III. For this production of Hamlet, she is relinquishing the role of Gertrude, which has won her critical acclaim on two separate occasions now, to appear in the role of Ophelia.

but **c** is now looking in the other direction, while **f** calls out to **e**, still brandishing the A-K in florid psychosis. **e** is now backing away from **f** rushing toward him, and feeling a sudden rush as he does so of realisation. There is a sudden desire

I *write:*]

that takes you every so often in the middle of an everyday anhedonic existence with a mousy wife and a tedious life of laughing-behind-marching-to-the-tune, that sudden desire in the midst of one's movements up and down these white corridors to shatter your own mirror, to destroy your own world, to throw your career out the window, to fuck yourself up -

'Shhh,' he whispers hopelessly.

f repeats, now much louder, 'that I am bearing, the body and word of our union, by holy fellatio, and his name shall be written' -

e is backing away, backing still further down the corridor, his expensive leather shoes slipping on the freshly polished lunatic asylum linoleum, white floors and walls all around him.

'Sh sh shh, my darling' he whispers, now terror-stricken that the chief psychiatrist, who combs these corridors as if looking for lice, will overhear and have him castrated, or at least debarred. **e** remembers, absurdly, that he hasn't paid his last insurance premiums.

and the jail sentence for sex with a minor, or an involuntary, is that rape?, and in jail they rape you, they stick Playboy pin ups on your back with drawing pins into your bare flesh and then anally rape you, these huge psychopathic men who haven't had a woman for so -

The T intersection looms ever-larger behind him, and meanwhile **a** is daydreaming about various ways to steal back the payment for his treatment, while **d** is wondering whether she has already had her appointment, or is on her way there, and **e** is suddenly remembering how he came last night in **f**'s mouth the very moment **c** barged in upon them, only last night, he came, and his mind blew threw the ceiling, and the door opened, and the mirror was like it was exploding and -

d *whispers:*]

The collision of **a**, **d**, and **e** causes items to fly everywhere. **e**'s copy of the psych-report on **d** separates into fifty sheets of paper spread all over the floor, the thief drops his hat, while **d**, high-heel high and tottering over, **g** does so, taking the other two with her. Her handbag falls to the floor, spilling its contents, among them something which, with the momentum, rolls rapidly toward who is on his way back from a ritual satanic abuse assessment and therapy session. **g** slips on a sheet of paper, only just manages to hold himself up. He stands up straight again, casting a look (making a lightning mental mark '**e**' on next month's roster: there are bladder control workshops to be given in the psychogeriatric department, and the style will be cognitivist) of pure evil at **e** in the process. **g** is the head of the ward and does not like to trip up on copies of his own psych reports.

e *says help:*]

g stares down to discover a blue dildo wrapped in red rice and green seaweed paper, the whole tied with a strip of hot pink salmon. He is confused. Whereas **d** is tripping off her dial. 'I made it specially for you doctor. It's Japanese. When I was an actor – I mean an *actress* – I used to play samurais – I mean geishas to samurais. The catering was always lovely. I mean. What nice colours at least. Um, am I late for my appointment?'

The psychiatrist picks up the offending article, attempting as he does so, to pretend that he hasn't just got some white sticky mayonnaise like stuff all over his fingers. **d** suddenly remembers that there was an acid tab in the Bloody Mary. A whole tab. And **g** is the psychiatrist she has to impress with her ability to act like a woman if he is to approve her sex change. Standing up and pulling down her skirt over her muscled legs, **d** tries to smile demurely, and says, 'Um, it's a present, um, for you Doctor.'

'Twenty-four hours early,' replies **g**, now rather less than impressed with **d**'s womanly competence. Only, he reflects, studies have shown that women tend to be forgetful and indifferent to matters of worldly concern, so this could all be proof of **d**'s womanly nature. Perhaps she is not 'faking-good' after all.

'Today,' he finally says, having forgotten all about the in his fingers, 'I'm dealing with erectile dysfunction. Now, as for matters at hand,' He turns to the thief. **a** stifles a laugh. **g** assumes an air of brusque politeness, 'I'm ready to see you now.'

g then notices **d**'s attire – it is not womanly. He shouts 'Don't ever come in here wearing slack again. If you're serious about this operation, you better start acting like a woman at all times! At all times!'

d *is queasy:*]

b, to **e**'s horror, is now walking up to **g** and repeating, like an opera aria, 'I have decided to alert the relevant authorities that I am

bearing, the body and word of our union, by holy fellatio, and his name shall be written' -

h cites:]

I think it's unwise to use movies as a guide to reality, don't you inspector?

Marco, Terror at the Opera (dir. Dario Argento), 1988

[[791.4372 TERR](#) SEVEN DAY LOAN LOST OR STOLEN]

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g writes:]

The shelves were close, the walkways between them narrow. From the gap between the 373 shelf and the 339 shelf below, **h** or rather her raised arm and curving breast, was visible as she reached to put a 362.21 back in its place. She raised her other arm, and now on tip-toe, made room to slot the item in. A second breast entered into view. Then she lowered herself back onto her heels, blue spectacles now becoming visible, her blue-tint lashes lowering behind them. An audible click, as **h** turned on her heels and disappeared from sight, leaving rows and shelves of indistinct books to fill the void her body left behind.

j tastes:]

a's portrait is a series of polaroid close-ups montaged together to give an identi-kit look to his features which are: short hair receding around a balding scalp like a woman's headband, focussed eyes, a craggy nose, a sensitive, finely drawn mouth. **a**'s wiry body is appended below, captured in a single polaroid which, when montaged onto the close-ups of his face suddenly seems perversely small. **a** looks like life is something that just happened to him while he wasn't looking. But his eyes are focussed on something.

d *cries:*]


b suddenly collapses in the doorway of **c**'s office. Holding herself up against the lintel, and getting desperate, she asks the nurse, who is busy speaking on the telephone, 'How do I call the police?'

'Oh, I don't know, ask your boyfriend,' **c** says, glancing in the direction of **e**'s office.

'Are you speaking to **k**?'

'Get out!'

I *writes:*]

assert the right, in accordance with the  Berne Convention, 1984, to be accredited the sole author of this work.

h *cites:*]

Once he was discovered banging on the piano like a schoolboy and saying, 'I've written four operas in a week.'

Francis Toyne, 'Donizetti and 'Lucia di Lamermoor', Booklet to Lucia di Lamermoor CD, 1986, EMI, Hayes (England)

[\[AV 10081\]](#) LOST OR STOLEN]

e *says help:*]

g shuffles through his girly cards once more, slowly, lovingly. He can taste them with his eyes. They keep him sane.

Now: work to do. **g** must eat his sandwich. There is an office all around him, which is his, it has four walls, a roof and a floor, a mahogany desk, a window –

I writes:]

Out the window **g** glances a moment sees a breast nimbus cloud beckoning torrents of rain. He blinks. The blue sky reasserts its grip.

a neat row of diagnostic manuals on the desk, a chair for patients (lower than his), a glass coffee table, a row of shelves, that pile of girly cards in front of you. **g** takes a blue ribbon and slowly, lovingly, sorts the cards into a neat pile, then ties them together. He places the bundle into a sealable plastic bag, removes his latex gloves, throws the gloves in the bin, and then turns to lock the cards in the drug safe behind him, next to the Lithium. They keep him sane.

g writes :]

b was in the middle of another lap of the nudist club swimming pool. Various nuclear families clustered on benches around the walls of the pool, in groups of male, female and two to three children. **b** was doing freestyle, which showed her rising little breasts and taut stomach to best advantage. A middle-aged economist with a global charity

corporation began talking very seriously to his nuclear family about the rising PH content of the swimming pool. His eyes focussed intently on the water. Now turning for another lap, **b** began to backstroke. She was about to meet her professor for the first time and was in no hurry.

j is next **d** whispers:]

Work to do. **g** must eat his sandwich. **g** reads while eating, but not while preparing his sandwich, which he does as follows: Take two slices white bread from packet. Spread a layer of Flora™ margarine on each, evenly to the crust. Now place a lovingly pre-masticated portion of chicken breast on one of the slices and dollop with mayo. Place the other slice on top, slice diagonally, and then strangle, sorry wrap with glad wrap I'm glad wrap with I'm the chief psychiatrist wrap with glad I'm glad wrap. Slide the lot into a sealable plastic bag.

Work to do. **g** must eat his sandwich. While eating his sandwich **g** must read something anything today its this month's Woman's Weekly lifted surreptitiously from the waiting room an article on weight loss. But while eating and reading **g** remembers that he has someone waiting. Not there is any personal concern in this. But work is work to do. So **g** will eat and read and prepare for his next patient at the same time.

He begins by removing from his desk drawer some psych tests, taking care, a bite, not to get any mayo on them, while the article proceeds, another bite, to the question of post-natal stretchmarks. **g** removes a ten gauge syringe from the drawer, another bite, the chicken steadily

re-masticated into a homely mulch in his mouth, while large women rejoice on becoming before and after smaller. The article continues, a new set of latex gloves in **g**'s hand, a gulp, another gulp, stethoscope around his neck once more, the sandwich is consumed. **g** wipes the mayo off the magazine with a bit of surgical gauze, the materials on his desk now stand neatly arrayed, and he finishes lunch by opening, over the top of the Woman's Weekly, a manilla folder file, which itself opens on a personal details page, and the patient in question is named **k**. I wasn't meant to say that.

h writes:]

Moreover it was during the composition of Lucia that he first began to suffer from the headaches that were the prelude to the nervous breakdown and subsequent insanity that clouded the end of his life.

Francis Toye, 'Donizetti and 'Lucia di Lamermoor', Booklet to Lucia di Lammermoor CD, 1986, EMI, Hayes (England)

[\[AV 10081\]](#) LOST OR STOLEN]

d cries²:]

b suddenly collapses in the doorway of **c**'s office. Holding herself up against the lintel, and getting desperate, she asks the nurse, who is busy speaking on the telephone, 'How do I call the police?'

'Oh, I don't know, ask your boyfriend,' **c** says, glancing in the direction of **e**'s office.

'Are you speaking to **k**?'

'Get out!'

b *dreams:*]

f (soprano), *taking the hospital foyer as her palace vestibule, and still carrying the Good Book, moves operatically between a public telephone, which she repeatedly and unsuccessfully dials, the waiting bench where a* (counter-tenor) *sits, the open door to the office of c* (mezzo-soprano), *herself on the telephone, and the door to the office of e* (tenor), *locked.*

Now raising the A-K White Pages and dancing with it to her chest.

Now swooning at a point midway between a's bench and c's office. e meanwhile pokes his head out fearfully from his.

Now turning to address a, holding the white pages out to him.

f (soprano, counter-tenor, tenor & bass) *plays a whole crowd of priests, army generals, slaves and princesses in the following triumphal scene, set in the Ancient Near East, or on the threshold to the office of c* (mezzo-soprano), *who is still on the telephone.*

d *cries*³:]

b suddenly collapses in the doorway of **c**'s office. Holding herself up against the lintel, and getting desperate, she asks the nurse, who is busy speaking on the telephone, 'How do I call the police?'

'Oh, I don't know, ask your boyfriend,' **c** says, glancing in the direction of **e**'s office.

'Are you speaking to **k**?'

'Get out!'

e says help:]

'You don't know how to use a telephone?' **b** asks. Her pyjama top is only half buttoned up, her cleavage white, nubile white. **b**'s teenage breasts are eye-level to the thief and now looming closer to his face.

'Ummm, no' **a** says.

An awkward pause. The police!

f reflected:]

Behind the scenes, **b** reasoned as follows: to call the police it says 'DIAL triple O' which opens up two dead ends: 1) if 'O' is zero, then three times zero = zero, but when you dial zero nothing happens; 2) if 'O' is o, then it means the MNO button, which is 6, but that would make triple 6, which = 216, and if you dial 216 nothing happens. There was a film about Dial M for Murder. So dial O for oral pregnancy will work. doesn't work. should work. will work. doesn't work. should work. Ask the psychiatric registrar to fix the telephone, because he can fix the switchboards in people's heads by coming in my mouth. **b** is now on the threshold of **c**'s -

I writes:]

Out the window **e** sees endless blue seas, a lilo of clouds, a place for him there out under the sun and floating floating away, a window cleaner's strong jaw and angular features, dark

black hair, deeply tanned chest, a half open shirt . . .

f *will reflect:*]

f was just a reflection.

b enters **e**'s office, closing the door behind her. To **e**'s distress. **b** asks, 'How do I call the police?'

e is speechless, backed against the wall, a picture of his wife next to him that he hasn't noticed in years. **b** comes closer, caressing **e**'s chest through the St Laurent Shirt, flicking his tie aside. **b** giggles, and the look in her eyes is the abyss **e** has spent his whole life circling around and avoiding, '- now that I'm on the verge of making contact with -'

For some reason **e** has a memory of the film The Story of O. He trips over a rug in his terror, as he attempts to get away from **b**, glances back at the window cleaner, then races for the door, charges out of his office, leaving the psychotic teenager in his place. Still wearing his lab coat, forgetting his wallet, his pulse bursting (what if **c** tells **g** that it actually happened with **b**), the idea of jail, into the hallway, and the sound of **b**'s '- with **k**. I have decided to alert the relevant -' following him into the foyer, **e** suddenly realises he has no idea where he is running to . . .

Another 14th floor.

a *reads by ear:*]

The transcript of **c**'s phone conversation is as follows:

- Hello St Sebastian's Public
- Yes
- Yes, every Wednesday
- Because it seems a good thing for a woman to do?
- Oh, so you like being womanly?
- Really?
- Oh look I don't care, I'll put you down on the - Where are you calling from?
- A supermarket? It sounds very quiet for a supermarket.
- You do the shopping every Monday?
- It's good for your figure? What's that splashing?
- Hold please.
- Oh well, I suppose I should start working.
- Yes I know
- Now you look after yourself. Try making a pass at his brother. Never fails. Or his best friend.
- Bye now
- So you're in the supermarket. How old are you, dear?
- You have a rather deep voice for your age.
- Have you ever tried eating chalk?
- Yes, I thought so.
- That's fine, we won't say anything about it.
- Oh look, lets just say I've seen all shapes and sizes.
- Now you enjoy your shopping, and we'll see you on Wednesday.
- Hi there, just thought you might like to run over some of those lines before Wednesday.

f *reflected:*]

Another 14th floor.

But either way university life did not seem promising. The 'Please do not leave belongings unattended' signs in the toilets,

the lifts and the corridors betokened heavy competition. And **a**, who did not need to reason to arrive at this conclusion, as it was the structure of his reason in general, did not like to compete. Unlike **I**. I mean me. I mean O. *Ora e per sempre, addio.* I mean zero. The number I saw when I looked down and out zero all the way down.

2. prac report

2.1. hypothesis

the 14th floor: an hypothesis

Most of the time love speaks in prose. Me too. The 14th Floor is inhabited by a second novel, this one a first person affair. Colour page segments bloom at various points from the scientific work, and the page numbers struggle to catch up. Here you will discover a *haibun*, or prose diary with *haiku*, a distant echo of Matsuo Basho's Narrow Road to the Interior (1991), but here high-rise and rather more twisted. These narrow paths of colour will trace the narrative of someone wandering through the corridors of the first novel. The narrator will simply see things, whatever that means: views out the window, glimpses of passing helicopters, or butterflies, prose interiors, deictic instants, brief, already gone.

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And their reflections which last a little longer. This second novel, the working title of which is Narrow Road to the Exterior, may perhaps open or close as follows:

Envelope in hand, I stood by a winter window near the doorway to the administration office, uncertain, like someone off in the distance. I thought of another window, the friend's flat where I live this week, of love and killing yourself, why one always seems to reflect the other. Out the open window, and fourteen flights down, I threw the first draft of this narrow road:

Anderson's Imagined Communities homogenous empty time all bound by love and by travel both ego-syntonic activities like the syllogistic Socrates is one of us all of us are nationals therefore Socrates is a national strictly homologous to Peirce's triadic sign a habit like Lacan's love makes a sign says if $A=B$ and $B=C$ then $A=C$ we shift to Hegel's Phenomenology a work of mourning overcoming indwelling with the rises like every day morning negative conclude with appropriate quote from Basho cry curriculum vitae have drink submit to application fall

A wall of words, falling fourteen flights down, weighed-down butterfly dying. I forgot to add the question that rises up to haunt me as day, burnt through, flickers, turns to night, to haunt me by adding: *No. 364 : Is a bit of white paper with black lines on it like a human body?* Uncertain, like someone off in the distance.

I turned, as if I were a page, back into the room. White walls and sit-com lighting cast me once more into the blankness of it all. Why call *this* bit of paper number 364, as if it were the door to a flat, an open winter window flat? Why make *this* proposition fall on *this* page (Wittgenstein, 1958, p.115e). Why a number? Why make it so cold comfort clear that we're all cast to leap out the window, or at least die, or fall in love, on one of the 365 days of the year, excepting leap years? There's nothing number than a number.

Inside there's a picture of the pond where Ophelia lands on the wall hanging by the telephone table.

All the landscapes here are interiors. They make you reflect, like an inside-out Basho, staring, *sun high overhead*, at the three-mile bay at Matasushima, to reflect on *islands on top of islands, islands like mothers with baby islands on their backs, islands cradling islands in the bay*.

The pond is really quite pretty, not yet frozen over, like a human body, with lines on it. Ophelia's in company, her numbness thaws, she floats amid

philosophic ducks thinking being qua qua

A question: does love leap out the window or in? I graffiti flying ducks, in ball-point pen, on the wall by the phone. Little picture propositions. There's someone - I get butterflies - I could call about this:

*I said, teach me to hold on
I'll teach you to let go
but hold me all the same*

Your poem, do you remember, it was only last week? Hello, this is proposition number 364, do you recall?, you were the roof and I was the floor and we fucked like two houses meeting inside of each other. Do you remember?, you turning into my arms and legs the table, the bath overflowing, the bed flooding with ponds and pools of you do you remember?, *call waiting*, do you recall?, *hold please hold please*, recall me proposing?, *hold please*, hello?, *hold please hold me please hold please* hello

I received a call on a phone like this once - all phones are like this once really - and all the life within me drained out the window butterflies dying ducks drowning islands of joy disappearing is a bit of paper a picture of reality a body a window frozen over.

This second novel, the working title of which is Narrow Road to the Exterior, may perhaps open or close as follows: Whose grave is still unmade. These black lines flow for her.

Tears are rivers, fourteen stories up, they drown you with words, they cleanse you with white paper, they make you blink with everything un-containable and dewy new, they might just bear colour, they lead to the exterior . . .

I close the envelope, which you perhaps open, perhaps close, to find a letter to her, fourteen stories of love, dewy new epitaphs, blue and gold translucent letters, a river is washed to sea . . .

*hold please hold please hold please hold please hold me please hold please hold please
hold please hypothesis*

the 14th floor: an hyperthesis

Here it seems that we cannot say: 'if $A = B$, and $B=C$, then $A=C$,' for instance. And this sort of trouble goes through the subject. Or suppose you want to speak of causality in the operation of feelings. 'Determinism applies to the mind as truly as to physical things.' This is obscure because when we think of causal laws in physical things we think of experiments. We have nothing like this in connection with feelings and motivation.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Notes by Rush Rhees, after a conversation, Summer 1942

The goal of my research is to generate a working model of the mind.

The 14th Floor, an Hyperthesis will take the form of a novel, set on various fourteenth floors of buildings all across a city like Melbourne or Sydney, or both. This cross-section is intended to offer to investigation a socioscope, as in Tolstoy or Dickens, but here high-rise, and rather more twisted. The point is that the fourteenth floor is usually in fact the thirteenth - not that the number thirteen has any power of its own, but rather that the very act of erasing and writing over it makes living there rather strange. After all, nothing happened, did it? This seems to be the place to write about neurosis and psychosis.

*(Here
optic nerves
dangle
they are open poppies
in the evening
air)*

I must have blinked

With Wittgenstein, I hold that a model of the mind can only be realised through scientific experimentation. Contra Wittgenstein, I believe that this condition can be fulfilled. The Doctorate of Creative Arts at the University of Technology, Sydney is the appropriate site in which to enact this project because it offers the facilities in which to hypothesise and conduct *experimental literature*.

This last claim may seem facile, but then, so is the typical picture of scientific method within the humanities. *Experiment* and *experience*, both derived from the Latin *experiri*, were formerly (in English, as in Latin) synonymous. Yet if an experiment is an experience, it can only become a *datum*, and thereby an inductive conclusion, through a semiotic process. The result of an experiment is, as Charles Saunders Peirce notes, none other than the interpretation of the experience to which it gives rise in its percipient. In reading experimental phenomena the scientist imports the series of ‘logical interpretants’ which act to turn atoms in a chamber, or letters on a page, into signs (1955a, p. 277). It is not that the series of results thus articulated could ever be totalised; none ‘can be the final logical interpretant, for the reason that it is itself a sign of that very kind that has itself a logical interpretant’ (p.277). The accumulation of scientific knowledge is rather the consolidation of certain habits of reading: ‘each new instance that is brought to the experience that supports an induction goes to strengthen that association of ideas - that inward habit - in which the tendency to believe in the inductive conclusion consists’ (p.278). The determinism Wittgenstein would impute to ‘causal laws in physical things,’ and so model in an ‘*if A = B, and B=C, then A=C*’ format, is itself a habit of reading.

*Cutting my face while shaving
is
cutting my face while shaving
in his mirror
deflects my father shaving
too close to curb
shatters and that is my face*

Now my reader, to give the analogy its proper form, is to be understood as a scientist reading results into his / her experience of the experiment I construct. I want to use the 14th Floor to present my history of psychosis. The test, to be verified by each individual reader, is to see - either *pro* or *contra* Wittgenstein - whether a *model of the mind* is supportable on such fourteenth floor grounds. You, as objective reader and judge of this application, will doubtless apply a similarly experimental methodology to assess the validity (yes or no) of these paragraphs. My history of psychosis was my experience of another’s psychosis. Being stuck in a room with someone else going off their brain is enough to confuse subjective and objective genitive, not to mention life and all else that

rests upon a grammatical structuring. The transitivity of both the possessive and the genitive in the above phrase underlines and exemplifies that mode of semiosis which objectivist science tries to avoid recognising at all costs. For it is possible to fall into words. Peirce describes

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another unit of signification (in contrast, but certainly not strict contrast, to the *logical interpretant*, which it functions to call forth) as an *index* (plural, *indices*): ‘it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the sense of memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand’ (1955b, p.107). What I want to put into the hands holding this page is the sort of text that ‘anything which startles us is an index in so far as it marks the junction between two portions of experience’ (pp.108-9). Another word for *indices* could be *data* (the moment they impel you to impute meaning to them). For my reader, to give the analogy its proper form, is to be understood as a scientist reading results into his / her experience of the experiment I construct.

Compare the realm of language Roman Jakobson and Grete L  bbe-Grothues (Jakobson and L  bbe-Grothues,1985) analyse through H  lderlin’s biography and later works. Visitors to H  lderlin, or Scardanelli, as he called himself, or at other times Scaliger Rosa, noted the impossibility of his conversation. Questions were met with ‘an absolutely nonsensical and incoherent flood of words’ (Schwab in Jakobson and L  bbe-Grothues,1985, p.134). Scardanelli seemed driven to ‘cancel out the partner, as it were,’ to disavow the entire realm of dialogue (p.137). Jakobson and L  bbe-Grothues find similar features in the poet’s later verse: a marked absence of ‘deictic language signs’ (Peirce’s performative *indices*, Jakobson’s own category of *shifters*), the ‘strict monopoly of the unmarked present tense,’ the ‘suppression of any allusion both to the speech act and its time as well as to the actual participants’ (pp.138-9). What one discovers in the place of such indexical functions is a ‘heightened mastery of what is distinctly monological’ (p.138). The ‘nouns of such poems as The View . . . turn into uniformly

ordered chains of *abstracta*,’ for what prevails is the internal architecture of the discourse itself (p.139). What prevails is the fourteenth floor. This extraordinary ‘monologic competence’ has been noted by other observers of psychosis, which Lacan described as ‘an essay in rigour,’ before adding that ‘in this sense, I would claim to be psychotic for the sole reason that I always try to be rigorous’ (1975, p. 9). Lacan’s model of science is doubtless more on the side of Peirce’s than the scientific objectivism which I dismissed so offhandedly above. Yet that objectivist fantasy is worth holding onto if only for the insight it gives into strictly psychotic phenomena. A language of ‘uniformly ordered chains of *abstracta*,’ such as one discovers in our fantasies of science, mathematics and logic attempts, as did the poet Hölderlin, to suture over the ‘I-You’ axis of dialogue. It speaks of objects in the third-person, or rather, as Emile Benveniste put it, the ‘non-person’ (1971, p.198). For a lab-coat and a lunatic are, as regards their respective attitudes to discourse, convergent phenomena.

*Teach me the meaning
of the simplest words
without using an
example*

So let’s drop the lab coat. Now my reader, to give the analogy its proper form, is to be understood as a scientist reading results into his / her experience of the experiment here constructed, and so forming ‘*if A = B, and B=C, then A=C*’ models of his / her own.

To this end, I will seek to meet the criterion Wittgenstein set for the logical proposition, which he theorised as a picture of the world: ‘2.17: What the picture must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it after its manner - rightly or falsely - is its form of representation’ (1981, p.41). I will draw a picture of the mind in the following form, or rather architectonic (recalling my fourteenth, which is not the fourteenth, floor setting): ‘*if 14 = 13, and 13 = missing, then 14 is missing.*’ After all, nothing happened, did it? Now the moment one posits an absence (13 : *missing*), that absence takes on the substantiality of language (here ‘13 : *missing*’) and hence cannot, in

fact, be said to be missing. So the fourteenth floor is still there. In other words, we have staged the following reality / hypothesis:

- A psychosis seeks to live out the proposition that ‘it is not the case that there is a brick missing.’

To define these terms a little more precisely: *a brick missing* provides the subject of the unconscious with its foundation, its inescapable predication (pre-requisite to any grammar *per se*) upon the recognition of the Other. When the Sufis seek to cast off the Self like smoke from a flame, what burns still is precisely the *You* to which we, as walking question marks, are ultimately addressed (Shabistari in Smith, 1928, p. 20). Where else could the foundations of the very buildings, houses and lives we live in come from, if not somewhere Other than right here? It’s psychotic to think otherwise.

My second hypothesis, to be couched in the same scientifically rigorous novel as the first, is hence as follows:

- A neurosis seeks to negate the proposition that ‘it is not the case that there is a brick missing.’

The double (triple?) negative here is intended to convey something of the contorted head-space such a proposition can cast into being. The collapsing effect of multiple negations may well act to index, or set the stage for, falling through the floor. Shakespeare was alive to this: ‘I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself the king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams’ (1986, p.750). The topology of Hamlet’s head balloons around the cut in infinite space rent by his self-alien dreams, making an inside and an outside of himself, all inside-out. I am drawing here on the topological model of representation provided in George Spencer-Brown’s The Laws of Form (1969), a work in the philosophy of mathematics which offers striking homologies to the psychic structure of what Joyce described as ‘a creature in Youman form’ (Joyce, 1976, p.36). Through the gap in Hamlet’s mental architecture, a nutshell or a palace, desire pours into his incestuous surrounds and is simultaneously dammed up by his own inability not to say no to it, not to fall into his own trap. In other words, it incapacitates him for love.

‘The topology of Hamlet’s head’ may seem a deranged title for the first chapter of a scientific work. On the contrary, it is simply rigorous, and thus akin to the mathematic rigour of a Spencer-Browne. ‘If mathematics,’ claimed Peirce, ‘is the study of purely imaginary states of things, poets must be great mathematicians, especially that class of poets who write novels of intricate and enigmatic plots’ (1955c, p.141). Of course an experimental method cannot simply be subsumed within mathematics. Unless mathematics itself is understood as an ‘enigmatic’ activity, which calls forth its own species of interpretants . . .

Mathematics kiss.

But there are other criteria than internal consistency by which to uphold the rigorousness of a novel which seeks to emplot the real of psychic structure for experimental verification. Here once more I take my cue from Wittgenstein: ‘Proposition 2.022: It is clear that however different from the real world an imagined one may be, it must have something - a form - in common with the real world’ (1981, p.35). If there is a formal commonality between an imagined model of the mind, and a real mind in the world, that ‘something – a form’ will be verified, or negated, in the reader’s actual experience of the text. For literature offers us the data, the experimental data even, for constructing, critiquing and correcting psychic models of the sort *if A = B, and B=C, then A=C*. Of course, this is as much as to say that any act of reading, if you are willing to take it that way, is an experiment in psychic structure. I’ve suggested two such models/ hypotheses/ ways of reading above. Add them together and you get the third:

- The fourteenth floor is still there.

The fourth is:

- It’s really the Other who keeps us sane.

Which is why authorship is such a strangely external act. The *data* to be adduced in support of this claim will include the very form of my novel. The persuasive dimension of the text, the *deixis* of my utterance, will be woven into the walls of The 14th Floor and will doubtless serve as architectural a function as ‘the uniformly ordered chains of *abstracta*’ I have aspired to in sections of this hypothesis. The dialectic between the deictic and the logical twists thought the works of the authors whose style most matches the ‘form of representation’ of the book whose conceptual floor-plan you now hold in hand: Chuang-Tse, Eckhardt, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Witkiewicz, Lacan. Their model is mine too. Among these data one will find the following confession: in the midst of the strictest of logical cogitations, I find it impossible to divorce the term *proposition* from its erotic overtones.

This then, is the sort of spin I want to put on my book of mind, which, like Peirce's book of nature, is to be read, still spinning, in the laboratory of your head. Field-work, if you will. But here we are high-rise, valleys are living rooms, TV sets are mountain views and there is a brick missing. Or not. And yet you are never quite there.

2.2. letter to supervisor

27th march 2000

Dear Martin,

the single greatest cause of domestic house fires in Moscow in the early nineteen nineties was the random and periodic explosion of Soviet-made TV sets. Moscow in full blown *perestroika* - watching the news could be a strange enough experience. Exploding TV sets, brilliantly burning hi-rise buildings, smog stained skies and

Where was I?

The first page I randomly opened in Robert Perelman's The Marginalization of Poetry (1996) had the title 'Parataxis and Narrative: The New Sentence in Theory and Practice,' and proceeded to illustrate parataxis:

According to the old grammars, parataxis involves placing units together without connectives or subordination. 'I came. I saw. I conquered.' is paratactic;

*Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
brought death into the world, and all our woe,
with loss of Eden, till one greater Man,*

[...10 lines intervene...]

*above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme.*

is hypotactic (p.60).

This strikes me as a pretty twisty and strange and beautiful way to express - in one single sentence - the character of these two oppositionally linked grammatical devices.

Perelman takes standard expository prose and does interesting things, his six-word-per-line conference paper being another case in point. And the idea that each individual

sentence be regarded as a story in itself, paratactically set among other sentence / stories, intrigues me.

But turning to the tradition of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Writing itself, I have to say that I wouldn't like to encounter many of these poems ('instead of an wort I saw brat guts') without Perelman to explain and introduce them to me. That is, the New Sentence is a fine idea when stated as such ('each individual sentence is to be regarded as a story in itself, paratactically set among other sentence / stories'), but the idea does not shine through **the TV's on** the instantiations of it, when considered on their own. Is there a hint of this in Perelman's assertion, contra to the otherwise A.D.D. effect of reading L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Poetry, that 'the nature of the units and the ways they are juxtaposed need to be considered before useful judgements can be made' (p.63). In my way of reading of this, if you're not in on the theory behind such verses, you won't have much fun. I like the works he presents best when they actually let me in on the game: like Hejinian's Oxota:

*Zina stood on a chair
Arkadii waved the ghosts aside
There must be a sentence which claims a chapter for itself
And a name at the vanishing point in a person's description*

(Hejinian in Perelman, 1996, p.74)

There must be a sentence which claims a book for itself. There must be a sentence which claims a shelf for itself. There must be a sentence which claims a library for itself - I like her work. It opens me up. to a name at the vanishing point in a person's

I've been playing with introductions a lot lately. I think you have already seen this one, from my Cube Root of Book (a.k.a. $\sqrt[3]{\text{book}}$):

1728. This book takes the form of a spiral. We begin in outer space. A nineteenth century theory of the giant spiral nebulae that form in the heavens attributes their whirlpool shape to a prior collision of stellar bodies. As the energy unleashed by the collision diminishes, the particles released tend to drift

toward an ever more rapidly spiralling centre. So they maintain their original momentum, much as the reader of a new book, gaining familiarity with the mind of its author, reads faster and faster to maintain the excitement of first contact. A new universe of disparate phenomena steadily contract into a reading, a set of characterisations, a body even, albeit of data. What prior collision?

The next is Hegel's Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics (1993), in which I found gratifying confirmation of what I had been getting at in paragraph one thousand seven hundred and twenty eight above. In fact, I have been thinking in this direction for years, only now to find it explicitly signposted in Hegel. The following five paragraphs will follow Hegel's thinking, with further reference to Perelman. I will be in search of an aesthetic that can leap into a rich and strange experimental novel. For that is where this letter is heading: The 14th Floor.

1. Hegel: A certain received wisdom claims that art is aimed at the imitation, in full or near verisimilitude, of reality. Yet the moment you compare the products of scenic painting, poetry, music and so forth to the natural landscapes they represent, it is clear that these '*one-sided* deceptions' are in no way adequate to their referents. So why, if the verisimilitude criterion is correct, does one not simply prefer the real thing (p.30)? On the contrary, the role of art is not to imitate, but to pretend to imitate reality. No artist really wants to deceive his or her audience, for the semiotic power of art lies precisely in its insufficiently veridical status. Recognised as such, as semblance, the work 'points beyond itself, and refers us away from itself to something spiritual which it is meant to bring before the mind's eye' (p.29). It points to the existence and actions of a creative consciousness, as that consciousness works through a given set of symbols to express its truth. 'Beyond itself,' the artist's work allows one 'to feel the whole range of what man's soul in its inmost and secret corners has power to experience and to create' (p.33). Aesthetic pleasure, in sum, arises from the spectator's encounter with both the work and the authorial agency imagined to lie behind it, with both the sensuous materiality of a text, and the mind whose hands have shaped it.

2. Hegel poses the 'beyond' of the work as the 'soul that the external appearance indicates' (p.23). So is art of God? Hegel is explicitly anti-Platonic, eschewing the idea

of any abstract or divine soul; we ‘must understand this idea more profoundly and more in the concrete’ (p.25). We must, that is, understand that a transcendence, a profundity, is inherent to all representation: ‘every *word* points to a meaning and has no value in itself’ (p.23). The specificity of art lies in the fact that it wields this play of inner and outer meanings, so as to elicit aesthetic pleasure. Yet in doing so it acts all the more to evoke Plato’s divine, for the beyond evoked in language, however impossible its claim to presence, is necessarily *personified*. Which is why it appears as a soul. In this sense all representation is of God. Or whoever we put in His place. For the Other is not simply semantic, but spiritual; i.e. He / She manifests in the concrete / phantom contours of an alien / self-same consciousness. In terms, once more, of art, the hands we glimpse beyond the diegetic frame are integral to both the meaning and the pleasure which the work affords. For one reads literature to revel in the mind and desires one imputes to the author, as much as for the story the text spirals into. In fact, they are inseparable.

3. I like Perelman’s material where, as I stated above, he leads us to glimpse the workings of a creative mind in the material at hand. Yet the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Writing programme he articulates seems geared against such a reading. The various attempts at ‘breaking the automatism of the poetic ‘I’ and its naturalised voice’ which he addresses seem to pose the ‘death of the author’ as the logical conclusion of such a strategy (1996, p.13). Bruce Andrew’s ‘I Guess Work the Time Up’ splits meaning to such an extent that, without Perelman’s help, it is hard to discern any shape to the hands which have spliced these sentences apart / together (p.25). For me, that actually constitutes a death of the reader, as it militates against the pleasure of finding (oneself in) a beyond to the text. I see such work, indeed, the history of anti-representationalism itself, as test cases of Hegel’s arguments. You need a visible scaffolding of meaning to allow the spectator to peer through and beyond it. Witness the way the explanatory caption/ catalogue essay has arisen, in the modern visual arts. The fact that such texts, here again I include Perelman’s exposition, have proved necessary, lends proof to Hegel’s definition of art; the work must allow a glimpse of the Other behind the work, if it is to serve as a conduit for aesthetic pleasure.

4. The formal experimentation in so much philosophical work seems to push the boundaries of traditional writing precisely so as to impress upon the text the workings of the mind in question. Witness Heidegger's slow hand and wrenching of language, Kierkegaard's drag shows or even Husserl's dramatisation of the Cartesian meditations. By hollowing out and redoing Descartes' metaphysical arguments phenomenologically, Husserl reads a consciousness reworking the very symbols of its given world (1988). This is the point of the equation I was making to you in Sydney between Joyce's Ulysses (1969) and **the TV's on the blink** Wittgenstein's two published books (1958; 1981). Both open up their author's minds. I think reading philosophy, as much as reading Milton, looking at Francis Bacon, listening to Charles Ives, is all about meeting people. On their own, often rather twisted, terrain.

5. Literary experimentation, when hypothesised and conducted to rupture textual expectations at the right moments, has the paradoxical effect of bringing more of the reader's inner voices into play. That is, in 'breaking the automatism of the I,' one floods the work with the creatures of the unconscious. Yet to showcase such otherness, the devices must be explicit. The more the texts in The Marginalization of Poetry play with explicit formal devices, the more the pleasure and interest they afford me. I would say this of Lyn Hejinian's work in particular, as also Perelman's six-word-per-line conference paper. The twisted titles of many of the works he cites (given the highly formalised and specific technology or function of titling, as opposed to the multipurpose sentence) have a nicely estranging effect. The magazine This had me thinking of Hegel's spinning mirror meditations on the *This* and the *That* in the opening pages of the Phenomenology (1977, pp. 58-66). Then there is Silliman's What. And Perelman's A.K.A., which leads me into just the right room of mirrors (also known as what? A me? A not-me? An and/or not?) that you find on the edge of literature, a play of appearances, and half-staged, half-uncontrolled authorial presences, a science which turns me into

Where was I? Deixis, of course, evokes the intersubjective register of language, that indelible second person presence to whose acquaintance a reading ultimately spirals. So,

on to The 14th Floor, a Hypothesis, the hi-rise novel I am trying - through these various beginnings, concepts and collisions - to introduce. That with no middle flight intends

from poetry to science

I have been rethinking the scaffolding of my 14th Floor, since beginning Tomás Eloy Martínez' Santa Evita (1996), which recounts the bizarre life-after-death of Eva Perón's embalmed corpse (a true, albeit posthumous, story). I started reading this book, relishing all the while the thought of encountering a life lived in the drag queen genre (a female drag queen, with consumption and early death too! Reality *does* have the structure of a fiction!). Yet after only a few pages, I was annoyed to find the author slipping into magic realism, making up words to put into Evita's mouth, not allowing me to enjoy the bizarreness of reality itself. This made me think - because I often enjoy reading historical writing, at present Yirmiyahu Yovel's beautiful Spinoza and Other Heretics (1989) - that there is a pleasure in reading work which claims veridical status, just as much as there is in reading fiction. Is the former also an aesthetic pleasure?

I want to explore this other pleasure of the word, by upturning the course of Martínez' fact-to-fiction river of loss. I plan to begin The 14th Floor as a poetic/fictional work - the hi-rises, the characters therein, the themes of love, death, psychosis and suicide – which steadily turns into a work of scientific, logical and even mathematical prose. None of the TV sets in any of these fourteenth floor rooms work. Every time you enter a room, there is just a box, whose screen is awash with static, with electronic as-if-it-were wallpaper. Where was I? Valéry speaks somewhere of poetry as 'a language within a language.' Well, I want to show this by beginning in novelistic poetry and moving out to the scientifically reachable world from within which poetry is generated. For the world is poetic in the play of appearances (the language within) but - and here I move beyond Hegel to Spinoza – logico-mathematical in essence (the language without). Which is why a mathematically generated book should start backwards, as poetry.

In other words, I want to follow Martínez' magic realist method, but backwards: from poetry to science. Three variants on this theme follow, and then a counter-Hegelian theory to contain them, all aimed at answering the above questions. Just what are the pleasures of non-fiction? Are they also aesthetic pleasures?

a) Presenting a text of Roman Jakobson's backward will help characterise the fiction-to-fact strategy I have in mind. At the end of one of his Sound and Meaning lectures, Jakobson describes a character from a story by Vladimir Odoevsky, a character who received the malevolent gift of

being able to see everything and to hear everything: 'Everything in nature became fragmented before him, and nothing formed into a whole in his mind,' and for this unfortunate man the sounds of speech became transformed into a torrent of innumerable articulatory motions and of mechanical vibrations, aimless and without meaning.

(Jakobson, 1978, p.20)

A human scientist, Jakobson uses literature, just like he uses aphasia, another linguistic extreme, as the laboratory for his researches. In the course of the lectures, this vignette serves to characterise the intellectual 'nightmare' that was 'the victory of naive empiricism' in linguistics, and further, to show, through an extreme case, that phonemes not only exist, but that they exist to import principles of distinction to otherwise overwhelming motor and acoustic phenomena (p.21). With this example, Jakobson illustrates, summarises and concludes, his first lecture. Myself, I want to start with the example (a world extreme, fictional and particular like Odoevsky's) and from there to build up to the science which explains it.

b) Another example: the Haiku poet I had wandering through the floor plan of my experimental novel. Pound's Cathay translations have been seducing me; they do nature so well. I want to take such styles and apply them to whatever nature one can winnow, fourteen floors up, from such only-recently rendered, artificial, neo-naturalised heights. Pot plants, flower arrangements, and aquariums. TV sets broken. A Chinese poet, and

the dawn rises. Exploding. But I want the presentation to move from these half-Rihaku poetics to a science that unravels why such characters would, when speaking English in *faux*-haiku translation, sound so postmodernly out of place:

The two liquids *r* and *l* have such clearly distinct functions in our languages (cf. *ray-lay, fur - full*) that it seems strange to us that in some other languages they are simply two combinatory variants of a single phoneme. Thus in Korean this phoneme is represented by *l* at the beginning and *r* at the end of a syllableIt is natural that a Korean who is trying to learn English will at first pronounce *round* with an initial *l*, *sell* with an *r* at the end, and will reverse the order of the two liquids in *rule* which will then be confused with *lure*.

(Jakobson, 1978, p.31)

So my text will move from poetry to linguistics, art to science, by turning a hi-rise world of characters, confusions and pronunciations into a scientific presentation of the principles which generate them.

c) In some instances, scientific findings and mathematics seem like poetry to begin with. Let me introduce a third character, Robert Recorde, whose ‘Preface to **the TV’s on the blink of an I** the gentle reader’ of his 1557 mathematics text-book opens as follows:

Although number be infinite in increasyng: so that there is not in all the worlde anything that can excede the quantitie of it: nother the grasse on the ground, nother the droppes of water in the sea, no not the small graines of sande through the whole masse of the yearth And if anything doe or maie excede the whole worlde, it is nomber, whiche so farre surmounteth the measure of the worlde, that if there were infinite worldes, it would at the full comprehend them all.

(Recorde, cited in Midonick, 1965, p.125)

Recorde’s numbers will comprehend the imagined world of my 14th Floor four hundred and forty three years prior to its very creation. The almost Miltonic hypotaxis of these introductory lines could lead me to a reverie on the numerical principles which structure attempts within contemporary science to explain

in the Beginning how the Heav’ns and Earth

*rose out of Chaos: Or if Sion Hill
delight thee more, and Siloa's Brook that flow'd
fast by the Oracle of God; I thence*

turn back to Hegel, whose philosophy of aesthetics seems to allow little place to the sort of delight I experience when reading of acoustic excess, phonematic variation and the timeless infinities of number. So, are these aesthetic pleasures?

My theory is that there is a pleasure in knowledge which partakes (though the pathways there are very different) of that same pleasure one derives from art. The attempt to expound this will help me further to construct the scaffolding of The 14th Floor.

Hegel once more lays the foundations. He wants to show that art, e.g. scenic painting, presents its viewers with a mental landscape, a world beyond. The landscape beyond the painting arises from the dialectic between the inadequacy of any given representation and the creative mind glimpsed through that representation's very aporia. Nature has no such spiritual quality. Hegel gives the following example:

The sun, for instance, appears to us to be an absolutely necessary factor in the universe, while a blundering notion passes away as accidental and transient; but yet, in its own being, a natural existence such as the sun is indifferent, is not free or self-conscious, while if we consider it in its necessary connection with other things we are not regarding it by itself or for its own sake, and therefore, not as beautiful.

(Hegel, 1993, p.4)

In support of this claim, Hegel adduces the fact that, in contrast to fine art, there has never been a science to determine the beauty of natural objects. Nature, bereft of spirit, is not only lacking in discriminative beauty, it is inferior to art, 'for everything spiritual is better than anything natural' (p.34). I think Hegel is in many ways correct, though I disagree with his valorisations.

For scientifically inflected philosophers like Spinoza, or Peirce, it is precisely the indifference of natural phenomena, their 'necessary connection' with all the other

component parts of the universe, which provides the cause for wonder and joy. Regardless of what we do or say, the Earth will round the Sun, bees will generate offspring in male-female ratios identical to that of the Fibonacci number series, every triangle will have three sides. Recall Recorde's wonder at the infinity of the number series: 'if there were infinite worldes, it would at the full comprehend them all.' Hegel has no such crystalline vision, a fact which doubtless contributes to his relative dullness to music, that most mathematical of **the TV's on the blink of an eye can't hear** the fine arts. For Hegel, music constitutes a form of 'feeling without thought'; it 'needs little or no spiritual content to be present in consciousness' (p.32). Hegel had Beethoven's deafness, without the ability to sight read. Yet Bach wouldn't turn in his grave, nor Beethoven, he couldn't care less, he is blissing out on a fugal recursion as intricate in its workings as Carl Friedrich Gauss' Theory of the Motion of the Heavenly Bodies Moving about the Sun in Conic Sections (1963). He is happy, and at one with the Heavens. But are these aesthetic pleasures?

Above I queried whether, in the light of Hegel's aesthetics, art can be seen to be of God. In the place of such a Platonic presence beyond, Hegel locates the spectator's intimation of an extra-diegetic creative consciousness. The manifestation of such an Other is at once showcased in art, and yet innate to all representation (including talking to yourself, as I am in these parentheses: 'What I call listening is not what you do with your ear to the door. It's listening to yourself. What I call seeing doesn't involve seeing anything else, just seeing yourself clearly' (Chuang-tse, 1999, p.61)). As I claimed above, the 'beyond' evoked in art, and indeed all language, however impossible its claim to presence, is necessarily *personified*. Now I want to claim that this ineradicable inter-subjectivity informs the pleasure of scientific knowledge. In a very particular way. 'The mystical thing,' as Wittgenstein wrote, 'is not *how* the world is, but *that* it is' (1981, p.187). The universe of 'states of affairs' depicted in the Tractatus (p.31) is characterised by the fact that each one of its components have a truth-functional, logical form. Every thing in the world, as every sentence, speaks its being, as if it were a product of the mind. That this is the case - the simple fact *that it is* - is both concrete and profound. So too with Recorde's infinite number series, or Cantor's \aleph . Numbers exist, wherever they come from, and

regardless of our finite ability to enumerate them. It is *as if* they were the products of a conscious creator. Or rather an unconscious creator. Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura* ('God, or Nature') is as unreflective as the science of optics itself. The ordered laws by which rays of light diffract and refract offer no meaning, and yet have a logical, even semiotic, status all the same. God, or Nature speaks its laws through the very being of Spinoza's world, even though 'neither intellect nor will pertain to God's nature' (1994, p.14). For God, as Lacan adds, has no soul. I hold, in sum, that the *amor intellectualis dei* ('the intellectual love of God'), Spinoza's phrase for the bliss of knowledge, partakes of Hegel's Other beyond representation, yet it does so in an immanentist way far removed from human artifice. In science, the pleasure of knowing is the bliss of encountering an alien consciousness that has no self, that has no soul.

This is why I want to follow Gauss to the window, and to have my ant- and pro-agonists follow me there, as the novel proceeds - remembering that there are no ground shots in this book, it's all hi-rise - and some of them even think of jumping, where they can just bliss out on the pure '*that it is*' of the universe. It was something like this that first made me want, as a child, to become an astronomer. For looking into outer space is a form of temporal regression. When you consider the distance it takes for light to travel, the galaxies present us with a picture of all of time to date. The further you peer into them, the further back you go in cosmic natural history, as if the heavens were a concave painting, of infinite horizons, which bear the successive stellar traces of Time itself. This is the artwork of an alien consciousness that has no self, that has no soul and yet exists, *Deus sive Natura*, as if it were speaking to us in stars. Since the beginning of the universe. 'To believe in a God at all,' claimed Charles Saunders Peirce, expounding his own cosmology, 'is not that to believe that man's reason is allied to the originating principle of the universe?' (Peirce, cited in Shariff, 1994, p.16). One can read this claim commutatively too: to believe our science can see so far into both space *and* time is in effect to read a Spinozist consciousness, as subject to logic and number as a hypotenuse triangle, into the heavens themselves. For if you have any belief in scientific knowledge at all, and it is seriously hard not to, you can only but see the heavens as subject to the same logic and mathematics that we use to understand them. Turning back to the telly,

the **the TV's on the blink of an I can't hear deaf** static on any given TV set registers not random interference, but rather the presence of the anti-matter released into our galaxies at the moment of the Big Bang itself! Looking into a broken TV set you are looking right back into the exploding moment of Time's very origin. Where was

In such a fashion, I want to turn my novel into an exposition of celestial mechanics (Chaucer's A Treatise on the Astrolabe (in Midonick, 1965, pp.77-104), Gauss's above-mentioned researches), of optics (Spinoza's little known reflections on the geometry of rainbows; Goethe's open-eyed and phenomenological Theory of Colour (1970)) and of language (Jakobson's investigations of creative practice). Through these three sciences of sight and insight, I want to telescope in and out of the window of my novel, uniting all three, in Dantesque conclusion, into that *amor intellectualis dei* above. In this way I will turn my poetry to prose, fiction-to-fact, novel into a pure mirror of itself. A science of literature. For if the art of Hegel's aesthetic offers a glimpse of authorial manipulations beyond, and of, the diegetic frame, the pleasure of a scientific vision must be something like the world of those famous Escher hands, drawing each other in right there on the page.

the science of experience literature

So is Escher an artist or, as I seem to be suggesting and the TV set that runs a wormhole through this letter exploding in Moscow where I lived for ten insane hi-rise months at the end of an adolescence that moved like a labyrinth in and out of my sister's insanity I remember minding her till the police could arrive in front of the television set which she knew had been programmed to spy on us in glass walls around a room as fragile as breaking waves all at sea she held me a sea of static change the channels to see her like Evita cast herself off the balcony and into a passing train leaving me in Moscow as mad as a whole Soviet Union exploding out of seventy years of nightmares and Hegelian dreams an artist or as I seem to be suggesting here, a scientist?

14. What happens when the scientist puts himself in the picture? Thirteen paragraphs – each paragraph to be read as a story in itself - follow. In the text above, you were witness to a theoretical presentation: the 14th Floor as nature documentary. Looking down, the writing will now plummet, like one of Galileo’s experimental objects, through thirteen stories, simply to see what happens. This should cast up a rather different model of the fourteen flights up mental landscape in question.

13. Hegel once more lays the foundations. His opposition between art and science soon slides into an opposition between artist and scientist. The move is logical, given the authorial presence which, Hegel argues, the aesthetic requires. ‘In poetry all depends on the representation - which must be full of matter and thought - of man, of his profounder interests, and of the powers that move him’; Hegel advances this picture of poetry to show its superiority over that ‘feeling without thought’ that sings through musical composition, a showcase for ‘expertness’ and ‘execution,’ but little experience or spirit (1993, pp.32-33). Yet if music is all too dumbly sensuous, poetry by no means leaves such realms. However universalising the representation of man and his powers, the poet cannot be wholly of the universal, for he needs to communicate through the sensual materials of art. As both ‘a great mind and a great heart’ the poet must be grounded in the particular (p.32). The thought which ‘abstracts . . . from all that is natural’ belongs, on the contrary, to the scientist, a creature of the dry understanding, almost a non-person in comparison (p.33). There is a curious meeting here of these two experts, the musician, all too natural, and the scientist, all too abstract. Whereas the poet impresses us with his dialectical control of both the profound and the concrete, with the movement and power of his mind.

12. Leaving music aside for the moment, the opposition between scientist and artist is clearly important to Hegel. To put the fine arts beyond the realm of scientific repeatability, he claims that art ‘unquestionably rests on natural gifts,’ and even goes so far as to introduce ‘talent,’ that most un-Hegelian of categories, to characterise them (p.45). Talents, as the Gospels remind us, are God-given, that is contingent, pre-destined,

natural. Here they are directed toward the communication, via the work, of the alien contours of the artist's mind. Yet again, compare the scientist:

It is true that we speak in the same way of scientific 'talent', but the sciences only presuppose the universal capacity of thought, which has not, like Fancy, a natural mode (as well as an intellectual one), but abstracts just precisely from all that is natural (or native) in an activity; and thus it would be more correct to say that there is no specifically scientific talent in the sense of a *mere* natural endowment.

(Hegel, 1993, p.45)

It is through his talent, his natural, aristocratic even, birthright, that the artist puts himself into the picture.

11. This is very interesting, for in effect, Hegel indulges the artist with an indelible mental trait, something he would by no means suffer *Self-Consciousness* to claim for itself. Witness Hegel's critique of phrenology, some twenty years before, crowned with the derisive assertion that, for the practitioners of such proto- *Trait Psychology*: 'Spirit is a bone' (1977, p.208). So how should one treat this bone-like concept of 'talent'? Is Hegel simply painting with a broad brush here, in accord with the needs of a set of introductory lectures (as he seems to suggest (1993, p.14))? I don't think so. In this same introduction, Hegel claims that his thinking on the aesthetic unfolds, as all true philosophy must, from the necessity of the object itself (p.14). I think Hegel should be read at face value here, however un-Hegelian his claims might seem. The fact is that the object of his inquiry, the aesthetic, is ultimately recalcitrant to the claims of Spirit, and Hegel knows it. He deals with this impasse by taking it to its logical conclusion: death. The artist, Hegel famously asserts, is fated to disappear. This is a sociological and historical postulate, founded in Hegel's reading of the changes occurring all around him: the French Revolution, the rise of modernity, the birth of civil society. As civil society becomes ever more modern and spiritual, as civil society approaches the status of philosophy itself, art will disappear. For if the arts allow us access to a dialectical encounter with the artist's own consciousness, there is something in that artistic consciousness which is fundamentally alien to civil society. There is something in the

artist's psychic make-up, something akin to a brand, a proper name, or a birthmark, which will never be reconciled to the claims of Spirit, that free flowing entity whose end is to attain the 'I that is We, We that is I' of reciprocal and communing self-consciousnesses (1977, p.110). Art is just not democratic enough to make it into the future. Compare Perelman, on the critics of L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Writing:

The conventional reproach, 'I could do that,' should actually be taken as a good sign, as a response a writer might seek rather than fear. A better sign might be, 'I could do something a bit different than that.'

(Perelman, 1996, p.36)

For Hegel such responses are no longer actually aesthetic. Art is aristocratic; it requires God-given talent. Hence it is destined to vanish before the higher reconciliation of universal and particular that will characterise the modern. Soviet Man would be glad to know it. Higher reconciliation high rise living is all about such

10. I expressed certain reservations about Hegel's thinking above, where I tried to focus upon that point of aesthetic pleasure attainable from knowledge, that *amor intellectualis dei* to which my novel will aspire. In science, the pleasure of knowing is the bliss of encountering (*exempli gratia* in the endlessly recurring Fibonacci series, a numerical model of differential calculus which one can discover in the seed arrangements on sunflower heads, the diffraction ratios of multiple mirrors, even the spiral nebulae above) an alien consciousness that has no self, that has no soul. A thinking without a thinker. Having bent Hegel's opposition between art and science in the second third of this letter, I want now to test that which he sets up between artist and scientist. I agree that a certain impress of the artist's mind need necessarily rise to the surface, or offer itself behind the veil, of the artistic text. Further, the artist needs talent to convey this through the materials at hand. What of the scientist? Is he simply the dead skin of 'The Understanding', a consciousness ever absent from the abstract realm of laws and facts he nonetheless works upon? Is there no such thing as scientific talent? Can there be talent (mathematics offers the best access to this question) in the timeless universe of numbers?

9. A legend about the brilliant mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss, a contemporary of Hegel's (and fellow primary school student at the time, if not place, too) suggests otherwise. It is said that Gauss' eighteenth century schoolmaster once asked the class, simply so as to shut them up for a while, to find the total sum obtained by adding together all of the numbers from 1 to 100. Within 45 seconds Gauss called out 2550. He reasoned as follows:

Here interpose paragraph - out of the blue

And more: I have come to realise that the voice informing my plans for the 14th Floor is in some sense a resonance from the time when I did live in a fourteen story building, in Moscow, for ten months over 1990-91. Something cracked in my mind at the time, as if the sheer lunacy of a society exploding out of seventy years of facades, lip-service and sham civic virtue served to trigger in me the trauma of the insanity I had experienced at rather closer range in a nice suburb of Melbourne the decades before. I had met my macrocosm. There is a strangely Hegelian aspect to all of this, for in a sense I became one of the 'I that is We; the We that is I' in that severely fucked up city - only in my case the reconciliation of universal and particular seemed like a very cracked mirror indeed. My initial plan for The 14th Floor was to take one of those so Hegelian Imagined Communities of contemporary social theory, and twist its perfectly syllogistic socioscape into a dizzy and deranged model of mental representation. I think now I realise that I was still trying to come to terms with Moscow, which is to say with the fact that the master-slave dialectic I had to pass through to get there was shared with a psychotic. So that is where I am in some sense coming from.

start with words swallowed - history of my soviet union and this as other scene recalled by all these materials; modernity and anonymity and Hegelian depression . . .

This doesn't reconcile with my theme nor this paragraph - another scene which will end here

continue with Gauss [t]ake to find the total sum obtained by adding together all of the numbers from 1 to 100 two horizontal columns and draw them. In one write 49, 48, 47, 46, 45, 46 . . . to 1. In the one below write 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...to 49. Add vertically and down and you will get 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50 . . . to 50 = $49 \times 50 = 2450$. Add 100 = 2550. Within a minute Gauss called out 2550. He reasoned as follows:

then shape of a mind - same in Einstein!

And then there is sex, something it is hard to imagine Escher having.

With one foot nailed to the floor two three four five six

Find within material at hand and its inner necessities patterns and shapes. . . .

within 75 seconds Gauss called out 2550. He reasoned as follows:

4) read this commutatively:

Shakespeare and flow chart

- Hamlet and m.p.d = multiple personality disorder = mathesis : in Lacan's reading

is not a mask you peel back from a moving mind which moves through it. The face is a talent to be adored and loved and kissed and made a mirror of you're mine, darling, you're mine I'm now writing

Jakebsen 74 - performance on page : in multiple significations - p.119 in absentia ; this projected onto plane - formula p.78 stressed to the full in Jakobson own futurist poem расеяность 279 ff. . . - Jakebsen as merger of scientist and poet, his 'poetic laboratory'

[here begin writing]

About the end of my analysis which some 4 weeks ago after 4 years of Lacanian head reading and I feel well and truly spun out. Which ended.

That is where was I.

Within a minute and a half Gauss called out Chaucer's lovely Treatise on the Astrolabe was written 'in plain English words' in 1391, for the instruction of his 'litell son Lowys' (Chaucer in Midonick, 1965, p.77). Directions on the usage of the instrument, its zodiacal register, its circle of days and so forth are interspersed, in Chaucer's text, with comments like 'Forget not this, little Lewis' (p.84), while the line 'and for more explanation, lo here the figure' recurs like a refrain, ushering in the pictures which transpose these wonders into a graphical register. There is a real beauty in this, as if one were witnessing all of a father's tenderness, wonder and delight at the joy of trying to communicate those very qualities to a ten year old consciousness, as little Lewis seeks to make his way among the stars.

And so my analysis ended. How do you die?

Coming back to Earth, Carl Friedrich had been asked to find the total sum obtained by adding together all of the numbers from 1 to 100. Within 45 seconds Gauss called out 2550. He reasoned as follows: take a page and write out, in a horizontal column, the numbers 49, 48, 47, 46, 45, 46 . . . to 1. Directly beneath these numbers, in a parallel column, write down 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 . . . to 49. Add vertically and down and you will get 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50 . . . to 50. That is, 49 of these 50s, which will equal 2450. Add 100 to 2450 (for the two 50s you forgot to count at the start and end respectively of each of the columns; 50 + 50) and you will have 2550.

8. The beauty of Gauss's thought process, which has a certain theatric, even Shakespearean, quality to its measured resolutions, renders dubious Hegel's claims as to

the inexistence of scientific talent. For Hegel, the scientist is fundamentally bereft of 'Fancy.' A 'natural mode' of perception and creation, Fancy is

manifested in the impelling restlessness that busies itself, with vivacity and industry, in creating shapes in some particular sensuous mediumA sculptor finds everything transmute itself into shapes, and he soon begins to take up the clay and model it.

(Hegel, 1993, p.46)

The artist is possessed of a natural genius for impressing mind upon, that is speaking through, the materials at hand. Yet when a Gauss alights upon a perfectly coherent, indeed ideational, pattern in the materials at hand, is he not performing a similar task? Finding a way to make numbers speak, or even sing?

7. To fine tune this picture, the scientist as artist, turn from mathematics to the natural sciences, and, on the other hand, from sculpture to poetry. The objects we see in the world are, of necessity, comprehended semiotically. As Krystyna Pomorska writes, 'conscious sensations are not mere copies of the external world of 'real objects,' but rather *homologous constructs* of these objects' (Pomorska, 1987a, p.5) If her analysis causes the objectivity of the sciences to waver somewhat, it needs to be seen that the poet's materials have rather *more* objectivity than is customarily noted. In this light, Emile Benveniste argues for a recognition of the pure historical givenness of the language code, claiming that 'the connection between the signifier and the signified is not arbitrary; on the contrary it is necessary' (Benveniste, cited in Jakobson, 1978, p.111). The poet cannot alter the denotative and connotative extension of his or her utterance: the flowchart of possible reading, albeit infinite, is largely given. In this respect, the poet's field is as delimited as the natural scientist's, who cannot create taxonomies outside the system of 'homologous constructs' at hand. Both artist and scientist are constrained to find their communicative resources within the semiotic material at hand. Which is why Peirce claimed that the construction of scientific hypotheses is a fundamentally poetic act (Peirce, 1955c, p.141). This claim can be read commutatively too. A poem is a hypothesis - and the reading thereof, an experimental, indeed, scientific act.

6. 'If mathematics,' Peirce continues (here we are back to Gauss, but also Shakespeare), 'is the study of purely imaginary states of things, poets must be great mathematicians, particularly that class of poets who write novels of intricate and enigmatic plots' (1955c, p.141). This principle can be contracted down to the Shakespearean sentence itself, to find mathematical intricacy on a semantic level. One could, that is, conduct a logicist reading of a few Shakespearean lines, to set forth, in flowchart fashion, the dramatist's deployment of the extensive yet relatively fixed code of connotations within the English language of his day. Here is Hamlet, on losing the plot so 'Rashly -

*And praised be rashness for it lets us know
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well
When our dear plots do pall, and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will –*

The 'praised,' a dead metaphor in the first line, retrospectively takes on its religious and spiritual connotations at the arrival of 'divinity' some lines below. In between, 'our dear plots pall,' where 'pall' opens two lines of meaning, most immediately a kind of failure or faltering, then, by connotative echo, a funeral pall. This faint line of death is carried over to the 'divinity that shapes our ends,' where the shaping, as an abstract spiritual act, is then made, by 'rough-hew[n]' contrast, a conduit for hopeless human hands, making for a double shaping, one earthly, one divine, of the ghostly coffin that seems (and I am claiming that this seeming coffin is actually mathematical in its status as one of a group of possible connotations) to pass through these lines. We arrive at a death. Foretold.

5. Or a work of art. For not only is it the case that 'scientific talent' exists. The artist is possessed of it. For all the 'pretend to imitate' dissimulations, the seeming games and apparent authorial presences, the capacity to generate a series of static, or structural, cognitions is integral to artistic talent. Like the mathematician, the artist must discover pre-ordained patterns within the semiotic materials at hand. This takes us far from Hegel's insistence on the vital nature of artistic consciousness (the artist, whose breed

will die out in the near future) with all its ‘impelling restlessness.’ Vitality, for Hegel, reproduces vitality, for the work

is a work of art only in as far as, being the offspring of mind, it continues to belong to the realm of mind, has received the baptism of the spiritual, and only represents that which has been moulded in harmony with mind.

(Hegel, 1993, p.46)

Yet is there not a certain refusal in these lines?, an avoidance, in the art=child equation they advance, of the fact that the artist, as scientist, works with inert materials, to arrive at that other so natural phenomenon, there in the very words on the page: a beautiful death. Foretold. The redemptive lead of Shakespeare’s divinity would then suggest that artistic talent, far from restless and vital, is much more like an ability to look up into the night and there, far beyond the travails of this **exploding TV sets** breathing existence, to find patterns, to sight read the music of the spheres, to sound out the post-mortem report of God Himself.

4. Hegel again, and alongside all the other voices in this tower of Babel letter, now drawing to a close, constructs the scaffolding for such a telescopic theory (from the Greek θεωρεῖν, *theorein*: to view), through the paradoxical category of ‘natural talent.’ As an ‘unconscious operation,’ talent like Shakespeare’s ‘must belong to the natural element in man,’ which is to say it belongs, like the Sun and the stars, to the realm of ‘absolutely necessary being,’ that which is ‘indifferent, is not free or self-conscious.’ Hegel wants to claim that it is the labour of the artist’s mind which redeems nature and makes it an object of beauty. So we commune through the work with another consciousness, a mind in motion. For the power of art is, at all costs, to be seen as the power of a living phenomenon (even if artists, as a historical group, will only be with us for so long). Yet if the artist’s talent is so much a part of his or her nature, and as such is ‘indifferent, not-free or self-conscious,’ surely this makes it closer to θάνατος, to death. For I am suggesting, still looking up, that in fact, the reader’s appreciation of the mind of Shakespeare as glimpsed beyond the text, is fundamentally more like the bliss of

encountering an alien consciousness that has no self, that has no soul. A thinking without a thinker. Shakespeare, Lacan, Hegel are all dead.

3.¹

2. ‘Man finds his home in a point situated in the Other beyond the image of which we are made and this place represents the absence where we are.’ (Lacan, 1962-3, week 4, page 5) So writes Lacan, distancing himself from the reign of images that make up the mental landscape of Hegel’s Master and Slave dialectic, an affair that is ultimately, for all its apparent beyonds, conducted in the imaginary, the domain of conscious self-recognition. Hegel’s absolute knowledge cannot see the ‘point situated in the Other beyond the image,’ for his optic is not logical (symbolic, inhuman, dead), but rather self-reflective, (imaginary, breathing, vital). The God who watches him work does so to avoid his own death. There is no Hegelian concept of the unconscious, a poem that, at least in its traces, is much more akin to mathematics and celestial mechanics than flowing river reflections. It is curious to think that this absence might well have impressed itself upon him, had Hegel not been blind to music.

1. Sing Heaven’ly Muse

0.

2.3. chapter of prac report

chapter 2

plus fort que moi

2.1 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had obviously never heard of the experimental novel.

2.2 His Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics (1993), written in the 1820's, set forth two approaches to the 'science of art'. The first, the method of 'art scholarship,' concerned itself with the history of particular arts, via an appreciation of individual works. Given that 'every work belongs to its age, to its nation and to its environment,' such a method required vast historical knowledge (1993, p.18). It was not overly concerned with 'theorizing proper . . . although no doubt it frequently busies itself with abstract principles and categories, and may give way to this tendency without being aware of it' (p.24). The second approach was exemplified by the 'abstract philosophy of the beautiful' found in Plato (p.18). Objects, for Plato, were to be comprehended 'not in their particularity, but in their universality,' for the truth of art did not reside in the individual work, as rather in the idea of art as such. Hegel described this second method as 'science abandoning itself independently to reflection on the beautiful,' and he, needless to say, felt no such abandon (p.25). *Why are you telling me this?*

2.3 Hegel argues that a properly scientific aesthetics traverses both extremes. True science is both empirical and conceptual. However one understands Hegel's 'idealism,' his commitment to the actuality of the object is clear throughout his work. Just as he would elsewhere claim that the history of the world *is* the world, here he argues that art is nothing other than the particular works which comprise it. And yet this empirical focus on the individual work is no mere art-scholarship, for Hegel believes that the particular work is always and necessarily experienced as something more than itself. Hegel's point is that art is artificial, and consciously perceived as such. Art does not deceive its readers with an illusion of reality, as the common-sense notion has it, but rather pretends to deceive them. For the communicative power of the work of art lies precisely in the fact

that we recognise its artificiality, its status as a work within a given genre, following certain conventions, set in a particular frame. What the work really points to, beyond the page, is the existence and actions of a creative consciousness, as that consciousness works through a given set of symbols to express itself through them. For reading is all about experiencing another's mind. In the lack. Which makes it a matter of desire.

2.4 The reason I borrow Hegel's introduction to the 'science of art' to introduce my own is that his aesthetics is more than mere aesthetics. Through it, Hegel opens inroads into the fictive dimensions of reality itself. The innate artificiality of art, he argues, heightens one's awareness of the necessarily symbolic nature of all lived experience. Art reminds us that conversations, just like poems, sculptures, portraits, essays, always point - *I hear what he is saying, but what is he really saying?* - beyond themselves. I invoke these registers of Hegel's paranoid discourse because my purpose in the following is to use literature to crack open the everyday, to write about neurosis and psychosis, how they write their way into the real world around us, the dinner table, this novel, a Greek tragedy, I mean Oedipus Complex. The significance of treating people as so overwhelmingly fictional - as walking novels, no less - will hopefully become apparent in the chapters above, as I turn to consider the implications of such a stance for the thinking of work, love, politics, and social being generally. Whole edifices of political and social beliefs begin to totter the moment you see that people have the same structure as works of art. One such belief *the Oedipus Complex* is the opposition of science and art, an opposition Hegel cannot help buying into, for all his attempts to present his dialectic as somehow more of a science than science itself. But then, and this is my other reason for introducing Hegel's introduction, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel had obviously never heard of the experimental novel.

2.5 Write a novel and see what happens. *That* is the scientific way to learn what literature is. You form a hypothesis as to the nature of literature, test it through an act of novel writing, observe what happens and then write up (as here) the results. What better way to theorise the novel, than by witnessing it coming into being 'out of the necessity of its own inner nature,' ie., in the creative activity of one's own body? This, the lived

experience of artistic creation, is the empirical procedure of aesthetic inquiry which escaped Hegel in his rush to set the dialectic in motion. At least he had one. Compare the contemporary university, where the very question ‘what is art?’ is seen as too indifferent to the particularities of time, place and power to merit serious attention. This is the glory of (I invoke Hegel’s category) ‘art scholarship,’ a historicist endeavour whose hegemony, and post-structuralism has done nothing to alter this, is now such that whole literature departments exist whose members cannot even hazard a theory as to what literature is. The experimental novel, in such a thinking, is an historically specific entity of European modernism, its ideologies/ discourses/ phallogocentricities of progress and So what? To my mind, the right to profess literature should only be accorded to those who have tried to produce it. Experimentally. Write a novel, see what happens, and form your theory of just what literature is in the process. Ha ha ha that's a fun way to lose all your academic friends.

2.6 It’s the tall buildings at UTS that make me feel so dizzy. Ever since enrolling in this Doctorate of Creative Arts at the University of Technology, Sydney, I have known that I would be exploring the edge of science and literature. I came upon the idea of creating an experimental novel and treating it literally as an experiment. In the same instant I realised that it would be set entirely on the fourteenth floor. This coincidence intrigues me, for I have always suspected a radical similarity between the scientific and the creative act. Where do such intuitions come from? *Intuition* is from the Latin *tueri*, to look, meaning *to look within*, and implying that there is already something there, readily formed, in your head, for you to observe. And then? Having settled upon ‘the length, the province and the tone’ of the work, ‘I betook myself,’ Edgar Allen Poe writes, of his poem The Raven, ‘to ordinary induction’ (1967, p.484). The poem, Poe argues, in an explicitly anti-Romantic style ‘proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.’ (p.482) So too with my novel; having decided upon the setting for the work, the conclusion that this premise led me to (that the novel would take the form of a multiple personality disorder) impressed itself upon me as if with the force of logic. I will detail this process at greater length above, but for the moment the intimation that artistic creativity may well be an

observational science suggests that not only my novel, but indeed all novels, are experimentally generated. But let me leave all the questions my literary investigations will occasion suspended for the moment, and as if in mid-air.

2.7. Splat.

2.8 What is science? ‘It is the enforced element in the history of our lives,’ writes Charles Saunders Peirce, defining *experience*, the concept at the heart of his theory of science (1992d, p.170). ‘The act of observation is the deliberate yielding of ourselves to that *force majeure* [superior force] - an early surrender at discretion, due to our foreseeing that we must whatever we do be borne down by that power, at last. Now the surrender which we make in Retroduction [NB: *the act of hypothesizing*], is a surrender to the insistence of an Idea. The hypothesis, as The Frenchman says, *c'est plus fort que moi* [it is more powerful than me]. It is irresistible, it is imperative’ (p.170). Science involves a yielding, a voluntary passivity to the force of what one observes. And yet what one observes in all its *force majeure* is not brute nature, but rather the ‘insistence of an Idea.’ Peirce has no time for the equation of science and dogma. He tends to view the efforts of philosophers in that light, and suggests that the two terms – science (from the Latin for ‘knowledge’), Philosophy (from the Greek: ‘love of learning’) – must have been swapped in the cradle (1931-5, p.20) The scientist, for him, is the one who yields, in love of learning, to ‘the lesson that the universe has to teach’ (1992d, p.176). Yet Peirce is no sensationalist either, for what the senses perceive in nature, at the insistence of an Idea, is a universe of symbols. So what is reality, then? ‘Perhaps,’ he argues, ‘there isn't any such thing at all . . . it is but a retroduction, a working hypothesis’ (p.161).

2.4. conclusions

Chapter 13. A history of mirrors

Chapter Zero is structured around a set of poems. It sets forth the biographical premises of the experiment. The experiment took place at the University of Technology, Sydney, where I am writing this report. Or rather, I am writing from Melbourne, where I live, about work institutionally located in Sydney, where I have never lived.

The university is in the central Sydney suburb of Ultimo, its hi-rise tower visible as you come up from the tunnels of Central Station and into the light. My pilgrimages here have two main resonances for me. The word Ultimo (in Latin the last, furthest, most extreme, in both time and space) makes me think of my last academic work, my first book, my From Here to Tierra del Fuego (2000), an ethnography of the travellers I found at the 'Uttermost part of the Earth.' As if I have opened that distant book of travels onto the street and walked right into it. Only this is Sydney. And the extreme I walk into in Ultimo is as close to me and my own as can be. For it's in the shadow of that huge brutalist tower, the windows of the higher floors shut tight against potential suicides, that my friend Jo, late one night back in November 1998, in a laneway, and for no known reason, was beaten to death. She was thirty one.

No one knows who did it, or what for. I don't even know exactly where the laneway is. Somewhere in Ultimo, a place small enough for me to have walked down that lane many times already. I don't know. Every time I return to UTS I remember that I have yet again forgotten to ask which one. I wander around Ultimo like a lost memory, not knowing, wondering, concussed.

But what I have known, ever since I received a scholarship to study a Doctorate of Creative Arts at the university in the last month of 1999, is that I would be paying for it in funeral rites. For it always seems to me that it is Jo's death which casts a shadow on the

tower, and not the other way round. A shadow from nowhere, from I don't know where, from a laneway, a gutter, a call to the police, a murder.

But if Jo's murder utterly conditions the sort of novel I can write in these premises, it does so as a mirror directing me to other sites and other selves. I want to write just for her - she was a woman of such rare colours. But I find myself directed, like a law of optics, from her death to the deaths of others I've known. It is almost geometrical, a question of 'lines, planes and bodies,' as Spinoza put it, in The Ethics, his formalisation of the passions (n.d., p.84). A history of mirrors.

*Merri Creek is she happy, washed-up, plastic?
The aftertaste exists it's real
It was some other bridge
mirrors, daily*

*Put a knife
through the eye
of the Sun
with a twist that says
you're not real
but your death
the real recyclable
floating garbage*

*that you could build a house on
and swing from the rafters
like a creek-jumping child
with bottle-top treasures for eyes*

Mirrors blackened. Wandering Ultimo, trying to find Jo, or at least the laneway, takes me into the part of my mind where Murray, who killed himself, back in Melbourne, in May 1999, is missing. Aged forty. We first met amid a group of tedious academic historians. I told him I wanted to do a Phd on the topic of repetition, which is usually too much for historians to deal with. 'Like in a *da capo* aria?' he replied, and I knew that we would be talking about opera and literature and philosophy from then on. Murray's house tumbled around him and a bottle of pills, the thousands and thousands of opera CD's literally

holding the walls up collapsing, at least in this metaphor, I don't know, I felt, such was the fragility of my homeless head, that he had killed myself.

This is another poem I wrote round about then:

*I ate the best minds of my generation, rot
dribbled down the sides of my chin
and not throwing up
To what sight
do you shut that eye off
do you dream it to death
do you drink it all down
to one black painting
that swallows the frame*

I can't think of this project, written as it virtually is from a murder site in Sydney, without folding back into the townhouse where Murray drank himself down not far from here in Melbourne, nor, and here my train of thought races ahead of me daily, from Sydney Central and back to Melbourne again, to Malvern station, where my sister in 1992, and while I was overseas to myself in Asia, threw herself in front of, and into, a train.

Bridget was psychotic at the time. She'd tried the night before to be voluntarily admitted, only to be told that if she was well enough to commit herself, she was well enough to look after herself. Beds were needed for the involuntary cases. Perhaps for cases like herself, involuntarily committed so often in the past which was suicide. Sometimes by me. I can't live with those betrayals, even moreso because they were necessary. Who stole my face?

Have you ever betrayed someone? Once, after I had spent hours convincing her just to stay in the same room with me, to put the sewing scissors down, that the dog hadn't been programmed by our parents to spy on us, that I wasn't squeezed up against the wall like an eggwhite eyeball, that the television was our friend, that the police now arriving weren't the police, Bridget, knowing full well by now that I had been deceiving her, that I was handing her over to them (that's called commitment) stopped on the threshold of the

television room from which she was now being led, the prospect of yet more months in the sick heavens of psychotropic drug stupor ahead of her. On the threshold she looked back. I was a mess in a chair, my face in my hands. 'I love you, Paul,' she called back to me, like the ghost she now is, 'Do you love me?' And I, like the ghost I am, couldn't answer.

I was fifteen, half my age now. Give me my face back.

Or just tell me who.

Because I remember her, her craziness, often so gorgeous and inspiring, her capacity for friendship, her ability not to care what anyone thought about her being mad. I even remember, at long last, her love. But I have no idea who did it.

The mystery of Jo's murder makes me realise that in grieving Murray I was grieving a murder too. For who was *he* when he did it? Who killed him? The same unidentified person who killed Jo? A person suicides. But who kills them? Who?

And why does this question seem utterly linked to the fact that this is my third attempt since age twenty six, my last degree, my Tierra del Fuego, at writing a doctorate. I have come to realise over that time that a thesis, whatever the topic, is basically an act of grieving. And I want it to end. But what?

The material in this chapter forms part of the biographical premises of the experiment to follow because I can see now that there is no other way out than the way in. Diving into the mirror -

Mirrors happen, daily

- of a science project, a doctorate that exploded.

2.5. epigraph

Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent;
Σιβυλλα τι θελεις; respondebat illa: αποθανειν θελω.’

For I once
il miglior fabbro

saw with my very own eyes the Sibyl at Cumae,
hanging in a cage. And when the boys asked
'Sibyl, what do you want?' she replied 'My desire is death.'

2.6. work in progress seminar paper

A Death in Progress

Suicide, according to Lacan, is the one successful act of which we are capable. This paper (an attempt to give form to that phenomenon, the force of impact, the image you leave when you hit the ground, the -) is not a success. I suspect that the attempt to figure suicide will always involve some sort of redemptive motif. That is, it will fail. So instead, I have decided to present what I have written backwards, and so make it truly redemptive.

What I have written: a description of progress this year on The 14th Floor, my scientific experimental novel, the Hegelian social theory underwriting it, the philosophy of time contouring its floors and walls, the opera libretto into which it collapsed, the abandoning of the novel, then the opera, and at last this very paper itself, a crumpled heap of loss, memories and nothing (the logic of modernity, I suggest, is predicated upon the periodic urge to absent oneself from it. One's character is just this absenting. Unto death). Now read backwards.

The final paragraph

A tear in the page as a knife slices as it cuts an eye out of an empty paper face. Like cutting the I out of my own body. of work. An iconostasis, in red nail-polish and heavy mascara. All saintly, with oil brush in hand. Painting the icon of its own death. But an image can't image its own absence.

Second last paragraph.

The 14th Floor is written in blood and cigarettes because I am trying to find an image (some materialisation, words on a page, a bleeding lung, smoke rings, dates of birth and death, names) among the ashes, all scattered to the wind, an image for

whatever it is within me that needs to turn to ashes on the hour, every hour, all scattered to the wind.

Third last paragraph.

into a ruin in ruins, a film script and the play, which I planned to set, alongside the opera, as a triptych within the ‘homogenous, empty’ and anonymous world of The 14th Floor. Now I just have a novel with a gaping hole in it, a nightmare in Hegel’s lungs, themselves steadily collapsing, under the weight of the past is it the future the future perfect the image you leave when you the ground the thirteenth

Fourth last paragraph

Let me reframe this project, putting walls back in place, a roof, windows, a door, a fourteenth floor not dissimilar to hundreds of others across a city like Sydney or Melbourne, or both. This report, which has taken the form of a collapsing edifice, a suffocating lung, or even a pavement rushing to meet the one who leaps, figures the style of the novel itself: varying discourses, philosophical, academic, literary and operatic, pushed to the point of impossibility and/or collapse. In fact this paper is part of the work. There is no novel. Just words around it. Literary and philosophical discourse like the white lines they drew around a no longer breathing body not far from here in Ultimo. The lines remained after they had moved it to the morgue, chalk lines around an absent body, a street side cenotaph, just as soon washed away by the rain.

5th.

Let me rip off the roof here. With another cigarette. An image of a lung. Blood spattered. Breathe in. Don’t - The third reason The 14th Floor is written for real is that it keeps returning to a missing body, my own ‘deeply desired flesh.’ To

explain what I mean I need to call upon Lacan's definition of the real as trauma, the violence of impact. But even that is too metaphoric. The opera couldn't capture it either, you can't catch the desire to leap, to go up in flames, to shatter your own mirror, I tore it up, it collapsed.

6th.

A cosmetically ornate orchestra, suturing over with strings, drums and low basses hints as to the horror which their wedding will betoken. The truth of the imagined community (for the opera is as much a product of The 14th Floor as The 14th Floor itself) is to burst forth in this archaic *ur*-image, a shattered mirror reflection of the modern. All in ruins, assailed on all sides, subject to wailing, mass murder, houses burning. The ruins, in this dramatisation of the recent past, leap out of their picture postcard frame to become none other than the ruins of the present. With no -

7th.

Let me tear down a wall here. Tear down a wall and you get a stage. Tear a stage into The 14th Floor and you get an opera. The more I have worked on this novel, constructing the fourteen flights-up floorplan, finding characters in this particular context, listening to what they said, the more I have realised that the unbearable self-sameness of the *I that is We* world (Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, where Spirit is defined as 'this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: "I" that is "We" and "We" that is "I" '(1977, p.110)) that I have confined myself to necessitates, like a logical inference, that I stage a diversion within it. Something for the characters in my novel to do when they are not working as characters in the novel. Something to look forward to. Death. Something to stop them obsessing, like good Hegelian subjects, on their own reflections. Mirrors demand to be shattered. Neither Hegel nor Anderson really

have a handle on this. Yet I believe that this experimentally generated result indicates something about the function of diversion within the modern, within The 14th Floor, within this paper. My doctoral investigations have accordingly collapsed into The Destruction of, a nineteenth century opera, with -

8th.

exemplifies this state of concrete abstraction. As does the modern novel, for it shows ‘ the “national imagination” at work in the movement of a solitary hero’ through an endlessly comparable and coeval ‘world of plurals.’ The ‘hospitals, prisons, remote villages, monasteries’ through which the narrator passes conjure up ‘a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside’ (p.30). Imagining a community of others passing horizontally through similar fourteenth floor spaces, the modern subject writes his / her own book, a nation-as-novel, connecting each character with all the other anonymously co-altitudinal characters, thus united in the ‘homogenous, empty time’ of the secular present. ‘Nothing assures us,’ Anderson continues, ‘of this sociological solidity more than the succession of plurals. For they conjure up a social space full of *comparable* prisons, none -

Let me open a door here - and this stupid experiment. I’ve timed giving up smoking with the writing of this paper so that whatever it is within me that needs to turn to ashes on the hour every hour might take form on this paper instead. An image of a lung. Blood spattered. The saints in Heaven, wrote Richard of Middleton, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, for they seek to be reunited ‘with their own deeply desired flesh.’ Let me open a door here -

in itself of any importance, but all representative (in their simultaneous, separate existence) of the oppressiveness of *this* colony’ (p.30). This abstract imagining somehow serves to hold the modern (in the absence of Heaven and Hell) together. Indeed affections more typical of the particular, the religious, familial or even maternal are transferred to the national body, whose hold displays such

‘remarkable confidence of community in anonymity’ (p.36). You will perhaps notice, at this stage in the experimental genesis of the nation-as-novel, that its characters have no character. And no future.

9th.

The second reason The 14th Floor is written for real is that modern society is itself a fiction. Such is the conclusion of Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1991). The characters I experimentally generated above can now take their place within a wider social framework. For the ‘generic conventions’ of the novel are those of modernity itself. A social scientist, Anderson reasons as follows: the nation-as-novel arises, first and foremost, from the chronological structure of modernity itself. Unlike the Medieval era, where my time span on Earth might race forward to meet the resurrection of my mortal remains on the Day of Judgement, time is now ‘homogenous and empty,’ free of interference, human or divine (Benjamin, 1973, p.263). Time at this moment, exists with or without me, and as such exemplifies -

10th.

Harold Pinter once stated that when creating plays he had typically ‘found a couple of characters in a particular context, thrown them together and listened to what they said’ (Pinter, 1983, p.xxviii). I want to utilise a similar method, taking the intellectual presuppositions of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit (1977) as the ‘test conditions’ for an experimental act of novel writing. According to the Phenomenology, it is only by knowing yourself as part of a greater whole that you acquire identity as yourself. From such a standpoint it is almost truer to say that the context (the fourteenth floor of a hospital, a residential block, a university admin. building) generates the character. More accurately, both arise from the experimental application of the same syllogism, *viz*:

minor premise: I live on the fourteenth floor

major premise: All the people who live on the fourteenth floor are characters in this book

conclusion: Therefore I am a character in this book

The Hegelian novel, written through experimental application of ‘the science of experience’ casts up characters with the curious capacity to reflect upon the test-conditions, or generic conventions, in which they are produced. In fact, they are all authors. Hegel would term this self-consciousness and see it as a prerequisite for existence in civil society, You will perhaps notice, at this stage in the experimental genesis of the Hegelian novel, that its characters have no character. And no future.

11th.

The 14th Floor is written for real for a number of reasons, first among them its status as a literary / scientific experiment. The word experiment was initially synonymous with the word experience, as their joint derivation from the Latin *experiri* indicates. The scientific experiment is based upon the scientist’s experience of phenomena produced, or even staged, within certain test conditions. The future is radically disavowed, for the point is simply to observe what happens right before one’s eyes, which is to say, the point is to find a semiotic form for the phenomena at hand. Substitute ‘generic conventions’ for ‘test conditions’ in the above formulation and it is possible to view experimental writing through a similarly scientific aesthetic.

12th.

Yet theological discourse has no place in this world. It has no place in this world because it concerns the future, whereas the present is the only time we can ever experience. To take Hegel’s claim seriously, one has to admit of everything that

happens, has happened or will happen, that it occurred, has occurred or will occur, in the present Not that this makes the immediacy of concrete experience that easy to attain. On the contrary, the necessary foundation of symbols and structures suspends this present in a strange sort of never quite there space of abstract immediacy. This is what I am calling The 14th Floor.

14th

Breathe in. We are back on The 14th Floor, a hi-rise novel set in the 'homogenous empty time' of the secular present, in accord with Hegel's dictum that 'reflection . . . is actual only in the present.' (1942, p.10). The aim of my experimental novel is to see what happens when a world is constituted by altitude alone.

To this end I am taking a hi-rise cross-section of civic life: a hospital, a residential block, a university admin. building - that is to say, the fourteenth floors thereof. For there are no ground shots, no parks, no tangible exteriors. Just thin air. And another fourteenth floor. The social ties within this world are horizontal, arbitrary and abstract.

The characters form a class defined by the altitude of their existence and that alone. The social landscape this practice constitutes is effectively not dissimilar to any other modern novel. As in Tolstoy, Dickens, or Flaubert, various characters across a city are described in their simultaneous and parallel existences, happenings and eventual encounters. Only here we are hi-rise and there is rather less space to breathe. Even with the windows open. For the world of my novel, 'actual only in the present,' is written for real.

The 13th floor.

I want to start with an image from the end of time: the Day of Judgement. Or rather I want to present a Medieval perspective on this moment, the day when the faithful souls in Heaven will

have their bodies restored to them. The corporeality of Medieval theology, the insistence that personhood is lodged in the body as much as the soul, is strikingly apparent in the eschatological texts of divines like Richard of Middleton. Richard claims that sheer bodily desire drives the saints in Heaven to pray for us sinners, now and at

the hour of our death. The saints seek to fill the places of the elect in Heaven and so hasten the coming of Judgement, for on that day these disembodied souls will be reunited 'with their own deeply desired flesh' (Walker-Bynum, 1991, p. 257). In such texts, Heaven itself is aflame with the desire for a body. A death.

2.7. progress report no.3

Progress Report 3 for Autumn Semester

i) The goals which you set for the semester:

I aimed to produce a 20,000 word draft toward my experimental novel, The 14th Floor, an Hyperthesis. The work was to take the form of a *multiple-personality disorder*. The novel's 10 main characters were also to function as its 10 authors. They would describe a world set entirely on the 14th floor of various buildings across a city like Sydney or Melbourne, or both. Beginning with the story of **a**, a thief trying to work out how to pick pockets in a hi-rise nudist colony, the work would culminate in a Neighbourhood Watch Meeting superimposed (the 14th floor being, as is often the case, actually the 13th) upon a Mental Health Volunteers workshop. This final meeting of minds was to be modelled on Plato's similarly decalogic Symposium (1980). Like Plato, I was seeking to dramatise my characters' view on the phenomenon of love, 'mind's feeling,' as Hegel described it, in The Philosophy of Right, 'of its own unity' (1941, p.110). Such were the hopes with which I began the 3rd semester of my Doctorate of Creative Arts.

ii) Comment on your progress in relation to these goals, and on any other achievements:

I wrote 13,938 words of the novel. I created 10 distinct characters. I found 10 different genres for them (for each character wrote in a separate genre; eg. **b**, a 17 year old Lolita, wrote opera libretti, **d**, a transvestite, wrote horror, **e** a psychiatrist, wrote situation comedy etc). I managed to introduce all of these characters in alphabetical order. In

sum, I met .6969 recurring of my quota. Yet the resultant text was unreadable. You cannot shift each page between 10 different authorial styles and retain narrational tension. The work collapsed in the confusion of disparate voices. I had constructed a literary prison. A disturbing finding. A suicide of a book.

This finding certainly constituted a regress. Yet I feel that my doctorate has progressed all the same. For in realising, some half-way through the semester, that my novel had leapt out the window, I worked out that I could perhaps redeem this loss, if only I could find a different way of framing it. I decided that the way to do so was to reassert the scientific component of my doctorate, the portion intended to constitute a 'significant contribution to knowledge'. That is, I decided to treat the manuscript of my experimental novel as a literal experiment, produced in the creative laboratory of my mind. I would now write up the results, and seek through them to formulate answers to the very questions with which I began the research. For the experience of having one's experimental novel blow up surely has something to offer an inquiry into the nature of literature and its relation to life. It was a relief to realise this.

Also, this 'prac report' format will help me find my own face in it all. For I had a sister who suicided, from a height, and in the midst of a psychosis. I have always intended to dedicate The 14th Floor to her, as well as to a friend of mine who was randomly murdered in the shadow of the UTS building some few years ago. Something in the ferocity of such events is recalcitrant to the sublimatory work I have tried to perform through the medium of the novel. I want to use the expanded format of the science report to work out just what; and to theorise what this says about literature more generally. Freud says that it is only when you manage to put trauma into words, that you will find a way to stop living it out in the world around you. Literature, I want to show, has just this vital function (something I will seek to prove in the lack).

This then will constitute the first of my portfolio pieces: The 14th floor, an Hypothesis, a scientific report, in prose, on the explosion of my experimental novel. I have already

produced some 10,000 words of draft text and plans, all of which my supervisor Professor Stephen Muecke has read, and found promising.

The second of the progresses I have to report this semester was also in the nature of a leap, the discovery that I had written my main portfolio piece without even realising it. For, while my attention, these last 18 months, has been taken up with the novel, I have been compiling, on the side, and as if in a trance, a manuscript of poetry entitled Cube Root of Book. It was only in the strange space consequent upon my novel's collapse, and with the encouragement of Dr John Leonard, poetry critic, editor and anthologist, that I realised that this ms. was indeed my doctorate.

Cube Root of Book sets a series of 133 autobiopoetical utterances along the descending spiral of a Fibonacci number sequence. The poems are numbered, rather than titled. The work changes tenor as it goes, for the descent charted through this series of ever deeper descents is falling in love. A 1,500 word prose introduction crystallises these numerical and affective patterns, and extends their range beyond the Cube Root of Book at hand. Adding up facts in biology, number theory, mysticism and poetics, I seek, in this retrospective introduction, to comprehend the significance of numerical patterning within life itself. That is to say I formulate a theory of love. For love could be a numerical / topological phenomenon as much as a novelistic one. And the spiral could instance its deepening shape, as much as any hi-rise novel. Or rather, the poetic spiral and the linear plot are really one with each other. For we're all bisexual really.

So the second of my portfolio pieces will be this Cube Root of Book, a 60 or so page book of poetry, with 1,500 word prose introduction. The work is about half complete. Dr Leonard is generously offering editorial assistance.

iii) Problems or issues which affected your progress and the strategies identified to overcome them:

Introduction to Cube Root of Book

1728. This book takes the form of a spiral. We begin in outer space. A nineteenth century theory of the giant spiral nebulae that form in the heavens attributes their whirlpool shape to a prior collision of stellar bodies. As the energy unleashed by the collision diminishes, the particles released tend to drift toward an ever more rapidly spiralling centre. So they maintain their original momentum, much as the reader of a new book, gaining familiarity with the mind of its author, reads faster and faster to maintain the excitement of first contact. A new universe of disparate phenomena steadily contract into a reading, a set of characterisations, a body even, albeit of data. What prior collision?

1331. The poems are numbered, not titled. The initially sparse sequence they form descends from 1296, 1152, 1008, 864, through steadily contracting intervals, to 4, 3, 2, 1. That is, it converges into a downward spiral. The sequence charts my autobiopoetical descent through this last year. Chapters form in the process. The first 12 poems in the book (1296, 1152, 1008, 864, 720, 576, 432, 288, 144, 0^{144} , -144, -288) are also the first poems in each of their respective chapters. The next 12 poems yield, in sequence, and respectively, the second poem to each chapter. The next set of 12, the set of third poems *et sq.* Each of these chapters cuts through time to register a repetition, a trait (or is it face?) of mine, as I spiral diachronically down through a year of confusion, broken glass and collapsed horizons. The 12 is also the 12 months of the year, which, if you freeze time, at least serves to make loss, like this winter past, a seasonal phenomenon, one shape among many.

1000. And there *are* numbers and shapes in nature. Seasons and sunsets cycle around us, while ocean waves form in the same equiangular spiral shape as nautilus shells, tree ferns and cyclamen flowers. The muscular fibres of the heart are likewise arranged in spiral formation. A spiral heartbeat. A counting machine. 9, 8, 7 . . . There is a definite, restorative, pleasure in experientially uncovering identities and patterns in disparate data, whether in the book of nature, or the book in your hands underneath those clothes you're naked. Excuse me. The ideal reader

of this literary experiment is wearing a lab coat, and trying, through inductive processes, to discover new forms of coherence in the mental universe whose contours it charts. He or she hypothetically isolates Chapter 8 (1152, 712, 440, 272, 168, 104, 64, 40, 24, 16, 8), unweaves this single thread from the text, reads sequentially and downward. From the 12-sided confusion of a life lived through the present, a character emerges with sudden clarity. Blood red clarity - a sick and fucked up bitch. How did I lose the plot? What's there to hold onto when you're spiralling like water or blood down a drain, the name of . . . the cube root of this book is a coffin, fingernailed at the edges. Give me my face back.

729. Read this book backwards, Chapter 1 that is, starting at Poem 1, and following in sequence: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89 and up to 144. Ignore the contents of the chapter and focus on the numbers which metricate it. This is the Fibonacci Sequence, defined algebraically as $t_{n+1} = t_n + t_{n-1}$ for the initial values $t_1 = t_2 = 1$. The n in subscript stands for the n th term in the sequence. So t_{9+1} (i.e. the 10th term, 89) = t_9 (55) + t_8 (34). Each term, that is, is the sum of the two previous terms: 55 = 34 + 21; 89 = 55 + 34; 144 = 89 + 55 and so forth. Now take any two successive terms and form a fraction of the sort t_n / t_{n-1} e.g. 55/34. Put through a calculator this gives 1.617647058, an approximate value of the Golden Ratio, also known as the Divine Proportion. The higher the two terms divided in this fashion, e.g. 89/55 = 1.618181818, the closer the fraction will converge upon the ratio, which cannot in fact be expressed in whole numbers. To draw it, rule up a rectangle of sides t_n by t_{n+1} e.g. 13 by 21. A series of such rectangles, each set perpendicularly within the next largest, here 21 by 34, will take the form of a logarithmic spiral, 34 by 55, the same shape one discerns, 55 by 89, in the nautilus shells and, 89 by 144, the cyclamen flowers previously referred to. This book takes the form of a spiral.

512. A spiral which opens out like nature. The Fibonacci sequence, the ratio it embodies, and the spiral it instances are all found in the world around us. The cyclical intervals at which leaves stem around a branch are nearly always ratios of

Fibonacci numbers : pear trees, like weeping willows, generate stems every $3/8$ of a revolution around the branch, almond trees every $5/13$. Higher ratios appear in the spiral rows of more densely packed flora, like the pine cone, whose bracts invariably display Fibonacci ratios of gradual and steep spirals, whether 3 to 5, 5 to 8, or 8 to 13. Pineapples feature 8 or 13 or 21 spirals, while the seeds on the head of a sunflower open out into two distinct spirals of 34 and 55, or, in the case of the giant sunflower, 55 and 89. Rare cases have been reported of 89 and 144, and even 144 and 233. Multiples of the sequence are also found. Occasionally you see double Fibonacci numbers, e.g. 68 and 110, whether on sunflower heads or even in the sequence which, in reverse, forms Chapter 2 of this book (2, 4, 6, 10, 16, 26, 42, 68, 110, 178, 288 . . .). Chapter 3, opening up further, is a triple Fibonacci sequence, Chapter 4 a quadruple sequence and onward and upward.

343. A confession: the following poems, titles aside, are neither nodes of natural history, nor instantiations of number theory. The scientific status of this cube root of book is that of artifice and accident. As I wrote in paragraph **11³**, the autobiopoetical moments you find here were collected, like so many strange butterflies, over the course of a year. I had been thinking of life as a series of haiku (all haiku having seasonal reference) as a way of seeing an end to the dead leaves of autumn then rushing to meet me; as a way of reading suicide mirrors glass hatred and hope as part of a natural cycle. Yet sometimes natural cycles lose their handholds, and drown into downward spirals. To have 133 poems swirling all around you, each expressing this fact, is like the floor is

216. Numbers are meaningless. If 2 glass plates are mounted face to face they produce 4 interior reflective surfaces. If a ray of light, passing through, is reflected twice, it can follow either of 3 different paths through the glass. If it is reflected thrice, there will be 5 possible paths. If 4 times, 8 paths. If 5 times, 13 paths. If 6 times, a shattered mirror

a shattered mirror,

and it still is

125.

64.

27.

8. skies. A dodecahedron. Like the spiral nebulae, the dodecahedron has beautiful properties, among them the way it manages to combine 12 perfect pentagonal faces into the one three dimensional shape. Isolate any one of these faces, and you have a two dimensional pentagon, with 5 interior angles, each equal to 72° ($5 \times 72^\circ = 360^\circ$). Run a diagonal line between any one of these 72° interior angles and another. The length of the diagonal will form a Fibonacci ratio with the length of any given side; so a diagonal of 144 units will yield a pentagon of side length 89 units; a diagonal of 55 will give side length 34; a diagonal of 21 will yield side length 13. The Star shaped pentagram, on the other hand, has interior angles of 36° ($5 \times 36^\circ = 180^\circ$). It also serves as a two dimensional model of the Divine Proportion. To form the pentagram, set 5 lines in a star shape, each intersected by two others at points $55/144$, and $89/144$ (or any similar pair of t_{n-2}/t_n and t_{n-1}/t_n Fibonacci ratios). A cluster of these 5-pointed stars, set, one for one, within a series of pentagons, the pentagons themselves arrayed around a central 10 point star, will create one of the (at once expanding and contracting) tile patterns which in Islam serve to express the breathing of the cosmos.

1.

v) An outline of agreed goals and a workplan for the forthcoming semester:

Over the next semester I will divide my time between these two projects.

I am happy with the structure of Cube Root of Book, and am now focussed entirely on the individual poems that form its contents. I will have to write another 1/2 bookfull of poems by the end of the doctorate, and further to polish those I already have. Over the next semester I plan to write another 1/4 of the poems. Then semesters 5 and 6 can be devoted to re-working the prose introduction, and to finding the last 1/4 of the poems. Cube the result and you will have the same number you started with.

As for The 14th Floor, A Hypothesis, I have a detailed plan of the overall work, have drafts of chapters 0 and 1 (there are 14 chapters in total) and a fair amount of the secondary literature read and ready. I aim to write chapters 2, 3, 4 & 5 over the following semester. Grounding the project in a) the losses which occasioned it, and b) the philosophy of science which raises it back into the realm of exchangeable knowledge, these chapters will also set forth c) my investigative data, *viz.* the ms. experimentally produced this semester last. In semester 5, I will turn to write up the results of these observations, seeking to show the implications the experiment has for the theory of literature, in particular its relation to suicide, psychosis and gender (chapters 6, 7, 8 & 9). During this coming semester, I will need to read ahead for semester 5, and to this end will continue my work on Spinoza, Lacan, Schreber and sexchange. This will leave chapters 10, 11, 12 and 14 (13 does not exist) for the final semester. These chapters, leading up to the 14th, constitute a mediation upon logic and poetics, which is where I arrive after passing through all the stories below. Out in the open and dizzy with words looking up from the page.

2.8. chapter of prac report

the 14th floor: an hyperthesis

the work has 14 chapters

Chapter1: What is it, to blow a book up?

Mayakovsky writes of tending his new Soviet passport for the first time to Western border officials: *They looked at it like a hand-grenade, like it were about to blow up.*

Obviously poetry does not have quite the same effect as an exploding passport. That is to say, this anecdote about early twentieth century international relations will only take me so far into a theory of the sort of books Mayakovsky authored, a theory of art itself.

Though then again . . .

In January 1981, the Frankfurt Opera's staging of Aida opened with Radames, the Captain of the Egyptian guard, the hero of the opera, alone on stage, and dressed in a contemporary bourgeois business suit. Radames moved around the stage throughout the overture, as if in a dream, and then grabbed a nearby shovel and proceeded, still in business suit, to dig a hole through the floorboards of the stage. He pulled out some sand, a sword, his Egyptian helmet and, finally, a sculpted head of Aida herself. With which the fantasy could begin. Only performances were interrupted nightly, not merely with whistles and catcalls, but even bomb threats (Weber, S. 1993, pp.107-8). There are buttons you should not push. Nightly. For if the past accessed in literature and the arts is a foreign country, the borders call forth their own defences.

This first chapter will constitute something of a literature search, and as such it too will involve some travelling. I wish to open up the field of the experiment to follow. I will do so with illustrations from other times and places.

Though in truth the borders I am approaching are rather more local: the defences of one's own body. Which are absolutely necessary. As are the arts themselves. Among the various 'processes of mortification' which Erving Goffmann (1968a) identifies in the inductive and punitive procedures of 'total institutions' like the army, the church and the mental asylum, is 'the unavailability of fantasy materials such as movies and books' (p.51). Deprivation of fantasy materials appears, in Goffmann's list, alongside the withholding of food and shelter. This is quite a startling finding. That the absence of the arts may constitute 'a violation of the self's boundaries' (p.51) seems almost absurd; surely *we* and our fantasy materials are strictly separable entities. But then I think how my present life would look and sound without something to distract me from it.

Or I imagine it the other way round, which is the same thing: the dearth of fantasy materials suffered by the psychotic judge Schreber, by dint of the fact that all he could see around him was his own face. In reference to his realisation that 'everything that happens,' viz. everything on earth, 'is in reference to me,' Schreber writes that

[t]his completely absurd conception, which was at first naturally incomprehensible to me but which I was forced to acknowledge as a fact through years of experience, becomes apparent at every opportunity and occasion. For instance, when I read a book or a newspaper, one thinks that the ideas in them are my own; when I play a song or an opera arrangement for the piano, one thinks that the text of the song or opera expresses my own feelings.

(Schreber, 2000, p.197)

The more you read Schreber's Memoirs of My Nervous Illness, the more you realise the horror of such complete narcissism. You need to find your escapism outside of your own body. Or it will become a prison, a 'violation of the self's boundaries' (- or a work of art, something I shall discuss in relation to cosmetics, in part b above).

Goffmann's finding perhaps reveals why the Frankfurt audience could not bear to see itself, outside itself, as so many bourgeois (bourgeois dreaming of being Radames). And why Mayakovsky's poetic life-work, so I-bound in its reference, tended so unremittingly toward the suicidal. For people are walking books, really. And some of them blow up. Inside:

Every sinner thus carries with him into the world beyond death the instruments of his own punishment; and the Koran says truly, 'verily you shall see hell; you shall see it with the eye of certainty,' and 'hell surrounds the unbelievers.' It does not say 'will surround them,' for it is round them even now.

(Al-Ghazzali, 1980, p.58)

In another time, another place. For surely that's what literature is for: to transport us.

But is that possible? Turn to seventeenth century Amsterdam, where Benedict Spinoza, the descendant of exiled Portuguese Jews, heretic and outcast of the Amsterdam synagogue, composed his Ethics:

[W]e can only distinctly imagine distance of time, like that of space, up to a certain limit, that is, just as those things which are beyond two hundred paces from us, or whose distance from the place where we are exceeds that which we can distinctly imagine, we are wont to imagine equally distant from us and as if

they were in the same plane, so also those objects whose time of existing we imagine to be distant from the present by a longer interval than that which we are accustomed to imagine, we imagine all to be equally distant from the present, and refer them all to one moment of time.

(Spinoza, n.d., p.144-5)

Distant places and past times, once out of sight, all appear on the same screen, according to Spinoza. My mental image of Moscow is just as close or as distant as my image of Sydney, 'equally distant from us . . . as if they were in the same plane.'

Surely this is the truth of writing also; when I read twelfth century Sufi texts like Al-Ghazzali's they speak just as vividly to me as Mayakovsky's eighty year old verse. All writers speak in the same 'one moment of time,' whether they are writing from the nineteenth century Leipzig lunatic asylum, the American university of the late 1950s, or the seventeenth century lens-grinding workshop in which Spinoza worked. His optic is clear. There is only one other time, only one other place to the present: the flat screen of the imagination. You and your phantasy. The borders of the body between. There's no other way.

Spinoza could well - conceptually at least - have invented the television set. I say this, changing channels back to Mayakovsky, because of a statistic that haunts me. The single greatest cause of domestic house fires in Moscow, when I lived there in the early 1990's, was the random and periodic explosion of Soviet-made TV sets. This is not a logical connection. For people are walking books, really. Moscow in full blown *perestroika* - watching the news could be a strange enough experience. Exploding TV sets, brilliantly burning hi-rise buildings, smog stained skies and And some of them blow up.

This is perhaps enough of an indication of where I want to take this chapter. Forget about another time, another place, and literature is suddenly a mirror for the ego and its other, the reader and the words on a page. What words behind those words? This literature search will hence reveal itself as a quest for the being (the nature, the spirit, the 'You' as the Sufis would say) of literature itself. Who are you?

b)

The question of literature - and the broader question of the arts in general, what they do and why - motivates the scientific experiment to follow. My hypothesis, which I shall sketch in brief over the remaining part of this chapter, is that the literary work can be read like a book because people themselves are read like books. Just like this one.

A fact that is often simply out of their hands. Take the face. 'I felt as if it had nothing to do with me' writes a victim of massive facial disfigurement, of her new mirror reflection:

it was only a disguise. But it was not the kind of disguise which is put on voluntarily by the person who wears it, and which is intended to confuse other people as to one's identity. My disguise had been put on me without my consent or knowledge like the ones in fairy tales, and it was I myself who was confused by it, as to my own identity . . . It was only a disguise, but it was on me for life. It was there, it was there, it was there, it was real.

(anon. in Goffmann, 1968b, p.19)

The subject's face, now no longer hers, is 'only a disguise,' and yet it is one she cannot remove 'on me for life.' It's utterly tragic. It is as if she has realised the arbitrariness of the symbolic function (the face as a mask, a token in a network of informational exchange and self-enactment, an artificial construct which 'had nothing to do with me') at exactly the same mirror moment in which she realises the immutability of the expression it has assumed in her. It's written into her very features.

This may seem extreme. Clearly people are not read just for their looks. But then again, when someone wants to read you the wrong way, isn't it similar? 'My disguise had been put on me without my consent or knowledge.' Isn't that what it is like, when someone reads you wrong, sentences you, in your very own words, to play out a part that you do not own as your own. They steal your face. It feels that physical.

Whereas the creative work attempts to put the best face on things. And if it is not literally the face I am talking about, then it is something like one's personality. Though a personality is rather more like a face than one might think. After all you don't choose your personality (nor your death mask). The word personality is derived from the Latin *persona*, which denoted the tragic or comic mask worn by the actors of classical drama. A disturbing thought: for a personality may well be a mask in its function as a symbol of artifice and illusion, but it is also a mask in the sense of a face reduced of all gestural or semantic lability, the walled-up castle of an imprisoning ego. The me from which Mayakovsky shot himself in the head. You steal your own face. That's what a personality is.

These are just conjectures, awaiting scientific verification.

Like the following: If the work is read like a person, it is because it is read for the impress it bears of its author's mind, of his or her personality. Hence the extraordinary opening to Hans Jurgen Syberbeg's film of Wagner's opera Parsifal (1982), which presents the work's overture *via* a series of long tracking shots in and around a house-high model of Wagner's head. Tresses and buttresses come into view, revealing that the head is in fact a stage set, populated with the cast of the production to follow. What is the Parsifal, Syberberg seems to be asking, if not an insight into the mind (from the counter-tenor choruses of boys down to Titurel's awesome aria of paternal vengeance) of its super-ego-maniacal creator?

The creative work puts the best face on things literally. For there is a world of difference between being read like a book and being read as the author of a book. Beauty resides in consciously recognised artifice, which explains the extraordinary fact that cosmetics actually work. The suspension of disbelief runs right up to the beauty of the face itself, thank God. And it is this that explains how Hegel could include bodily adornment, alongside poetry, painting and play-writing, in his discussion of the various arts (1993, p.49).

I would say that all of the arts, are, ultimately, arts of bodily adornment, though again, this claim awaits verification.

Illustration.

Expiation.

But what am I doing here, writing this self-portrait of books that explode like people, of missing faces, of me blown up - where are you my love, my creative work I was given this scholarship to write? - in words and ideas all over the page, of cosmetics, of blood, of bodily adornment.

This is an exploded novel, a term I take from Maud Manoni, who in 1969 set up an 'exploded institution,' an institution for mentally deranged, sociopathic, and otherwise disturbed children, whom she sent out to places all over the French countryside, to reintegrate them into the community from which they were cast (as described in her polemic Words have weight. They are alive: What has become of our 'mad' children? (1998)). Rather than locking them into a building. My novel is all over the place, an explosion, a scientific experiment gone wrong, a hand grenade, one me too many, a countryside of disturbed children, an attempt to try again.

Let me bury my dead.

Through the story of a science project, a doctorate that exploded.

The report upon which follows.

2.9. torn poster

[. . .]

Chapter 11 - 101 suicides

In this chapter I turn thirty three, bid farewell to my madness and try to learn how to read the newspapers (which Hegel claimed was modern man's way of saying his daily prayers (cited in Anderson, 1991, p.35)). Judge Daniel Paul Schreber learnt to read the newspapers prior to his own social reintegration (2000). Schreber inspires me, because he went from a situation of complete social disintegration to a position of relative sociability, by taking his case for release from involuntary commitment to the courts of the land. And there, calling upon a lifetime's legal knowledge, he argued for his right to be released, the fact that he was completely insane notwithstanding. Schreber succeeded, in this fashion, in re-entering civil society, even though his "bellowing miracles" occasionally upset the neighbours (p.301).

I combine this appreciation of Schreber's 'art of conducting my life in the mad position I find myself' (p.251), with a completely perverse reading of Orwell's 1984 (1954). Winston also learnt, having passed through Room 101, to read the papers. I actually think 1984 is a book about enlightenment and coming into one's adulthood, which is where Winston ends up at book's end, free of illusions and sibling rivalry. *Under the spreading chestnut tree / I sold you and you sold me* (p.236). Winston is by this point literally *dis*-illusioned. Which is as much as to say that he has arrived. And now might just be capable of love. And politics. At least this is the case if you take the book on the allegorical level I am suggesting; if you read it not as a novel about Stalin, but rather as a book about the tyrannical empire of the ego surrounding us all.

I conclude this chapter with some discussion of 101 Suicides, the new project I am contemplating, a historical *work* which begins with short biographies of various suicides: artists, poets and misfits like Mayakovsky, Lowry, Plath, Witkiewicz and Benjamin and

turns increasingly to biographies of mystics, those like Saint John, Saint Theresa and Rumi, who describe their spiritual progress as a sort of death to the self, a suicide to the self which opens new vistas on life.

Chapter 12 - The poem as a logical proposition

In the following two chapters I return to considering creative practice as a variety of science, via further reflections on the philosophy of science, this time through Wittgenstein:

[*the following precis are still under construction*]

- 1) Wittgenstein's picture theory of reality:
a logical proposition is a picture of the world
(*reading the tractatus in reverse this gives:*
so a picture of the world is a logical proposition
- 2) a (painting or a) haiku is a hypothesis, tested in the reading -
reader as scientist testing effect on self
(self-experimental reading)
(thus from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*)
- 3) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: Nature speaks propositions
Science seeks propositional patterns in nature, as in maths, ie. poems
universe as a symphony → Peirce - semiotic of
- 4) now the aesthetic sense aims
at accessing the mind/ consciousness/ personality behind the work (in Hegel)
while the (an)aesthetic of the scientist (reader as scientist *qua* para.2 below)
aims to access the state of mind - of God, who is dead ^{hyperlink → 2.2 letter to supervisor}
below

or a figure of one's desire

- 4) Dante's Heaven all in black
Poem as a death mask; science as God's death mask
Paradise is death

Chapter 14 – Dante's heaven, all in black

enjoy the view becoming a person, the horror of silence
on death as knowledge - death as life -

work = death

what artist does, what worker does – c/f life; Peirce and science as non-vital; Jakobson and theory of poetry there; my stuff on Shakespeare; it works perfectly; 2 types of law in Spinoza; scientific formalisation which lacks a sign for death c/f artistic stuff, which provides it's absence :

beauty... = what beauty is = a suicide backwards, a beautiful death, means reality is death,

exegi monumentum

[shariff 16-17: god allied to vital principle; 19, 20, 21 universe as an argument, a symphony etc

The mystical thing, as Wittgenstein put it, *is not how the world is, but that it is.*

architecture as frozen music - Goethe 337 in Cook

heraclitus fr 16 whatever we see waking is death!

paradise = death

¹ Robert Browning, in 'Fra Lippo Lippi' puts it thus (impersonating a 16th century monk-artist, caught whoring, and taking the opportunity to protest against his masters curiously Hegelian views on art):

*A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
 And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
 When what you put for yellow's simply black,
 And any sort of meaning looks intense
 When all beside itself means and looks nought.
 Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
 Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
 The prior's niece . . . patron-saint – is it so pretty
 You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
 Sorrow or joy? Won't beauty go with these?
 Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
 Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
 And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all –
(I never saw it – put the case the same –)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
 'Rub all out!' Well, well, there's my life, in short,
 And so the thing has gone on ever since.*

If this first six lines exposes the weakness (and the monasticism, albeit protestant in his case) of Hegel's reading of art-beyond-art, the second ('beauty with no soul at all,' which Lippo has never even seen) cuts the breath short with something ('indifferent, not-free or self-conscious') which must be closer to fainting. And perhaps Kant. Who, like Browning, is dead.

book three

of

Hello, ruel World

by Paul Magee

in fullfilment of the Doctorate of Creative Arts at UTS

a - lenin the thief (ЛЕНИН ВОР)

Although the editorial office of Proletary had already been transferred to Paris, Ленин would probably not have followed it but for the advice of two party members, who somehow convinced him that he would be less likely to be spied on in Paris than in Geneva. Even though the size of the French capital, compared with the Swiss city, would presumably make surveillance more difficult, the Russian secret police had their own headquarters in Paris; and it is significant that one of those who recommended Ленин to move was later discovered to be a police spy. Once again, the sophisticated Ленин showed himself to be curiously vulnerable to police infiltration.

*

'You always preach socialist revolution and the expropriation of the expropriators,' the future Russian Ambassador to Britain said to him. 'But tell me, if you met Rothschild carrying a heavy purse, could you rob him yourself and take his purse by threatening him with a revolver?' Ленин laughed and replied, 'I don't think so.'

*

The year 1910 started unfortunately for Ленин when he was returning home on his bicycle from watching an air display at Juvisy-sur-Orge: twenty-two kilometres from Paris, a car collided with him outside the airfield and although he was not hurt his bicycle was wrecked. 'People helped me take the number and acted as witnesses,' he wrote to his sister Maria. 'I have found out who the owner of the car is (a viscount, the devil take him!), and now I have taken him to court.' Ленин won his case against the viscount, a bright spot in what was to be, politically, a year of frustrating discussions during which he . . .

*

Subsequently, it was found that one of the five was a police agent - a further illustration of ЛЕНИН 's particular vulnerability.

*

'I too used to live on a country estate which belonged to my grandfather. In a sense, I too am a scion of the landed gentry. This is all many years ago, but I still haven't forgotten neither its lime-trees nor its flowers. So go on, put me to death. I remember with pleasure how I used to loll about in haystacks, although I had not made them, how I used to eat strawberries and raspberries, although I had not planted them, and how I used to drink fresh milk, although I had not milked the cows. I gather from what you've just said . . . that you consider such memories unworthy of a revolutionary. So am I to understand that I too am unworthy to be called a revolutionary?'

b - lenin the femme fatale (ЛЕНИН ЖЕНСКОЙ СЛАБОСТИ)

Yet with ordinary people he could, on the contrary, strike up friendships that were genuine and lasting. Giovanni Spadaro, an old Capri fisherman whom he got to know when visiting Gorky, would say of him 'Only an honest man could laugh like that,' and others, intrigued by his ability to catch fish without a rod, a skill which earned him the nickname of 'Drin Drin,' would later ask Gorky 'How is Drin Drin getting on? The Tsar hasn't caught him yet?'

* *post-revolution*

‘ЛЕНИН is quite unique. There are no others like him. Once I was driving him along Myasnitskaya Street when the traffic was very heavy. I hardly moved forward. I was afraid of the car getting smashed and was sounding the horn, feeling very worried. He opened the door, reached me by standing on the footboard, meanwhile running the risk of being knocked down, and urged me to go forward. "Don't worry Gil, go on like everyone else."'

*

After a fortnight of discussion he left for France to join Krupskaya and her mother, already on holiday in two rooms of a coastguard's cottage at Pornic on the Bay of Biscay, west of Nantes. Here ЛЕНИН thoroughly enjoyed himself:

‘He bathed in the sea a great deal, cycled - he loved the sea and the sea breezes - and chatted cheerfully on all sorts of subjects with the Kostitsins, enjoyed eating the crabs which the coastguard caught for us. In fact, our landlord and his wife took a great liking to Ilyich.’

*

‘ . . . the clothing of ЛЕНИН, this stormy individual, was always in perfect order,’ wrote Nikolay Valentinov (Volsky), a revolutionary who broke with ЛЕНИН after a year's work with him in Geneva, but who left revealing reminiscences of the period. ‘He never wore anything expensive, but his clothes were always neat and well-cared-for. He never had a spot on his suit and there were no signs of wear on his trousers; he did not wear shoes worn down at the heels (ЛЕНИН loved shoes with high, new heels!) and he always had clean boots.’ As a student he mended his own clothes, sewing on buttons when necessary, and generally kept up a neatness of appearance very different from his companions.

с - lenin the nurse (ленин гренландская)

'My mother came to stay with us, and later Maria Ilyinichna lived with us for a time. The Bogdanovs came to live upstairs, and Dubrovinsky (Innokenty) came there in 1907. At that time the Russian police had decided not to meddle in Finland, and we had considerable freedom there. The door of the house was never bolted, a jug of milk and a loaf of bread were left in the dining room overnight, and bedding spread on the divan, so that in the event of anyone coming on the night train they could enter without waking anybody, have some refreshment, and lie down to sleep. In the morning we often found colleagues in the dining-room who had come in the night.'

*

'Last Sunday we went for a lovely walk up "our" little mountain. The view of the Alps was very beautiful; I was sorry you were not there with usHow are you getting on? Are you content? Don't you feel you are lonely? Are you very busy? You are giving me great anxiety by not giving any news about yourself!Where are you living? Where do you eat? At the "buffet" of the National Library?'

*

[O]ne colleague has remarked on how ленин, watching Bernhardt acting in The Lady of the Camellias in Geneva, was seen to be wiping away his tears.

*

. . . helped Ленин and Krupskaya, now travelling as Mr and Mrs Richter, to find two rooms at 30 Holford Square in the Grays Inn Road area of central London. Here they settled down in the house of a Mrs Yeo, a landlady who was mildly allergic to foreigners, was suspicious of Krupskaya's lack of a wedding ring (the makeshift Siberian product having apparently been discarded) and disliked the fact that the Richters, German as they were considered to be, put up curtains in their room on a Sunday. But Ленин, revealing a lifelong weakness, gave Mrs Yeo's cat a friendly reception, which helped their cause.

* *post-revolution*

At the end of the meeting, Liberman continues, he was approached by Ленин's chauffeur who said that he had been instructed to drive him home since Ленин thought that he looked unwell. 'I thought bitterly,' Liberman writes, 'here is a ****
***** indeed - while ** *** ***** ** ***** ***** ** ***** *****', Ленин had also remarked to himself that I was suffering from a bad cold, and must be fetched home in his car.'

d - Lenin the drag queen (Ленин Смешанный, Гибридный)

As Rovio later remembered, Ленин had asked him to get a wig, some dye for his eyebrows, and a passport, and arrange secret accommodation for him in Petrograd. There had been no time for a wig to be made and Lenin had to do as best he could with a ready made one. He had then set off for the frontier and crossed it without trouble.

*

Ленин spent three days in Paris, accompanied by P.A. Krasnikov and Lydia Fotiyeva. Two of his evenings were free and on the first he attended the opera but found it boring. On the other night he went with his two colleagues to the Folies Bergères. Fotiyeva remembered one particular item, The Legs of Paris:

‘The curtain was raised knee-high, showing the legs of people of different walks of life and social standing moving across a stage. There was a workingman, a street-light man, a grisette, a priest, a policeman, a small shopkeeper, a Paris dandy, and many others. The legs were so emphatically typical that there was no mistaking their owners, and you could easily picture the person they belonged to. It was very amusing. Vladimir Ilyich laughed infectiously as he alone knew how, and he really enjoyed himself that evening.’

*

By 10 July he decided that it was time to leave Petrograd. He shaved off his beard, changed into a brown coat and cap and secured the help of N.A. Emelyanov, a loyal Party worker who has left a vivid account of the events that followed.

*

‘All those letters about handkerchiefs (passports), brewing beer, warm fur (illegal literature), all those code-names for towns – beginning with the same letter as the name of the town (“Ossip” for Odessa, “Terenty” for Tver, “Petya” for Poltava, “Pasha” for Pskov, etc.) all this substitution of women’s names for men’s, and vice versa – all this was transparent in the extreme.’

*

Ленин later wrote to Karpinsky asking him to take out papers in Karpinsky's own name for travelling to France and England. 'I will use them to travel through England (and Holland) to Russia,' he went on. 'I can put on a wig. The photograph will be taken of me with the wig on, and I shall go to the Consulate in Berne with your papers and wearing the wig.'

These hare-brained schemes were an indication of Ленин's desperation to be in the centre of the stage.

** post-revolution*

The low-ceilinged suit of rooms had been occupied by a lady-in-waiting before the Revolution and was quite adequate for Ленин's taste.

*

. . . she settled down with him in the suburb of Schwabing, carrying a Bulgarian passport in the name of Frau Maritzen while Ленин used a passport which described him as another Bulgarian, Dr jur Jordan Jourdanoff.

e - lenin the psychiatrist (Ленин

Психиатр)

'Our room was clean with electric light, but without service; we had to tidy up the room ourselves and clean our own shoes. The latter function was assumed, emulating the Swiss, by Vladimir Ilyich, and every morning he would take my mountain shoes and his and go to the shed set aside for this purpose,

exchanging pleasantries with other boot-blacks and displaying such zeal that once he knocked down a wicker-basket of empty beer bottles to the accompaniment of general laughter.'

*

'He loved fun, and when he laughed it was with his whole body; he was quite overcome with laughter and would laugh sometimes until he cried. He could give to his short characteristic exclamation "H'm, h'm" an infinite number of modifications, from biting sarcasm to noncommittal doubt. Often in this "h'm h'm" one caught the sound of the keen humour which a sharp-sighted man experiences who sees clearly through the stupidities of life.'

*

It is clear from his letters to his mother that Alpine scenery provided some compensation for his deficiencies in German, and he wrote 'The scenery here is splendid. I am enjoying it all the time. The Alps began immediately after the little German station I wrote to you from; then came the lakes and I could not tear myself away from the window of the railway carriage.' Most forms of mountain activity also fascinated ЛЕНИН. 'Do you ski?' he asked one friend. 'Certainly take it up. It's wonderful in the mountains in winter.'

*

'I am having a rest such as I have not had for several years,' he wrote to his sister Maria, while his mother was told by Krupskaya: 'We have all put on so much weight it's not decent to show ourselves in public . . . Here there is a pine forest, sea, magnificent weather; in short, everything is excellent.'

*

The Conference was mainly held in the garden of the Zimmerwald hotel and Ленин spent much of the time playing on the grass with the Hotelier's dogs. At one point, while the wording of the Conference manifesto was being decided, he left the table and starting laughing and tickling them, first one dog, then the other.

** post revolution*

'Speaking of the way he worked I think it can be said that he worked jovially. He had an amazing sense of humour. One could hear him breaking into a laugh now and again when he was talking to someone in his office, and he often laughed at C.P.C. meetings too. He had an extraordinarily infectious laughter, without any malice in it ever. It was the laughter of a man of ebullient energy and vigour.'

** post revolution*

'That spotless Finnish cleanliness with its white curtains everywhere reminded Ilyich of the days of his secret residence in Helsingfors in 1907 and again in 1917 on the eve of the October Revolution, when he had been writing his book The State and the Revolution there. As a holiday, it wasn't much of a success. Ilyich sometimes even dropped his voice when speaking, the way we used to do when we were in hiding, and although we went for walks every day, there was no real zest in them. Ilyich's mind was occupied and he spent most of his time writing.'

*

'At last we reached the top. A limitless panorama stretched below, an indescribably beautiful display of colours. Before us, as on the palms of our hands, lay all the Earth's climactic belts, all types of vegetation; next to us, the unendurable brightness of the snow; a little lower down the plants that grow in

the North, further still the rich Alpine meadows and then the lush vegetation of the South. I felt in the mood for some high literature and was about to start reciting from Shakespeare, or Byron when I looked at Vladimir Ilyich. He was sitting down, deep in thought. Suddenly he burst out: "Hmmm, a fine mess the Mensheviks are making for us." When we started on our walk we agreed not to talk about the Mensheviks, "so as not to spoil the landscape." And as long as Vladimir Ilyich was walking, he was full of fun and the joys of life, having obviously put out of his mind all thought of Mensheviks and Bundists. But he had only to sit down for a minute and his mind would revert to its usual train of thought.'

** post-revolution*

On his desk there rested an assortment of souvenirs that had been sent to him - at one period a writing set of Caucasian workmanship, an inkwell, an ashtray and a cast-iron monkey examining a human skull.

unaustralia: a study of heads

chapter

- a – repeat
- b – abstract
- c – to act
- d – in borrowed robes
- e – is an author
- f – insane
- g – case-studied
- h – catalogued
- i – bookcook
- j – food for action
- k

Some Chinese Intellectuals have launched the slogan 'Farewell to utopia'. I do not agree with it. The 'utopian disasters' of twentieth century China were caused by coercive experiments, not utopia itself. For utopia, if we mean by the term 'an ideal that cannot be realized', is first of all not something to which one can simply say 'farewell', since human beings cannot always judge what is feasible and what is not. So there is no way they can just proceed to think within the realm of 'realizable' ideas. In this sense, after a 'farewell' to utopia there will be no more independent free thinkers. Hayek rightly points to the limits of rational thought, urging us to beware of the 'conceit of reason'. But he evades the paradox that, precisely because our reason is limited, we cannot know where its limits may lie. Therefore it is both unnecessary and impossible to 'limit reason,' whereas to limit coercion is essential and possible. In other words, no humanistic idea – be it practical or utopian – should be implemented at a destructive cost to either private liberty or public democracy. We must uphold ideals, and resist violence.

Qin Hui

a) repeat

Kierkegaard - the Movie

Of Grammatology is a very strange book. An even stranger one is Søren Kierkegaard's Repetition, which in fact covers similar ground. Only on foot. For Kierkegaard has long been concerned with 'the problem whether a repetition is possible and what significance it has' (1943, p.3). And it suddenly occurs to him to go to Berlin, where he has already been, to see whether he manages to repeat himself in the process. The resultant 'essay in experimental psychology' takes Kierkegaard by steamer and then stage coach back to his old lodgings, his old coffee house and even his old theatre, where he witnesses a repetition of the same farce he saw acted last time. As I said, it's a very odd book. The reason I am invoking it is that Kierkegaard's is precisely the sort of project (a trip back to Berlin, to see if repetition is possible) that a contemporary philosophy department would not fund. And that, to my mind, is precisely the sort of issue that needs to be tabled at a conference on the politics of Theory.¹

What is the politics of Theory? Let me quote from Warren Montag's recent work on Spinoza's political philosophy:

Words acquire a fixed meaning solely from their use; if in accordance with this usage they are so arranged that readers are moved to devotion, then these words will be sacred, and likewise the book containing this arrangement of words.

(Spinoza, cited in Montag, 1999, p.20)

That is Spinoza on biblical interpretation. Montag claims that the same applies for politics: you judge the political value of a theory not by whether it is inherently

¹ This paper was delivered at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia's annual conference in Hobart, December 5th – 7th 2001, which addressed the topic 'What's Left of Theory?'

good or bad, but rather by its power to move people to the conduct you desire. Now on these pragmatic grounds, the political status of contemporary Theory is dubious. As a Spinozist you would have trouble calling Theory either left or right wing, unless you could prove that it has left or right wing effects upon the world. I'm not sure it does.

Or rather, what I am sure of is that there is a much more obvious connection between Theory and power. For the undeniable effect of 'Theory Wars' is that certain people gain ascendancy and power within the university. Others lose position and power. That, speaking as a Spinozan, is the real politics of Theory: the powerplays and manoeuvrings internal to the institution itself. It's also the reason why I, who put myself in the Theory camp, worry about calls for theorists to 'defend their turf a little more vigilantly,' as in this conference's 'Call for Papers' (Anonymous, 2001). Defending one's turf usually means homogenising the forces within your camp. Someone committed to the politics of difference, for instance, will want a bit of proof that you support the same cause if he or she is going to give you a job, publish your work, promote your interests. That is how one effectively empowers a given politics and guarantees it a place in the world of the university. Particularly during a 'Theory War.' My problem with such practices is that, even when conducted in the name of difference, they don't seem likely to promote anything that really is different. For me, the political question needs to be posed otherwise:

What do you do when someone says they want to go back to Berlin to see if there's such a thing as repetition? Do you support their application for a postdoctoral fellowship?

It seems to have been a valuable experiment for Kierkegaard, in 1843. For the very failure of his journey (the host of his lodgings is a different man, the farce does not amuse him this time, even his favourite coffee tastes bland) leads him to a striking critique of the Hegelian philosophy then dominant in Northern

Europe. '[I]t is repetition,' Kierkegaard writes, 'which by mistake has been called mediation' (1943, p.33). In placing Hegel's pre-eminent category - *mediation*, the *aufhebung* itself - on the level of repetition, Kierkegaard invalidates the whole progressivist, Eurocentric and colonial narrative of Hegelian world history. He equates its major term with something which strictly speaking does not exist. For just as during his journey 'the only thing repeated was the impossibility of repetition,' so in reality the only thing you find is difference (p.70). There is a surprisingly Derridean air to the non-progressivist theory arising from Kierkegaard's journey, a strange presaging of *iteration* and *differance* in sentences like the following: 'what is repeated has been, otherwise it could not be repeated, but precisely the fact that it has been gives to repetition the character of novelty' (p.34). One could think of categories like *the uncanny*, *déjà vu*, *the poetic*, or even Kierkegaard's own coining: *the absurd*. Perhaps the category of 'Theory' tooCan it be opened to facilitate experiments like Kierkegaard's, and to finance them, even before the results are known?

I just want to go to Cornwall to learn how to surf in Europe.

As I said, a philosophy department is not going to support such a project. They're too conservative. This brings me to the second form of repetition which Kierkegaard discovers in the course of his voyage, one rather more directly concerned with institutional practice -

But first I want to take a slight digression, to show why travelling back to Berlin to see if repetition is possible is in fact such an appropriate methodological device for generating original ideas. For it might just seem like a weird thing to do. Well, it is. There are sound reasons why weird-things-to-do often lead to new readings of the world of symbols we inhabit. Let me express this *via* Charles Sanders Peirce's nineteenth century critique of the Cartesian *cogito*. As is well known, Descartes established 'the first principle' of his new philosophy by doubting every one of his pre-conceived beliefs and opinions; the one thing

beyond doubt in all this, for Descartes, was his own existence. For to doubt so thoroughly, there must be someone to do the doubting: '*cogito, ergo sum*' (1968, pp.53-4). Peirce's critique reveals a very different model of inquiry to the ego-centred certainty of the Cartesian metaphysic. For Peirce, the idea of beginning a philosophical system by doubting everything was absurd. 'We cannot begin with complete doubt' for there 'are things which it does not occur to us *can* be questioned' (Peirce, 1992c, p.29). There are a whole set of premises and assumptions built into any utterance. The very meaning of the words in which you couch your doubt must be largely taken as given; in Descartes' case: the entire Latin language, not to mention a seventeenth century audience capable of understanding it. The institutional setting of discourse is for Peirce as integral to its meaning as the words themselves. There is, he writes 'no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference in practicewhat a thing means is simply what habits it involves' (1992a, p.131).

This is the very hallmark of Peirce's pragmatism, which could be taken as a theory of ideology as much as anything else. For when Peirce writes that 'belief is of the nature of a habit,' he, like Spinoza before him, intends us to understand that it involves physical actions as much as mental ones (1992b, p.115). Your beliefs are expressed not merely in your ideas, but in the typical practices that occur in relation to them. Which is why someone like Descartes might not even know what his actual beliefs are. Your habits may not enter your thoughts at all, but they are the effective meaning, and indeed belief, of your thoughts. This is quite an estranging notion; for if the utterance of the word 'post-structuralism' habitually occurs in a university department, then that is also the meaning of the word 'post-structuralism'. What is more, that association of a word and its institutional setting is, for Peirce, a belief, one you hold regardless of your actual conscious beliefs. Your actions believe for you.² This being the case, it may well

² Compare Althusser: '[W]e are indebted to Pascal's defensive "dialectic" for the wonderful formula which will enable us to invert the order of the notional schema of ideology. Pascal says, more or less: "Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe."' Your actions believe for you. The ideas / conscious beliefs will follow. So too, Althusser argues, with ideology (1994,

be that the best way to perceiving, and indeed challenging, one's own beliefs is not *via* thought at all. The process needs to run in reverse. If you want a new understanding of things, change the set of rituals and practices connected to your habitual knowledge production: eg. get on a boat and see what happens. The ideas will follow. The more dramatic the change of practice, the better.

You see I want to think about the role of the body in idealist philosophy and this will involve learning how to surf. Yes, in Cornwall. You know the movie Apocalypse Now?

If you change the habitual way you approach knowledge, if you approach repetition by travelling back to Berlin, like Kierkegaard, rather than through reading more commentaries on Hegel, or for that matter Derrida, you'll invariably find that you see things very differently. Indeed, it seems to me that it is attachment to habitual practices which, more than anything else, calcifies thought. If you shake those practices up, new thoughts will often flow in the wake. *Act first, the thoughts will come later*: I think that could be an interesting methodological protocol for Cultural Studies. I don't mean everyone should fly to Berlin by the way; when Einstein conducted his mathematical 'thought-experiments' he was as much involved in a change of practice as Kierkegaard (Einstein, cited in Brent, 1993, p.44). After all, Peirce's definition of habit applies to one's thoughts too. If a given word (say the word 'post-structuralism') habitually gives rise to another word as its meaning (for instance, 'Theory'), then

p.127). Which may be fine for a Christian. But why does Althusser stop at this point? Why doesn't he say anything about what happens when you stop kneeling? I am suggesting, as regards the university, that if one intervenes at the level of ritual conduct, of habitual practices and procedures, rather than ideas *per se*, that such an intervention could serve to shift those ideas much more than any 'notes toward an investigation.' And besides, the real investigation involves seeing what happens when you do. Marx, Thesis II of the Theses on Feuerbach: 'Man must prove the truth, ie. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question' (1970, p.121). It's a much more interesting thesis than Thesis XI (p.123: "The Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it") which people regularly trot out as a convenient confirmation of their own personal, and extra-scientific, moralities. Whereas 'Thesis II' states that investigation and proof are *themselves* predicated upon action and change; predicated, one could even say, on social intervention. A thesis about scientific method, and the goals internal to it, can be just as radical as political activism, why not? I treat this question, and in regard to Althusser, at greater length in 3g above.

that habitual association in fact constitutes a belief. This makes Peirce's definition of belief even more counter-intuitive, for even as regards ideas, it does not necessarily refer to consciousness, but rather one's typical chains of associations. Which is why the mechanical intervention of a 'thought-experiment' is more likely to lead to new associations than any conscious attempt to discover them. By taking repetition as something to do first, and then theorise later, Kierkegaard engages in a similarly mechanical, and similarly revolutionary, process.

That's why I want you to fund me to go and learn surfing in Cornwall. I will need to buy a waterproof walkman too. Something which can handle the bass arias. You see my family is from Cornwall too, like Tristan's.

Taking ideas as things to do first, and then theorise later: that could be a mini-definition of revolution. Or poetry. This brings me to the second form of repetition which Kierkegaard discovers in the course of his voyage, one rather more directly concerned with -

For this is why I want to go to Cornwall: to learn how to surf in the place where Wagner set Tristan and Isolde, which Opera Australia are currently performing in Melbourne. You see, I want to write about the low art³ of Wagnerian opera and the way it embodies key currents in Idealist philosophy. I want to write about the embodiment of philosophy in general. I can't think of a better way of theorising the body's role in such waves of ideas than while learning to surf in Cornwall.

I've been testing this project over the last week, while backpacking around Tasmania on the way to this conference. And this is what I've discovered, talking to other travellers, looking at their itineraries and reasons for being here: Europeans come to Australia to experience the bush, to look at the reef, to hike,

³ See Freidrich Kitler's extraordinary 'World-Breath: on Wagner's Media Technology' (1993). Kitler details the innovations in staging which served to make 'music drama . . . the first mass medium in the modern sense of the word' (1993, p.215). The 'revolutionary darkness,' for instance 'of the *Festspielhaus* - to which all the darkneses of our cinemas date back,' presaged the modern cinema, while the lowering of the orchestra pit at Bayreuth foreshadowed the idea of an auditorium in which the actual production of sound is invisible, and yet all pervasive (p.216). Which all goes to make cinema, at least in derivation, a high art. But then again, how does one classify opera? Maybe the point is that our obsession in Cultural Studies with raising 'low cultural products' to the level of the 'high' presupposes a binary opposition that may never have existed outside places like Britain, and which is certainly irrelevant to the majority of actual artists.

to surf. We go to Europe to look at museums, to visit the theatre, to observe 'culture.' A thoroughly colonial exchange. I want to reverse it. Instead of studying postcolonial philosophy at Oxford, I want to head to Cornwall.

With a waterproof walkman. Remember 'The Ride of the Walkyries,' which the American Imperialists play during their helicopter raids on the Vietcong in Apocalypse Now? Well, this postdoctoral application is called Zen and the Art of Wagner. Rather than defending our colonial turf, it will involve an attack upon ethnocentric Europe. Through a postcolonial work of high/low culture. Which is why this postdoctoral application has been couched in the form of a TV advertisement.

Australian Cultural Studies is at an interesting point at this moment, as I think is shown in the positioning of this focussed political gathering (What's Left of Theory?), back to back, with last years kind of all over the place conference On the Beach. That's a strange contrast. In this conjuncture, I think that the anxiety about Theory becoming 'an empty signifier, a hollow term able to absorb without differentiation any meaning we choose' is an anxiety worth holding onto (Anonymous, 2001). The possibility I am trying to table here is that Cultural Studies become the experimental, which is to say radical, wing of the humanities.⁴ It is in a rare position to do so, because its Theory is so overtly 'a

⁴ For another example of the sort of habit-breaking praxis which such a discipline could support, one could return to Kierkegaard's Repetition (1943), focussing this time on the way the text serves to perform the question 'what is an author?' For the purposes of this paper, I have ignored the fact that Repetition is attributed not to Søren Kierkegaard, but rather to his pseudonym, Constantine Constantinus. Nor is Constantine the only author. *His* first person experimental trip to Berlin is juxtaposed, in the second part of the work, with a series of letters from a young friend of his, a poet, whose love affair in Copenhagen founders, or perhaps sublimates, around this same question of repetition. So there are really two authors to Repetition: Constantine, and the poet. What is more, Kierkegaard clearly favoured the latter. As he stated in a later pamphlet, Constantine's trip to Berlin was in fact presented as a parody or a jest, and designed to underline, by contrast, the truly religious nature of the repetition his younger friend experienced at home in Copenhagen. Of this strategy, Kierkegaard commented: 'the most inward problem is here expressed in an outward way, as though repetition, if it were possible, might be found outside the individual, since it is within the individual it must be found, and hence the young man does exactly the opposite, he keeps perfectly still' (p.xxxvii). The reason I raise this is not to invalidate my argument about the value of Constantine's trip, which I have emblematised as *taking ideas as things to do first and then theorise later*. Actually I don't find Kierkegaard's critique of himself (ie. Constantine) convincing. I don't accept his distinction between 'inward' and 'outward,' nor even his definition of the individual. What is more, I think Kierkegaard's authorial praxis is as radical as the performance (the trip to Berlin) it describes. For the bizarre strategy of dividing his voice between two pseudonymous and mutually exclusive authors - in a text on repetition, no less! - constitutes another of the experimental practices (a *Gedankenexperimenten*, or 'thought experiments,' to repeat Einstein's term) which I am claiming Cultural Studies should be used to

hollow term able to absorb without differentiation any meaning we choose' (ibid). That's not such a bad thing. Indeed, there is a Kierkegaardian possibility here. For the extraordinary thing about his Repetition is that it shows a way out of the repetition of ideas, by way of repetition itself. What are we to do with the emptiness of the 'empty signifier' of Theory, other than to put it into practice? By treating Cultural Studies as a constitutively empty discipline, one which opens an institutional space for people to try out new knowledge practices. While surfing.

promote. Nor does the questioning (or rather putting into question) of authorship end here, in the contrast between Constantine and his quietist friend. Kierkegaard may well critique Constantine, but the latter gets his own back. Defining the concept of repetition early on in Repetition, he cites, and goes on to critique, the views of 'an author who, so far as I am acquainted with him, is sometimes rather deceitful'. Constantine is referring to himself, or rather to Victor Eremita, the 'author' of Part One of Kierkegaard's earlier Either/Or (1844). What is an author? Turn to Stages on Life's Way (1845), one of Kierkegaard's later works, which opens with a Platonic symposium conducted between Constantine Constantius ('author' of Repetition), Victor Eremita ('author' of Either/Or), John the Seducer (also 'author' of Either/Or, as is Judge William), and others. So Kierkegaard's idea of a philosophical symposium is a debate among some (by no means all) of his erstwhile personalities, each in flagrant disagreement with the other. That is an author! And maybe it's the truth of Plato, not to mention Derrida too, whose Of Grammatology (1976) could well be read, in all its polemic, as a theatrical debate Derrida is conducting with himself (playing Levi-Strauss, Rousseau, Jakobson etc . . .) In 'Idea of the Method of the Composition of a Book,' Rousseau once suggested that philosophers should look to Greek tragedy for models of how to deploy the various antagonistic and protagonistic positions that go to make up the narrative of a factual argument (1997, pp.300-05). The split subject speaks right through the works of Rousseau, the supposed champion of presence. But then, the other thing post-structuralist theory could do to be truly post-structuralist is to break with the narcissistic practice of imagining itself to be without analogues in the history of ideas. After all, Spinoza, in his Ethics, produced the world's first hypertext novel, 300 years before the Internet (and in this he was preceded by his own model, Euclid, Euclid's Elements of Geometry (1952)).

b) abstract

Habeas Corpus

(abstract for a conference on 'Sound and Silence')

'Lately, when I was suffering at every mouth through which a man can drink suffering . . .' began Charles Sanders Peirce, in a 1905 letter to a philosophical colleague (Peirce in Brent, 1993, p.300). I paused, at this point, startled by the viscerality of the image. Recall Emily Dickinson:

*then space began to toll
as all the heavens were a bell
and being, but an ear*

What is this power of language that serves, in a letter long dead, to bring such bodily images to life? To the point where I, as I read, momentarily feel that being is but a mouth. This paper concerns poetry's relation to the body.

I am going to argue, with reference to Peirce and others, that a body *is* a book, or a poem, or an idea. That is to say, it is a composition of signs. Jacques Derrida, in Of Grammatology, refers to the 'idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality' and heralds its imminent demise, as something 'profoundly alien to the sense of writing' (1976, p.18). I think that he is actually referring to what Jacques Lacan would call the Imaginary, the 'illusion of unity' which is the sense of one's own body. In fact, I think the formal analogy between the book and the body is the reason why we enjoy reading. And why our ears, mouths, eyes and bodies get drawn onto the page at certain poetic moments. For poetry is a form of seduction. Enacted on a body of signs.

There is a theory of poetry here, and a marked absence of any reference to silence. In a way there is no silence in a Peircean universe, where all is signs, bodies of signs. Peirce's letter begins with grief and proceeds to philosophical

realism: 'To try to peel off the signs and get down to the real thing is like trying to peel an onion to get down to the onion itself' (p.300). The body of things, for all its illusory coherence, is but a congeries of signs. For there is no mute object. Which should import a certain tension to the second part of the paper, when I turn to consider poetry's debt to silence.

What silence? When Mayakovsky writes that you should 'only take to your pen when you have no other means of expressing yourself than in verse' (1972, p.159), I do not think he means turning the supposedly mute reality of the body into the articulate realm of language. The body speaks already, as do all things, including silence. What doesn't speak is -

This paper is a requiem for my father. Who was a poet of silences.

c) to act

Playing Another's Role:

A Study of Actors and Agency in the Postcolonial Theatre (‘Notes towards an investigation’)

Playing Another's Role comprises a study of actors in amateur and professional theatre companies in Australia and Brazil. The project has three main aims. The first is to approach the question of culture *via* its production rather than its consumption. Hence my focus on actors rather than audiences, and my interest in amateur as well as professional theatre companies. The second aim is to subject the question of acting, which is usually treated in a philosophical or aesthetic manner, to a study which *also* considers social, historical, and economic realities. Hence the project's Australian and Brazilian setting, intended to import local, comparative and global perspectives to the questions studied. The final aim of the project subtends both these concerns. I want my study, through its focus on the production of culture, and through its globally contextualised framework, to serve as an intervention into the longstanding debate within the humanities and social sciences over the nature of human agency.

The question whether *social* actors have the power to originate activity, or whether their actions are predetermined by social conditioning and constraints, has arisen in the study of popular culture (eg. Fiske, 1989), as much as the study of global change (eg. Escobar, 1995). In neither instance has it been adequately resolved. My study is conceived in the belief that the predicament of stage actors, who must recite set lines at predetermined moments, and yet have the power to act, presents an extreme version of the social actor's predicament. If we can understand what agency means in the constrained, and yet paradoxically

creative, environment of the theatrical stage, it will help us approach the question of agency more generally.

In the following, I will set forth: 1) the history of the academic debate, 2) the vastly different way stage actors tend to view questions of role playing and creative autonomy, and 3) the broader postcolonial context, and how it effects my intervention. I will then turn to consider the potential ramifications of the project for our thinking of: 4) politics, 5) social theory and 6) Australian intellectual practice.

1. The problem of agency

The problem of agency has recently been sketched by David Gary Shaw, in his introduction to the recent issue of History and Theory devoted to the topic (2001). Shaw sees the problem as an intractable one. On the one hand, we have formulations like Pierre Bourdieu's: 'the history of the individual is never anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his group or class' (Bourdieu in Shaw 2001, p.5). On the other hand, such assertions fail to account for the lived realities of our own experience. For while theories of social action overwhelmingly present us as 'as marionettes attached to discourse's strings,' our sense of personal autonomy remains, and requires consideration (p.2).

A survey of the debate over the last thirty years reveals the persistence of these two basic positions. The issue came to particular prominence in the early seventies, as the central target of attacks upon both structuralist and traditional models in the humanities. In The Poverty of Theory, E.P. Thompson famously attacked Louis Althusser's theory of ideology for its failure to account for 'experience', which 'defies prediction and escapes from any narrow definition of determination' (Thompson in Scott 1991, p.784). A similar desire to rescue the autonomy of the oppressed from constraining models (whether academic,

governmental or both) of social conditioning informed a variety of nascently post-colonial projects through the seventies (eg. Field, 1976; Iltis, 1979; Guha and Spivak, 1988). Yet by the late eighties, the tide had turned back again. Joan Scott, in the widely-read article, 'The Evidence of Experience,' attacked both Thompson and the rescue trend more generally. Such theories, she claimed, 'locate resistance outside its discursive construction and reify agency as an inherent attribute of individuals, thus decontextualising it' (1991, p.777). Scott's Foucauldian position, which attempted to contextualise agency by founding it in the subject's 'definite conditions of existence,' bore more than a passing resemblance to Althusser's (because Foucault's did), and largely held the field for the succeeding ten years. Only to be found, yet again, wanting. Now. Shaw, in the issue of History and Theory cited above, critiques the neo-determinism of theories like Scott's. Fitzhugh and Leckie argue in the same issue that the problem with post-structuralist theories of agency is that they fail to explain the factors that lead to change (2001, p.84). Whereas Aya is desperate enough to call upon rational choice theory to resolve the issue (2001). We would seem to be returning to a Thompsonian model of subjective autonomy; yet given the history of the debate, it is hard to imagine that such an accommodation will last long.

A historical survey shows, in sum, that the question remains fundamentally unresolved. It also reveals that neither position has ever challenged one of the presuppositions of the debate: the idea that creativity and discursive constraint are necessarily opposed.

2. A creative solution?

At times Performance Studies comes close to treating stage-acting as a laboratory for more general questions of subjectivity (eg. Kubiak, 1998). Yet my inspiration for asking the question of agency of stage actors comes from the

writing of actors themselves. The contrast between such approaches is striking. In the social sciences, indeed in Performance Studies itself (eg. Carlson, 1985), attempts to articulate the pre-determined nature of social life are resisted because they are seen to imply passivity and a lack of agency. Compare a popular text by a contemporary actor. Here is Stephen Berkoff, writing of how it feels to play Hamlet: 'Suddenly you have a role to play and a task, the performing of which will highlight everything in its path the role brightens the light we carry in our minds - the searchlight that gets dim with constant self-interest. Now it is like a fire lighting everything in its path' (1989, p.43). There is no implication of passivity here; on the contrary, the call to perform crystallises a possibility for action. Hence its danger. 'Beware those who are exposed to it' Berkoff writes, 'nothing seems right again' (p.44). For an actual actor, the pre-determining power of a set role, a role as set as Hamlet itself, is in no way an impediment to creative action. It is its pre-condition. Texts like Berkoff's I am Hamlet point to the possibility (in the theatre at least) that to play another's role may involve far more than simple passivity.

To investigate such possibilities will be the main task of my fieldwork among the amateur and professional actors of Australia and Brazil. I will further outline the nature, and potential scope, of this intervention in sections 4, 5, and 6 above.

3. The postcolonial context

I will seek to read my researches against the broader questions of imitation and cultural dependency effecting both Australia and Brazil. Brazil promises to be particularly revealing in this respect, for, given the nation's explicitly subordinate role within the global economy, its theorists are rarely content to settle debates about cultural autonomy on philosophical or aesthetic grounds alone.

Roberto Schwarz, for instance, argues that the post-structuralist rejection (Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Joan Scott et al) of terms like 'original' and 'copy' has only so much to offer the Brazilian situation. My attempt to complexify the question of discursive agency and autonomy through a study of stage actors would doubtless be subject to a similar critique. For however much such theories and researches might liberate one from 'the mythical requirement of creation *ex nihilo*' they do nothing to alter the 'practical character' of peripheral imitiveness (1992, p.1). The problem, according to Schwarz, of adequately analysing Brazil's 'artificial, inauthentic and imitative' culture lies not merely in the theoretical difficulties which concepts like agency and creativity occasion. It is a matter of 'social structure' too, the country's affliction with 'forms of inequality so brutal that they lack the minimal reciprocity ("common denominator")' necessary to allow for a common and representative Brazilian culture. No amount of philosophical reflection can argue that away. The imitiveness, and indeed inauthenticity, of Brazilian cultural life is a literal fact, caused by the distance of elite cultural producers from the social life of the majority of the population. They're not in a position to construct a local system of shared meanings, so they import one (two, three, the whole lot . . .) In this light David S. George's otherwise paradoxical questioning of the postmodernist Brazilian opera Mattogrosso makes sense. Mattogrosso combines characters like Hamlet and Batman on a set that features a wreck of the Titanic in the middle of the Amazon. In asking whether this work 'parallels Brazilian society, or reproduces questionable ritual practices developed in North America and Europe,' George is doing more than simply reiterating modernist myths about 'creation *ex nihilo*.' He is suggesting that to play another's role - *even in the theatre itself* - may indeed constitute a form of neo-colonial subservience (1997, p.485).

Such issues will provide a necessary counter-point to my study of stage actors, contextualising its theoretical implications, and possibly even contradicting its conclusions.

4. Politics

The phenomenon of stage acting is less a normative model for agency than an extreme version of the social agent's predicament. As such, it puts certain issues in the agency debate in fundamental relief. For to consider an actor's agency, the agency evinced in the performance of a four hundred year old role like Hamlet, is already to abandon all question of experience outside history or language. Such a strategy serves to rescue the main contribution of post-structuralist thought to the agency debate, the finding that 'experience,' as Scott says, 'is a linguistic event' (p.793). Yet it avoids the critique of dehumanisation that work like Scott's, or Foucault's, or Althusser's, always occasions. For it would seem, at least from my preliminary reading, that on stage the power of the pre-determined word is less an impediment than the precondition to creativity, agency and autonomy. A detailed, empirical, and comparative investigation of these possibilities would offer insights of relevance to fields outside that of Performance Studies itself. Like politics.

The theatre, in offering such an extreme conjunction of pure action and pure acting, challenges one to consider what separates symbolic action on stage from the 'theatre' of politics more generally. There is, one might note in passing, an extensive literature gesturing toward the theatricality of modern political life: Gore Vidal's reference to the 'Stanislavskyan triumph' that was the political career of Ronald Reagan (2001, p.6); Walter Benjamin's famous claim that 'fascism aestheticises politics' (1970, p.235); and even further back, Weber's call upon politicians to attain that 'knowledge of tragedy, with which all action, but especially political action, is truly interwoven' (1970, p.117). By focussing explicitly, rather than just metaphorically, upon theatrical experience and its relation to political questions of agency and autonomy, my research should serve to explain not merely why such analogies are so suggestive, but how they can be extrapolated and rendered even more analytically cogent.

At the same time, I intend the national and comparative framing of my research to problematise the idea that the theatrical can ever fully subsume the field of politics. I sketched something of this problematisation above; as Schwarz forces us to realise, the 'practical character' of Brazilian imitativeness and inauthenticity is far more than simply a regional version of the actor's predicament. It is just as much a product of the nation's failure to provide a representative culture, whether political or aesthetic, a failure grounded in social inequality of a local and international nature. By setting my project in a comparative frame, I intend such insights to cast light on similar and dissimilar factors effecting the Australian experience too (eg. Muecke, 2001). Such considerations are significant not merely because they help to elucidate the relative significance of my findings on the philosophical question of agency. More generally, they help to assess our possibilities for creative action, whether cultural or political, in an increasingly globalised world.

5. Social theory

As well as complexifying our understanding of agency through the concept's extension to the domain of stage acting, the study should inspire reconsideration of the theoretical language of the humanities and social sciences more generally. It will highlight the striking prevalence of theatrical metaphor within theoretical frameworks as various as Kenneth Burke's 'Dramatism' (with its 'act, scene, agent, agency and purpose'), Erving Goffman's 'role' based sociology, Althusser's theses on the 'performance' of ideology and, most recently, Judith Butler's theories of 'performativity' (Carlson, 1996, p.24). My study seeks to open up the tension within such language, the possibility that it be used to describe creative action, as much as ideological constraint. Such an approach would ultimately serve to interrogate the possibilities within the term 'culture' itself, which, from its Arnoldian usage as a label for the high arts, has now, in the

humanities and social sciences, come to denote the undifferentiated totality of social behaviour. Again, there is a potential tension here; the very ambiguity in the term 'culture' *could* serve to signify the possibility for creative action, on the level of literature itself, within everyday life. The project pioneers such theoretical advances by approaching them from a rigorously empirical and comparativist perspective.

The project is novel and innovative because it treats the creative arts as a laboratory for exploring broader questions of social behaviour. A dissatisfaction with both post-structuralism (eg. Shaw, 2001), and postcolonialism (During, 2001) marks current Cultural and Postcolonial Studies. There is a general theoretical lacuna at present. In arguing that the creative practice of artists can serve, by dint of its very extremity, to cast light upon fundamental philosophical and political problems, I believe I am opening up new theoretical and investigative possibilities, at a time when the discipline itself is ready for change.

6. Unaustralia

The question of national identity continues to be asked in Australia, and issues of agency and autonomy remain vital to it. My study will be of benefit to Australia because it will add two new factors to the debate. Firstly it will complexify our understanding of just what it is to portray oneself. Given that our genres for creative self-expression, whether aesthetic or political, are largely inherited, the question of agential conduct in a derived language is an important one, at a national, as much as an academic level. The second factor the research will add to the debate will be its capacity to open our eyes to the work which prominent Latin intellectuals like Roberto Schwarz, or Ronald Kay (1980) have produced on these and similar issues. I believe we are far more likely to learn from parallel debates in countries like Brazil, than from US/Euro-centric texts produced in the Northern Hemisphere under vastly different conditions of cultural production and

influence. The opening of international links to intellectual communities which debate similar issues, albeit differently, is integral to improving the quality of national debates internal to Australia.

I expect the work will reveal severe limitations in our typical models of human agency. I suspect the true picture is that human action is much more creative than our current theoretical models allow. By the same token, I suspect that we are far more determined by discursive and economic forces than a non-academic approach would allow. In sum, I suspect that my work will push the debate to two extreme poles, and that this contradictory result will be something like the reality of the matter: a country between two poles.

A new flag.

d) in borrowed robes

Cross-dressing as science

[This chapter was delivered at the University of Technology, Sydney, on the 15th October 2001. I leave it in its original format, up to and including the stage directions, because I think it serves as a document of the sort of anarchy in ideas that the WTC attack actually unleashed across the globe, in fields as far removed as the philosophy of science. Indeed, S-11 could almost be seen, at least for those first few weeks, as a globalisation of its own. Of shell shock. Where were we?]

I want to start by telling you about a conversation I had with a policeman a few weeks ago. He was leaving the force, after ten years of stress and hassle. 'Everything's harder for police,' he said. 'Say you get done for an offence. You have to pass through the civil courts, and then the police courts as well. You get tried twice. It's like double jeopardy.' I resisted asking why a police officer would get done for an offence in the first place. He continued, telling me about the continual public attention, the need to appear honest, decent and virtuous at all times, the 'constant acting.' To hear this remark - the 'constant acting' - made me think that actually to be a policeman must be one of the most theatrical jobs there is. Which was strange, because I was in drag at the time, and at work - I work as a drag queen - at *Club 44* in Melbourne. You elicit some very interesting information when you go out dressed as a member of the opposite sex.

To be a policeman must be one of the most theatrical jobs there is. To me this is a refreshing finding, because when you think about it, police are scary. After all, they are licensed to inflict physical violence upon you. It's a mistake to think of police simply as officers of the law. If the law worked, they wouldn't even be necessary. The existence of the police, as Walter Benjamin put it, 'really marks the point at which the state . . . can no longer guarantee through the legal system the empirical ends it desires . . . to attain' (1978, p.28). For the police

are basically there to use force, or the threat of force, in moments when laws do not work. And that requires violence. Try to imagine a police force with no recourse to violence. It's impossible. They'd be mere bureaucrats. Police are violent by definition. That's scary. Which is why it's good to know that they are also a bit like drag queens. Constantly acting. Needing to appear honest, decent and virtuous at all times. Always on stage.

As proof of this I suggest you try the following experiment. Next time you see a policeman in public, try staring him in the eyes. The first thing you'll realise is that your natural instinct, whenever you see a policeman, is to look away. But this time don't. Try staring him in the eyes; *he'll* instantly look away. Police don't like to be reminded of the fact that everyone is always looking at them, that they're always on show. Constantly acting. Of course this is just my experience. Things will perhaps turn out differently for the women among you, and maybe female officers will respond differently too. Maybe they will outstare you? As I said, it's an experiment.

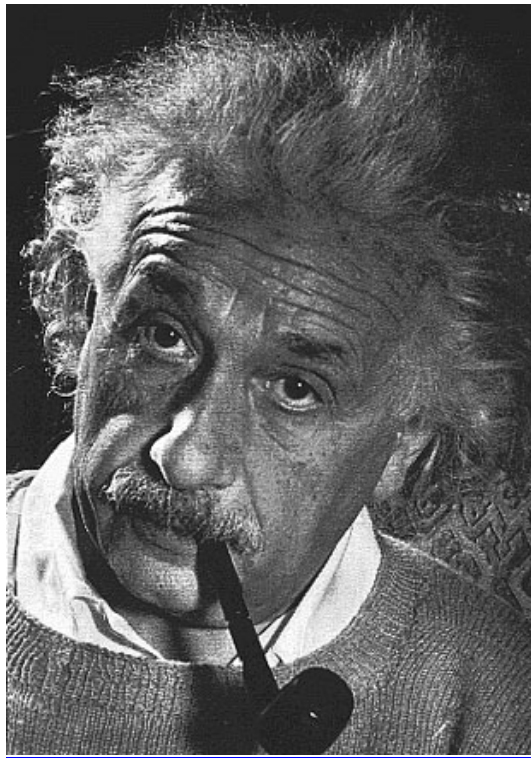
I'm going to talk about a few such experiments in the following chapter. For the fact is that reality is not all that obvious. The value of the experimental method is that it can serve to disrupt our typical assumptions and understandings. To show this, I am going to describe various cultural experiments that serve to cast light upon the 'theatre of power' all around us; the fact, for instance, that to be a policeman is one of the most theatrical jobs there is. That's not at all obvious. But then, nor is the idea that Cultural Studies might be an experimental science. That's why, in what follows, I am going to talk firstly about science and the scientific method. Having set forth a theory of scientific knowledge, I then want to try to show the value of the experimental method to the study of culture, that 'theatre of power' all around us.

- [cd1: The Beatles: 'A Ticket to Ride' \(1983\)](#)

[At this point I put The Beatles' 'A Ticket to Ride' on the CD player and, without comment, press play. After a minute or so, I tell the auditorium that the song has nothing to do with my paper. I've always thought that you should have a bit of background music in academic papers, just like at the movies. Why not? I let the song play to the end, and then resume.]

1. the scientific method

- overhead 1:



In an essay in his book Mythologies entitled 'The Brain of Einstein', Roland Barthes states that 'Einstein's brain is a mythical object' (1972, p.75).

Barthes' main target here is the status of the science that brain is seen to contain. For in popular culture, 'the historic equation $E=MC^2$ ' has become a sort of shorthand reference to a fantasy of an abstract and objective truth. Through

this equation, 'the world blissfully regained the image of knowledge reduced to a formula' (p.76). Such a formula operates in fundamental ignorance of the historical and social forces that condition our very view of reality. Bertolt Brecht put the matter in similar terms in his notes to The Life of Galileo: 'The formula $E=MC^2$ is conceived of as eternal, not tied to anything' (1980, p.121). Critiques like Brecht's and Barthes' claim, on the contrary, that scientific knowledge can only ever be partial and particular. It will always be a product of the place from which we speak, which is to say the race, class and gender of the scientist in question. There is no eternal truth.

Einstein's brain is a mythical object because it partakes of this fantasy, the fantasy of 'objective truth' enshrined in $E=MC^2$. A 'machine of genius' engineered 'to produce . . . equations,' this brain apparently has nothing to do with the society which spawned it (p.76). For the myth of modern science acts to place the subject, as much as the object, of its inquiries outside of culture.

'Einstein,' again in Barthes words,

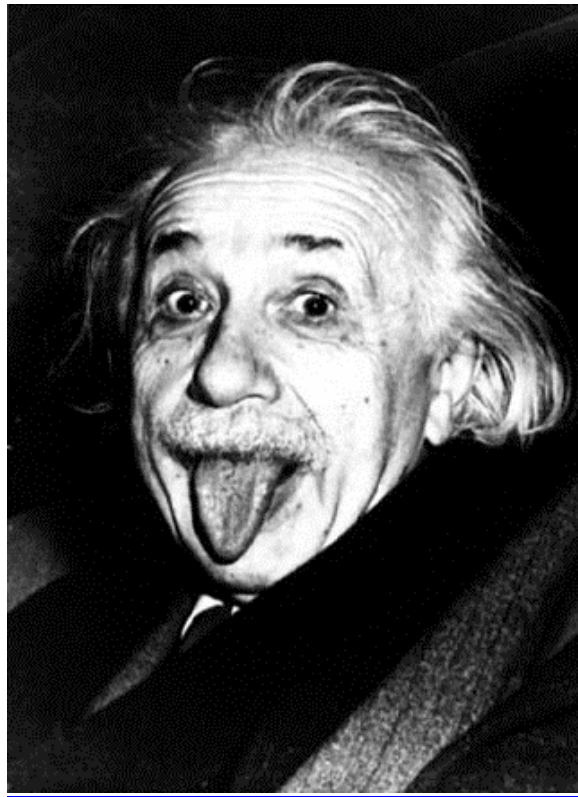
himself has to some extent been a party to the legend by bequeathing his brain, for the possession of which two hospitals are still fighting, as if it were an unusual piece of machinery which it will at last be possible to dismantle.

(Barthes, 1972, p.75)

The scientist, just like the equation he produces, somehow appears to exist beyond historical, social and political realities: 'one speaks of his thought as a functional labour analogous to the mechanical making of sausages' (p.76).

So Science is a sort of super-human endeavour, the work of a 'machine of genius' like Einstein. Its process is fully mechanical. Its results are abstract, objective and timelessly true - infallible even. Which is all just nonsense.

- [overhead 2:](#)



'[I]nfallibility in scientific matters seems to me irresistibly comical'; those are the words of Charles Saunders Peirce, the nineteenth century scientist, semiotician and philosopher of science, whom I shall quote extensively in what follows (1955e, p.3). For Peirce, the idea that science might purvey an absolute and infallible truth is 'irresistibly comical,' because science - the experimental method - is based on personal experience. Now personal experience 'can never result in absolute certainty, exactitude, necessity or universality' (1931-5: p.24). If it does result in any of these things, then it simply isn't science.

To hear a scientist say that the scientific method is based on 'personal experience' might sound a little strange. But that is because we are so under the sway of the scientific myth Barthes describes. The best way to correct this notion is to focus on the experiment, the keystone of the scientific method. The experimental method renders the notion of 'objective truth' problematic, because,

in the words of one textbook on scientific method, 'ordinarily in an experiment the observer interferes to some extent with nature' (Wilson, 1952, p.28). You make an intervention into the world (eg. you bombard nitrogen atoms with alpha particles) in accordance with a hypothesis you have formed about what you suspect might happen. The formation of hypotheses and the construction of experiments is necessarily subjective. Peirce refers to it as a 'poetic' act, meaning that it relies upon creative inspiration (1955c, p.141).

Yet if the construction of experiments involves active intervention, the observation of what happens next is a largely passive phenomenon. You just watch and see what happens. Again, in Peirce's nineteenth century prose:

The act of observation is the deliberate yielding of ourselves to that *force majeure* - an early surrender at discretion, due to our foreseeing that we must whatever we do be borne down by that power at lastas the Frenchman says, *c'est plus fort que moi*. It is irresistible, imperativeat least for the time being

(Peirce, 1992d, p.170)

Sounds sort of sexy doesn't it. Just to remind you where we are, I am telling you all this as part of an exposition of the cultural experiment: dressing up in drag to learn about the theatre of everyday life; doing strange things to see what happens when you do; opening yourself up to what you don't know. Note how little the observation process which Peirce describes has to do with asserting an absolute and dogmatic truth. On the contrary, we are encouraged to adopt 'a deliberate yielding,' a passivity in the face of phenomena, with the aim of discovering something 'more powerful than me,' something beyond the narrow frame of our typical reality. In this sense, the experimental method has very little to do with personal experience. The aim is simply to be a conduit for a reality greater than you.

Yet that is only part of the process. The results one reaches through the practice of active experiment and passive observation are themselves subject to radical doubt. Ultimately the only scientific grounds for accepting any theory is what you yourself have seen, as a result of your personal, that is, necessarily limited, experience. The experiential and personal nature of this process structures radical uncertainty into it.⁵ To put this once more in Peirce's terms: 'induction can never afford the slightest reason to think that a law is without exception' (1992a, p.140). Induction is defined as the process of reasoning from particular experiences (results obtained experimentally) to general theories. But particular experiences will never amount to universal ones. After all, there is no eternal truth to be seen, just the world of your own experiences, and the inferences you derive from them. You infer general rules and laws from what you see. But you see very little. For a method based upon personal experience is inherently fallible. Indeed, it is this very fallibility which drives creative scientists to distrust the parameters of given knowledge and experience; it is this which drives them to keep experimenting. As Roman Jakobson puts it, effectively summing up what I have been saying here: 'Science is not doctrine, but inquiry' (1985c, p.253).

Of course most people fail to live up to the demands of the challenging ethic which a scientist such as Peirce articulates. People prefer to think of science as

⁵ Of course, as Peirce, a severe critic of Descartes, reminds us, the scientist's uncertainty is equally a function of the social nature of personal experience. See chapter 3a. I have minimised this aspect of Peirce's semiotic in my presentation, mainly because this sort of thing gets a certain amount of airplay in the humanities these days, while there is really very little attention to the notion of experimental inquiry, and almost no consideration of the possibility that it, as an ethic, might offer something to the social sciences. But the truth is that Peirce explores ideology in a way just as, if not more, powerful than contemporary discourse analysis. In 'The Fixation of Belief,' (1992b) for instance, he argues that each of us already believes a vast number of theories without even realising it because that is the fate of using a language - that is, a system of concepts - that came into being before you did. Such arguments underlie Peirce's critique of 'all the salad of Cartesianism' (Peirce in Delledale, p.21): you can't doubt everything around you. It's actually impossible. By and large you don't even know what you (and your actions, which amount to the same thing) effectively believe. All you can do is hold an ethical attitude towards those doubts that do arise in you. That is to say, you can make an effort to pursue those doubts and experiment on the basis of them, rather than to dismiss them as unimportant. The important thing is to allow doubt - question - confusion - to breathe. Which is precisely the sort of snorkel that discourse analysis lacks. And the reason why Cultural Studies should become an experimental science.

a body of stable knowledge, a system of laws, formulae, proven results, rather than as a process, a radical mode of inquiry open to everyone. It's somehow a lot more comforting to think of knowledge as an object which can be possessed, a thing which somebody actually knows. That's the other aspect of the myth of Einstein's brain, the fantasy that somebody somewhere is smart enough to know how it all works. We in our ignorance can just stumble around here below. Whereas if you're thinking scientifically you'll realise, with Peirce, that 'experience can never result in absolute certainty,' that no one has the absolute truth about anything. There is always another experiment around the corner.

2. hypotheses

Compare the experimental method to the various other modes of knowledge production, geared, as they so often are, to a reliance upon past authority and precedent, processes deservedly regarded as 'analogous to the mechanical making of sausages.' Whereas an experiment might just confuse you with the phenomena it forces into your perceptual field. This is particularly the case with cultural experimentation. I now want to argue that the value of the cultural experiment lies precisely in the way it serves to disrupt one's familiar categories and pre-conceptions. The theory can come later. For it will come; particularly if you are thinking scientifically. Thinking scientifically, in this context, means being prepared to experience phenomena that you don't understand, and dwelling with that confusion. The following five examples of twentieth century cultural experiments are intended to give you an idea of what I mean by things that disrupt familiar categories and pre-conceptions. I don't claim to understand them.

- overhead 3:



This is a photo of the *Mahnmal gegen Racismus*, the Memorial against Racism in Saarbrücken, in Southwestern Germany. Only you can't see it. What you can see is the partially reconstructed Saarbrücken palace, which in the 1940s was the headquarters of the Nazi secret police. The reason the memorial can't be seen is that it is an 'invisible memorial'. Between 1991 and 1993 Jochen Gerz and his students at the College of Fine Arts in Saarbrücken secretly removed two thousand one hundred and forty six of the cobbles you see here and inscribed each one with the name of a different Jewish ceremony in Germany. They then replaced the cobbles with the inscribed side facing downward.

The square now remembers 2146 sites, but those crossing the open space will neither know which of the 8000 cobble stones used to pave the square have an inscription nor will they be able to read the inscriptions.

(Neumann, 1997, p.4).

What does it mean to have a memorial you can't see, remembering words you can't read? I don't know. I have no idea what this 'invisible memorial' means, nor why I find it so haunting. Though it makes me think that the visible memorials you encounter elsewhere are just a bit too easy. For it's all too easy to learn that the past was awful, and then to get on with your day, whether as a tourist, a Saarbrücken businessman, an academic researcher or whatever. To learn that you don't even know the ground beneath your feet is rather more unsettling.

But why should we regard cultural reality, the reality of the past, present or future, as at all obvious, or easy to ascertain? Let me leap back to Einstein's brain, that 'up to date machine' which acts to 'produce equations' like $E=MC^2$. Now Barthes article is cute, and funny. But in as much as it serves as a critique of mathematical thinking I think it closes off possibilities for thought rather than opens them up.

- [overhead 4:](#)

Hold onto your brains!

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Paul Erdos once stated that '[a] mathematician is a device for turning coffee into theorems.' When you think about it, that's quite a strange notion. Maybe there's something in this, the idea that your everyday flat white might contain whole worlds of algebra, irrational numbers and knot theory, that expands one's reality,

not to mention one's theory of the human mind. The more you read brilliant mathematicians and scientists like Erdos and Einstein, the more you realise just how bent they are, which is to say, how inclined they are to viewing reality as something way beyond our common sense. Take Ludwig Wittgenstein, a scientifically inflected philosopher, who is reported to have once said that 'a philosophical treatise might contain nothing but questions (without answers)' (Wittgenstein in Malcolm, 1962, p.29). That is very much what Wittgenstein produced, in his Philosophical Investigations. There are very few actual claims in this text; it is only on reading it that you realise how strange it is for a philosopher *not* to want to tell you exactly how it all is. Wittgenstein simply asks questions, strange strange questions like: 'Why can't a dog pretend to be in pain? Is he too honest?' (1958, p.90e).

Wittgenstein's is a truly scientific philosophy: who needs answers, when you can have all these questions? I think Cultural Studies could approach the world in this fashion too: why spend so many pages telling us doctrinal theories of society, culture and language, when you could be just asking us strange questions, like: 'why are you reading this book?'

Let me describe a few other questionable cultural behaviours. I don't know what they mean. Above I quoted Roman Jakobson. Besides his scholarly activities, Jakobson was a close friend of many artists, among them the futurist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. Mayakovsky was such a modernist that he became obsessed, in the early 1920s, with 'sending Einstein a congratulatory telegram "from the art of the future to the science of the future"' (Jakobson, 1985b, p.123). Meanwhile Jakobson, the social scientist, made a translation of Mayakovsky's avant-garde poem 'Ничего не понимают' [lit. 'they don't know nothing'] into Old Church Slavonic, the language of ninth century Russia (Pomorska, in Jakobson and Pomorska, 1983, p.166). Which strikes me as a really very strange thing to do. I have no idea what Jakobson was doing in translating the 'art of the future' into the idiom of a people already dead one thousand years. Nor do I know to

whom the they of 'they don't know nothing' might in such a translation refer. The dead souls of the past who are already too dead to read it? Or we futurists of the present, who don't speak Old Church Slavonic? Was he speaking to them about us? And telling them that we in the present don't even realise that a culture is alive long after its actual people are dead? I don't know. I have no idea.

I don't even know why I am wearing drag at the moment as I write this lecture, I really don't. Hawaiian shirt, blue eyeliner, sarong and low heels. The tropical look. I don't know. You tell me. I thought about giving the lecture in drag, but that might have been a bit too obvious really. For after all, if I were to appear in drag it might close your eyes to the fact that giving a lecture is already, whatever you wear, a bit of a drag act, that this is a *theatre* after all, that to perform here involves playing a role too. I thought about giving the lecture in drag, but then it seemed like a better idea to just write it in drag, and see what happens. Maybe the real performance was six days ago, when I wrote this. Maybe every lecturer you've ever heard was just a puppet for some idea written down long before he or she ever even came to speak. I don't know. I've no idea.

But this is my favourite song:

- [cd2: Cathy Berberian: A Ticket to Ride \(1988\)](#)

[This is a two and half minute bel canto performance of the Beatles song by the famous American/Armenian soprano. I play it without comment.]

And this is my favourite movie.

- [video 1 – Luis Buñuel's The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie \(1972\)](#)

[I begin the tape at the 58 Min mark (the military Commander - 'c'est encore moi' - invites the seven bourgeois friends to dine at his house next week), and let it play through the incident that occurs at that dinner (the Commander does not appear, the seven seat themselves at the dining table, a waiter enters and drops the main course on the floor, one of the walls of the dining room is ripped away, a

theatre audience are watching and waiting for the bourgeoisie to perform, a prompter beneath the stage urges them to start acting, Monsieur Seneschal in shock realises that he does not know his own lines, the scene dissolves) up to the dissolve at 103 Min.

3. observations

That was Luis Buñuel's The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie (1972). The film depicts a group of seven seemingly respectable members of the French bourgeoisie whose attempts to dine together keep being interrupted (in fact they never manage to eat anything) by a series of bizarre accidents like the one you just witnessed, where the rubber chicken is dropped on the ground by a slovenly waiter. By continually disrupting his characters' everyday behaviour, Buñuel highlights the staged character of their interactions (the set roles, the stock phrases, the invisible scripts guiding them) as well as the hesitation and fear that takes them when things don't go to plan. In the footage I have shown you, Buñuel actually makes this theatricality literal: the dining room becomes a theatre, the hesitation becomes stage-fright:

The Archbishop, the Ambassador of Miranda and his girlfriend all flee the stage. Monsieur Seneschal is left in his seat. The prompter urges him to begin acting. The audience become increasingly impatient and start jeering. He stares around the dinner table / theatre in fear, whispering to himself 'What am I doing here? I don't know my lines.'

the theatre turns into an opera. For the line Monsieur Seneschal is being prompted to recite ('To prove your courage you have invited the Commander's ghost to dinner') is in fact a reference to the plot of Don Giovanni, perhaps the most famous opera in the repertoire. And opera, as Theodor Adorno once said, is 'the specifically bourgeois genre' (1994, p.29).

The theme of opera will help me draw in the various threads of this chapter, which has taken us from the philosophy of science into the field of social experimentation.

Having discussed the experimental method, and given you some examples of cultural experiments, I now want, in the third and final part of this chapter, to table a hypothesis. I'm going to suggest that in situations where something extraordinary happens, social life turns into an opera. Let me define my terms. I define *the operatic* as the space where the performance of one's social role, in all its artificiality, is both self-conscious and explicit. My suspicion is that modern life is silently operatic. A divergence from the expected script, or style, is all that's needed to set it off. When people are surprised or shocked they fumble and try to assume their typical roles. In such moments the theatre of everyday life (the set roles, the stock phrases, the invisible scripts guiding us) suddenly becomes apparent. That's when policemen reveal that they feel like actors. Others flee the scene. While some simply dwell with their confusion.

The ones who dwell with their confusion are the scientists. Earlier in this paper I set forth two main aspects of the experimental method: (1) the 'poetic' act by which you form a hypothesis and imagine an experiment to test it; (2) the observational act (or even 'passion') by which you allow the results of such experimentation to impress themselves upon you, this 'deliberate yielding,' as Peirce calls it, to a reality beyond your current knowledge and understanding. For to think scientifically you don't have to be sparking experiments off all around you. It may be that you don't enact an experiment of your own, as rather that you simply notice (and isn't this where hypotheses, and for that matter poetry, really come from? (See further chapter 2.3 below, chapter 3j above). If so, it would make hypothesising and observing rather closer phenomena than one might think) something happening in the world around you that strikes you as strange. The person next to you suddenly implodes. A typical response to such a situation is to attempt to ignore the radical newness of what has happened, to

fumble for the reassurance of the familiar script, to try and pretend that all the old table manners still apply. Whereas the scientific response, when you notice that reality suddenly has a gaping hole in it, is just to open your eyes and see what happens.

I'm hypothesising that if you do, you will discover that when something radically new happens, social life turns into an opera, a situation where the performance of roles becomes highly self-conscious, artificial and explicit. Of course this hypothesis is just a product of my experience; as I have argued throughout this chapter, the test of these things is in personal experiment and observation. If you doubt what I'm saying, test it out. Do something strange and see what happens. Or even just look, scientifically, at what is going on all around us.

For someone really set a bomb off on September 11th. The attack on the World Trade Centre was radically new. Look at what has been happening on the political stage in the five weeks since.⁶ The stage been shaken to its foundations. And look how people have been fumbling and leaping to assume set roles and posturings: pure opera. Just as 'characterisation in opera eschews the subtle shading we demand in most literary forms,' so too with our politics, which is now a world of 'sheer goodness and sheer evil,' a world of George W. Bush and Osama Bin Laden, a world in which 'important characters can be defined by a single (and obsessively) passionate emotion.' I am quoting from Herbert Lindenberger's Opera, the Extravagant Art (1984, p.43). If only our news media could employ opera critics instead of journalists. For if you resist the temptation to sing along, you start to notice that 'the badness of Elsa's antagonist Ortrud and of Desdemona's antagonist Iago' are rendered by certain

⁶ I leave this dating (correct, on October 15th, 2001) as it stands (now early December 2001) because I want the reader to remember back to the global hysteria immediately following the attack, prior to the ennui and everydayness that is increasingly greeting the nightly news of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, landslides in Nigeria and the sending of Australian troops. News events date like films, or novels, even faster. But the ennui itself, is as much a mask as the hysteria that preceded it, on which more below. (I leave this footnote as it stands, now early February 2001, for it too seems to have dated over the course of two months. What happened in Nigeria?)

conventional signs, markers and motifs, 'including the fact that during this period villains expressed themselves in a relatively lower pitch' (p.43). Or you could think of it all as a movie as well. As America under attack, turns into The War on Terror, doesn't it strike you just how staged this whole event has become?

I am claiming that if you want to test the hypothesis I have proposed in the final part of this paper (that when something radically new happens, social life responds by turning into an opera) you don't need to set off any experiment. Just cast eye on what is going on right now. For whatever your feelings on the immorality (and face it, those feelings are probably going to be pretty obvious; you'd be worried if they weren't) of it all, the fact is that what Bin Laden did in New York blew a hole in reality.⁷ The very idea, only two months ago, that the United States was vulnerable to any sort of attack was almost unthinkable. If someone had said that six thousand casualties were about to occur in New York you would have wondered if they were (or rather should be) on medication; that a few guys armed with a few knives were going to commander a couple of planes and fly them into the World Trade Centre; and take down both towers in the process – yeah, right

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States' supreme and solitary superpower status has gone unquestioned. But a 'global policeman' is subject to the same theatrical requirement as a local policeman; as well as wielding violence and the threat of violence, there is also the 'constant acting,' the bluff and bluster that goes with the role and makes it work. On September

⁷ Not that he's done anyone any good, except during those split seconds of realisation that 'there's no such thing as the law.' But it wasn't a lasting impression (it's now 15/7/2003, I'm giving this paper its final revision, and the "Alliance of the Willing" begin their surreal march home, and we enter the most openly imperialist stage of international relations for near on a century, violence begetting more violence through the logic of what Michael Taussig theorised as "the colonial mirror of production" (1987, p.135)). Basically, Bin Laden is a failed poet. Or a failed scientist. Or a failed critic. The critique of violence reminds us that you can access the passion for Oedipus through those avenues instead. Like Jacques Derrida or Edward Said, who were content to bring down empires of symbols instead of people. Which may well be just as effective. If only our news media could employ Harold Blooms instead of political commentators. Bin Laden's a loser.

the eleventh that image was suddenly revealed for the mirage it is. No body believes in the United States' invincibility any more. I am suggesting that all the bluster and international posturing, all this opera of revenge and requital, is just one weak attempt to drown out a colossal new fact: no one believes it anymore.

In such moments the theatre of everyday life (the set roles, the stock phrases, the invisible script guiding us) suddenly becomes apparent. Yet this opera of roles and responses does nothing to alter the anxiety which prompts it. The advantage of the scientist's ethic of passive observation is that it opens your eyes to the zero point of incomprehension at the heart of any such spectacle. Suddenly the United States has lost its invincibility. And nobody knows what to say or do.

My second thesis: Drag is all about people's responses to trauma.

e) is an author

Nudism, multiple personality disorder and the hi-rise novel

1. nudism

There are at least one hundred thousand 'social nudists' across this nation: '0.7 % of the Australian population . . . spread . . . across a continent,' according to Magnus Clarke, the author of Nudism in Australia (1983, p.11). 'The total figure,' he continues, 'may amount to the population of a sizeable city' (p.11).

The anonymity of this image (a city of nudists, abstracted from their multiple networks of place and circumstance, hovering, as it were, in thin air) is appropriate, given the anonymity of nudism itself. This is apparent in the ground level experiences Clarke proceeds to describe. 'As nudists themselves observe, when they take off their clothes they shed external existence in both practical and symbolic forms' (p.12). The relative anonymity of class among social nudists lends a certain democracy to their gatherings, while the first-name only rule in operation at most clubs helps to maintain this. Yet the homogeneity of nudist affiliation does not stop here. In such a state of collective undress: 'a more meaningful egalitarianism becomes possible: one without even regard to age or sex' (p.13). Clarke underlines the paradoxical nature of this last claim: if nudism allows an egalitarianism beyond gender oppression, it means that sexual difference disappears from social interaction in precisely those circumstances in which one would expect it to be most apparent.

It is not simply the tradition of desegregated toilet facilities at nudist gatherings (p.250) that makes this the case, as rather something about the socio-historical texture of sexual desire itself. Desire slides through language. From 'bustles, to

bras, to minis,' clothes serve as the ever-changing 'symbols of sex,' the language for sexual exchange and interaction, our indices to wealth, power and lust (p.21). In divesting themselves of such signifiers, shedding 'external existence in both practical and symbolic forms,' nudists are literally divesting themselves of sexuality itself. At least, this is according to Clarke's informants. As one of them ("Mary") puts it,

it is the titillation of various clothes that makes someone sexually attractive. Mother Nature usually knows when you should be aroused sexually and it is not at a nudist club.

("Mary" in Clarke, 1983, p.233)

The taboo on male erections at all the clubs further underlines the difficulties that the patriarchal organisation of sexual desire has in such locales. Which is as much as to say, with Clarke, that the 'achievement of this nudist egalitarianism' is really quite radical. Here men and women are truly equal.

I have explored the political dimensions of Clarke's analysis because I think that his text offers an insight into the desexualised discourses of modernity itself. When Clarke defines social nudists as 'those who prefer to be naked in appropriate situations in the company of others of both sexes, not all of whom are personally known to the individual' (1991, p.11), he depicts the sort of 'community in anonymity' which Benedict Anderson sees as the hallmark of the modern nation (1983, p.36). Such is the size of contemporary nations that it is literally not possible to know all one's fellow nationals personally. To feel one with them, you must imagine yourself as a homogenous and replicable member of an abstractly conceived community, feeling one with an anonymous mass, who themselves feel one with you. Hence Clarke's city of nudists, hovering abstractly over the Australian continent.

Of course Clarke's demographic data aims at the statistical being of nudists, whereas Anderson is far more concerned with the way his subjects think.

Anderson's ultimate reference here is to Hegel, who claimed that the spirit of the modern lies in 'the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence,' a vision of collective identity he summarises as ' "I" that is "We" and "We" that is "I" ' (1977, p.110). Clarke's researches are not quite on the multiply self-reflexive level of The Phenomenology of Spirit. Yet if the perfectly democratic *I that is We* equivalence characterising the Hegelian 'world-mind' has any relevance here, it's in the fact that you would have to live in a nudist colony to believe in it. Where else is social life so representational, so democratic, so divested of sexual difference?

2. the hi-rise novel

Hegel is a nudist, now that we have your attention,

I want to usher you in to The 14th Floor, a novel-in-progress set entirely on the fourteenth floor of various buildings in a city like Sydney or Melbourne or both. This cross-section is intended to offer to investigation a socioscope, as in Tolstoy or Dickens, only here hi-rise and rather more twisted. The ten characters whose minds I enter into are named, as in algebraic logic, **a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, and j**. They all live, work, relax, read novels and interact on the fourteenth floor. Now part of the reason for the theoretical excursus above is that I, like any novelist, have to engage in a necessarily sociological operation to work out just how my characters exist and inter-relate within the environment I have set them. That's why I am reading Hegel. The other reason is that the novel begins in a nudist colony.

A hi-rise nudist colony. At this altitude, with full size savanna land photo-wallpaper all around, a Cambrook™ tea urn on a nearby trestle table, and next to nothing else, **a**, who is a professional thief, is trying to come to terms with

today's dilemma *viz.* how do you pick pockets in a nudist colony? It is **g**, a psychiatrist, who is writing this. The style is clipped, clinical and perverse. The reason **g** is now writing is that the ten characters are also the ten authors of the book. Characters are encountered on a two-fold level, as both author and protagonist. So now **d**, a transvestite who writes in the horror genre, takes up the story of **a**'s predicament, before the narrative shifts to **e**, another psychiatrist. **e** writes situation comedy. He proceeds to describe how **a**'s persistent and tormenting erectile failure finally disappears here in the one place, given the taboo on male erections, in which it would actually be of use. **a**'s eyes widen in fear.

The story is taken up by **f**, who avails herself of a Wittgensteinian / psychotic reading of all that is the case within this state of affairs to describe **b**, a nineteen year old student radical eating a banana in the nudist club solarium. **b** is planning an attack upon social justice Christianity for her next politics tutorial. The action moves to a psych ward, where **g** presides and threatens to withhold his authorisation of **d**'s sex-change unless she start acting like a woman *all the time* - no slacks in the consulting room! As for **d**, **d** is terrified that the psychiatrist will discover that she, back as a young man, used to do money-shots in porno films, an occupation in fact not dissimilar, at least in terms of décor, to nudism itself. All this is preliminary to the central focus of the novel, a Neighbourhood Watch Meeting, featuring all ten characters and based on Plato's Symposium (1980). There is a reference to Kafka's **k** in all this, only in my novel the characters end at **j**, a chef interested in psychotic cookery. **k** is reserved for the reader wandering through the uni admin block, the psych ward, the nudist colony, the twisted world of the novel, and seeking whatever it is one reads novels for therein.

Can you see why I need a bit of theory to help me out here? For how do you describe the inside and outside of ten different characters, and the concretely abstract hi-rise realm in which they are set, without some theory of how the

individual fits within a society? The problem, however, which the social sciences raise for the novelist, is that they tend to picture society as an entity composed of so many like-minded units: the city of one hundred thousand nudists, the Imagined Community of self-identifying subjects, the *I that is We*. The basis of such representations, and again Hegel gives it its most revealing articulation, is the idea of a bounded, homogenous and replicable ego:

It is part of education, of thinking as the consciousness of the single in the form of universality, that the ego comes to be apprehended as a universal person in which all are identical.

(Hegel, 1942, p.134)

The problem here is not that my characters are so clearly different: for **a – j** could simply represent ten different universal or exemplary character types: the exemplary thief, the exemplary nurse, the exemplary reader even. The social sciences can certainly theorise difference on this level, as Clarke's ability to abstract an *I that is We* city of nudists from the broader Australian social fabric indicates. This is what I call 'the nudist model of subjectivity': the bounded bodily ego and its supposedly unitary identity. Whereas the issue for me is that these ten characters are all housed within my own head. I wake up every day and wonder what **e** will do, how **j** will describe it, and what citations **h**, a bisexual librarian, will adduce to the event. The dialogue between my characters may well be fictional, but the fact of the matter is that I need to think in ten different ways – that is, I need to think as ten different people - to produce it. For the reality of my project is that there are ten of me. That being the case, the question for me is no longer how does an individual fit within a society, as rather *how does a society fit within an individual?*

This question, and the creative experiences inspiring it, are going to lead me to a rather unusual perspective on The Phenomenology of the Mind, Hegel's philosophical *bildungsroman* (with only one character). For the ego is not simply a dialectical part of the social whole, particular and universal, each telescoping in

and out of each other. The ego is a multiple of characters, a full dinner-table inside your own head. The novel, along with stage-drama and opera, draws upon this very multiplicity, indeed serves as a privileged site for its expression. I want to use the rest of my paper to illustrate these claims.

3. multiple personality disorder

So, I want to move from nudism to multiple personality disorder, the polar opposite thereof. The DSM-IV (which is to say the American Psychiatric Association's most recent edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (1994)), defines Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) as the possession of at least two distinct personalities, any one of which will alternately take control of an individual's thoughts and actions: The Three Faces of Eve, to cite the popular late fifties novel/ case report on one (or rather three) such individuals (Crickley and Thigpen, 1960). Frequently confused with schizophrenia, the disorder was further popularised in the seventies through the book and film of Sybil (1973), who was possessed of sixteen personalities, and then in the eighties, through Trudi Chase's 'autobiographical' When Rabbit Howls (1988), which, with over ninety authors, inspired me with the idea for The 14th Floor. Now part of the reason I am citing all this psychiatric and popular literature is that I, like any novelist, am searching for an appropriate form for my novel. That form itself will effectively constitute my answer to the question posed above: *how does a society fit within an individual?* The other reason is that the novel begins in a nudist colony and shifts to a psych ward.

A hi-rise psych ward. At this altitude, in white lab-coat, copy of Deitsch and Meyer's trusty Clinician's Handbook (1996) in hand, **g**, the head psychiatrist is subjecting **d**, who wants a sex-change, to a battery of self-report tests. It is **e**, another psychiatrist, who is describing this. **e** finds psychiatry pretty silly. Only he's been on his best behaviour ever since **c** caught him behind the mirrored

observation room with To assess personality psychiatrists typically rely upon the MMPI-2, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Ben-Porath et. al., n.d.), which subjects one to a series of five hundred and sixty seven self-reference statements (eg. 'I believe that cancer is a horrible disease') to which one can answer 'True' or 'False', the sum total of which responses can then be tabulated and codified into a formula like the following: '7*2'1'8-+:35#0 to the right of #9' (Deitsch and Meyer, 1996, p.292). That is a personality. Only MPD mucks it all up. It is impossible, Deitsch and Meyer note, to expect any particular MPD pattern to emerge from the self-report test battery, because the results will simply reflect the personality, **a** or **c** or **j**, answering at the time. MPD cannot be detected by the MMPI-2 because the presupposition of such a test is the idea of the unified and bounded bodily ego. An ego responsible for its own self-reference. That is a personality. Now considering how well known it is that **g**, as a junior intern, was officially reprimanded for staring at the nurses' breasts every time he addressed them, **e** finds this self-report regime all a bit absurd.

Of course the idea that the ego might speak the truth – true or false and in all consciousness *I believe that cancer is a wonderful disease* – of its own psychopathology is itself so absurd as to be almost psychotic. **d** is not psychotic because if she was it would have been picked up on the MCM-II, which has a 'Thought Disorder Scale'. Luckily there is no such scale for detecting ex-male porn actors. **d** is a smoker. **g**, still attempting to calculate whether to authorise **d**'s sex-change or not, considers that statistically more women than men smoke so that for **d** to be a smoker is a point in her favour. Only she could be a malingerer. A whole literature exists on the topic of 'malingering,' that is, answering dishonestly on your self-report test. Further differentiated into 'fake-good' and 'fake-bad' responses, malingering is, according to Deitsch and Meyer, 'in truth an act, not a mental disorder' (p.412). **d** remembers to cross her legs. Will **g** realise that she is now 'fake-good?' The MMPI-2 won't tell him, because the act of pretending on your self report test, the act of acting other to yourself, apparently has nothing to do with your personality. Just like MPD itself, the act of

acting is off the scales, because the only real person is the unified and self-spoken ego. For we have arrived back at the nudist model of subjectivity, only this time from the inside, *via* psychiatry.

c is a nurse, whose marriage, for better and for worse, is collapsing. **c** takes up the narrative. Now as part of her professional duties, **c** runs training sessions for the Mental Health Volunteers' Group and is trying to hold it together, which requires a certain acting in itself. **d**, meanwhile, has volunteered to work with the psychotics because she, anxious not to be suspected of malingering, wants to be seen to be publicly acting like a woman. Whereas **c** just wants to weep. But who are you when you act at being other than yourself? Listen to Crickley and Thigpen, clinicians and authors of The Three Faces of Eve, as they attempt to comprehend their subject's ability to change style, expression and even appearance to usher in another of her three personalities. 'Talented and well-trained actresses,' they write

are reported to be able to summon tears at will when their parts require that they weep. It is doubtful if ordinary volition unaided can bring such tears. Is it not more reasonable to believe that the process is indirect, that such an actress has the means to summon into her awareness some emotional component or shallower representation of the real feelings that might cause one to weep?

(Crickley and Thigpen, 1960, p.57).

Whereas **c** needs to summon up the real feelings that will cause her to hold it together. Who are you when you play at being someone else, if not another side of yourself? That seems to be what Crickley and Thigpen are saying, on the basis of their therapeutic work with The Three Faces of Eve. It is **f**, a psychotic, who is writing this, because psychotic thinking is rigorous enough to maintain the parallel between **c** and **d**'s self-reflexive ability to act as other to themselves and the MPD Eve's unreflexive ability to do so. In both instances one observes an ego possessed by a multiplicand of distinct alters, that is a society of faces within the one individual.

For with acting, as with novel writing, as with MPD itself, the manifold characters one summons up must come from somewhere within:

The psychological novel in general no doubt owes its special nature to the inclination of the modern writer to split up his ego, by self-observation, into many part-egos, and, in consequence, to personify the conflicting currents of his own mental life in several heroes.

(Freud, 1975b, p.150)

That's Freud, outlining his theory of artistic creativity. For Freud there is a direct link between the child's phantasy play (*spiel* in German) among imaginary friends and the dramatic play (again, *spiel* in German) he will come to write for the stage twenty year later. It is the 'family romance' which one acts out in such scenarios: a nexus composed of the unconscious subject's ambitious and erotic wishes to better its place in the oedipal triangle, a triangle of characters internal to the subject him and herself (1975c). Such infantile phantasies, veritable 'works of fiction' according to Freud (p.240), follow the subject through life to manifest in various sanctioned spaces: daydreams, jokes, mistakes and works of art among them. The mind is multiple – that's what Freud argues – and the novel, just like psychopathology itself, MPD for instance, serves to express this fact.

The 14th Floor serves to express this fact because it culminates in a Neighbourhood Watch Meeting. A hi-rise Neighbourhood Watch Meeting. **g** is chairing the meeting, for community is important to him. To **g**'s annoyance, his outpatient **f** is there as well. **f** is in vigilant attendance because **f** knows that if you don't keep watching, the neighbourhood could well disappear – quite a concern on the fourteenth floor. The psychiatrist and the psychotic are the only two characters who can take this all seriously. **a**, the thief, has decided to come along because it seems like such a good front. While **e** is there because **c** walked in on him while he was being seduced by a seventeen year old psychotic and he is terrified that **g** might find out. At such times, it is better to act like a

good citizen. An *I that is We*. The romance starts to heat up because, due to an error caused by the very structure of the novel (the thirteenth floor is sometimes, remember, the same as the fourteenth), the Mental Health Volunteers Meeting has been scheduled for the same room as the Neighbourhood Watch Meeting. **c** insists that the meetings be run concurrently, mainly to get at **e**, who looks a bit like her husband. **b**, the student radical, whom we last saw eating a banana in the nudist club solarium, is a Mental Health Volunteer for the sake of social change. **b**, now wearing a low cut dress, likes social nudism, particularly the ban on male erections. She has already had four senior members of the club expelled. And now she is round a table where **a, c, d, e, f, g, h,** and **j** are trying to disentangle the Neighbourhood Watch / Mental Health agenda. When **b**, in the midst of all this confusion, begins to bat her young eyelids at **e**, who is terrified already for his precarious position in the ward, given what **c** caught him doing behind the mirrored observation room, when **b**, who is only nineteen, moves to sit rather too closely thigh to thigh with **e**, the novel finally metamorphoses . . .

. . . .back into the academic paper which **I**, a disembodied academic voice, presents to the Cultural Studies of Association Annual Conference ('On the Beach') in Brisbane, in December 2000. Now clearly there is a difference between an ego possessed by a multiplicand of self-reflexively distinct alters, none of whom see themselves as the same person, and the comparatively unified **I** of your average everyday neurotic. Yet the extreme that is MPD (the society of faces) is, **I** claims, simply one extreme end of a continuum which runs, at its opposite end, to ego-bounding and unifying participation in collectivist activities like social nudism or academic inquiry. Dramatic writing and practice, on the other hand, are much more on the MPD end of the continuum. That is why the author, named **I** in my book, which is also a murder mystery, is dead, and always has been. Repression may import a negative unity to the psyche, but it does nothing to alter the fact that the 'family romance', and the ego foundering thereon, is multiple, an *I that is We*, lacking a central defining identity, for as far

the psyche goes, there is none. For we are all walking novels really, reading our way into the world around us. That's why my novel, conceived as a remake of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind, comes in the form of a multiple personality disorder, written by and about the multiplicand of characters **a –j**, with a few lacunae left for the reader to fall through, namely psychosis.

f) insane

Who speaks in Schreber?

: the ego and its role in the psychotic text

a plurality of heads (that is several individuals in one and the same skull) which they encountered in me and from which they shrank in alarm crying 'For heaven's sake - that is a human being with several heads.'

Daniel Paul Schreber, Memoirs of my Nervous Illness

'Who speaks?' In his 1955-6 Seminar on The Psychoses, Lacan claims that this question should dominate our approach to paranoid psychosis (1993, p.23). That is to say, we should focus upon delineating the various agencies within the individual patient which give rise to the delusional text. In asking such a question, essentially a question of authorship, Lacan distances himself from psychiatrists like Emil Kraepelin who define paranoia solely in terms of its delusional content. According to Kraepelin, paranoia is marked by 'a stable delusional system that it is impossible to disturb and establishes itself with total preservation of clarity and order in thought, will and action' (Kraepelin, cited in Lacan, 1993, p.17). For Lacan there is nothing specific to psychosis in this. He advises us to take definitions like Kraepelin's 'out of their context, read them out aloud, and you will see the most wonderful descriptions of the behaviour of everyone'. Indeed, Lacan continues, it 'can almost be said that there is no more apparent and visible discourse of madness than the psychiatrist's - and precisely

on the subject of paranoia' (p.19). For the 'stable delusional system' of modern psychiatry seems utterly impervious to facts that should surely point to a different way of thinking. As early as the 1880s, it was remarked that people having auditory hallucinations were often seen 'uttering the words they accused their voices of having spoken to them,' a phenomenon that occurred 'whether or not they were aware of it, or did not want to know' (p.24). Yet this fact could only be of significance if one were prepared to ask Lacan's question: if the psychotic subject utters his own auditory hallucinations, and just as soon denies authorship of them, where do they come from? And where is he coming from? Who speaks in him?

Who speaks? In the following paper, I shall be asking this question of Daniel Paul Schreber's Memoirs of my Nervous Illness (2000). An account of its author's psychotic experiences and 'religious convictions,' first published in 1903, the Memoirs is not an easy read. In part this difficulty is due to the sheer excess of the text, the fantastical nature of the experiences it recounts. For God has been communing with Schreber through the nerves of his own body. Schreber suspects that he is 'on Phobos, a satellite of the planet Mars which had once been mentioned by the voices in some other context' (p.81). The asylum is all around him, and yet its inhabitants could well be props:

I repeatedly witnessed that some of them changed heads during their stay in the common-room, that is to say, without leaving the room, and while I was observing them, they suddenly ran about with a different head.

(Schreber, 2000, p.105).

Schreber could be next. Jesuits repeatedly try to line his skull with a new brain membrane (p.97). The operation of divine miracles causes his stomach frequently to disappear (p.145). The 'compression-of-the-chest-miracle' occurs and 'the head-compressing-machine' squeezes his cranium 'as though in a vice by turning a kind of screw, causing my head to temporarily assume an elongated, almost pear-shaped form' (p.150). There is a whole bookfull of reasons for this:

the 'order of the world,' the perfidy of Schreber's erstwhile psychiatrist, Professor Flechsig, the privileged role of lunatic asylums as 'God's nerve institutes' (p.36), Schreber's own capacity for high grade 'voluptuousness,' his particular 'power of attraction' upon God, the 'celestial-tying-to-bodies' which the souls enact against him, the 'healthy egoism' Schreber feels compelled to uphold in his defence etc etc. The other reason the Memoirs is not an easy read, is that on some level it all seems to hang together. Though you are never quite sure where. After two hundred and fifty nine pages of such writing, it is hard to remember. Maybe it doesn't even matter. The real question to ask is who speaks in all of this.

1. a scientific subject

The striking thing, once you stop trying to make sense of the plot, and focus instead on where it is coming from, is that Schreber must have asked himself the same question. Take his nascent leprosy. Telling us that 'I had to recite certain strange-sounding incantations, such as "I am the first leper corpse and I lead a leper corpse",' Schreber adds that he 'spoke them out *aloud* several times in the presence of the attendant R., who naturally responded only with a pitying smile' (p.94, fn.47). Here Schreber describes how he, just like the psychotics Lacan mentions, utters the text of an auditory hallucination ('I am the first leper corpse . . .'), and simultaneously disavows its authorship ('I *had* to recite'). At the same time, he evidences his awareness ('R . . . *naturally* responded') of how insane he must appear. The Judge⁸ knows that he is not entirely in the text which he nonetheless utters, and builds delusional structures around. Indeed, his whole theory of nerve-contact is predicated upon an awareness of the fact that he is distinct to the voices which speak through him, and appear as him.

The more you open your eyes to such disavowals, and this is the disconcerting effect of Lacan's question, the more strangely sane their author appears. Take

⁸ Prior to his attack Schreber was a distinguished member of the Dresden judiciary.

Schreber's account of his thwarted attempts to freeze himself. The judge has discovered that by clinging to icy trees, or holding balls of snow 'until my hands were almost paralysed,' he can direct the nerve-contact of evil souls like Professor Flechsig towards his extremities, and 'so protect the head from the injurious consequences intended'(p.160). Again, Schreber realises that these activities must appear 'as raving madness to the physicians.' What is more, he realises that the phenomena driving him to attempt this self-freezing (the bevy of miracles directed against him, which require a full book to explain) sound equally crazy:

I must be prepared for the question, why did I not inform my physicians of all these things early on. I can only answer by asking a question in turn: would one have given my description of these supernatural events the slightest credence?

(Schreber, 2000, p.128, fn.63)

Who could fault the Judge's reasoning here? Schreber knows that psychiatrists have no ability to distinguish the psychotic from the insane plot against him. They are not trained to ask who speaks.

Whereas I want to suggest that the person who speaks as Schreber is far more rational than any common-sense view of madness will allow. To see this you have to accept what he keeps saying: that he is not the same as the madness around him. Take the miracle of 'the-celestial-tying-to-bodies,' one of the main reasons why the 'order of the world' is now so dependent upon Schreber:

I realise that such a conception, according to which one must think of my body on our earth as connected to other stars by stretched out nerves, is almost incomprehensible to other people considering the immense distances involved; for me, however, as a result of my daily experiences over the last six years there can be no doubt as to the objective reality of this relation.

(Schreber, 2000, p.122).

Schreber disavows his authorship of this celestial delusion just as much as he disavows his agency in the leprosy incantations and the self-freezing. For after all, however 'incomprehensible' it might sound, Schreber is simply reporting to us an 'objective reality,' something he has experienced and felt compelled to theorise. 'This is naturally only a hypothesis,' Schreber writes, conjecturing as to how Flechsig committed 'soul-murder' upon him, 'but as in scientific research it has to be adhered to until a better explanation for the events under question can be found' (p.35). Nor are these isolated moments in the text. All his delusions have a theoretical status (from the Greek θεωρεῖν, *theorein*, to see), in the sense that they constitute attempts merely to describe what he sees around him. Even the Judge's newly-found 'religious convictions' submit to scientific principles. Schreber insists that prior to his illness he had never been able to convince himself of God's existence, and had always preferred the natural sciences to the vagaries of theological speculation (pp.69-70). It is only now, inducing the theoretical consequences of his own experience of nerve-contact, that he finds himself a deist. As would anyone else: 'every other human being, had he seen similar dream visions, would equally have thought them real' (p.73, fn37).

It is fascinating to note just how scientific this paranoid psychotic's epistemology is. For science, or rather, the ideal to which it aspires, is also based upon a passive response to the 'objective reality' of one's experiences. It too is based upon a disavowal of authorship. Compare the attitude to knowledge Schreber evinces in his Memoirs with the theory of experimental science which Charles Saunders Peirce, the great Neo-Aristotelian, articulated in his near contemporaneous Cambridge Conference Lectures on Reason and the Logic of Things (1992d). 'It is the enforced element in the history of our lives,' writes Peirce, defining *experience*, the concept at the heart of this theory. 'The act of observation' he continues,

is the deliberate yielding of ourselves to that *force majeure* - an early surrender at discretion, due to our foreseeing that we must whatever we do be borne down by that power, at last

(Peirce, 1992d, p.170).

Even the formation of hypotheses is a form of yielding, a submission to a truth radically external to the scientific subject: 'The hypothesis, as the Frenchman says, *c'est plus fort que moi*. It is irresistible, it is imperative' (p.170). For science has nothing to do with imposing one's will on the world; it aims simply to learn 'the lesson that the universe has to teach' (p.176).

Elsewhere Peirce underlines the radical contingency of knowledge produced in such an experiential manner, the fact that it can always be invalidated by future observations (eg. 1931-5). For him this constitutes the superiority of science over metaphysics. Schreber is fully consonant with Peirce. In fact his willingness to take account of future inductions constitutes the basis of his extraordinary critique of Kraepelin. It is not just Lacan who had a problem with the psychiatrist's categorisations. 'I trust,' writes Schreber,

I have proved that I am not only not 'controlled by fixed and previously formed ideas,' but that I also possess in full measure the 'capacity to evaluate critically the content of consciousness with the help of judgement and deduction.'

The reasoning is impeccable - impeccably empirical even:

He who in Kraepelin's sense . . . understands 'sound experience' simply as the denial of everything supernatural, would in my opinion lay himself open to the reproach of allowing himself to be led only by the shallow 'rationalistic ideas' of the period of enlightenment of the 18th century.

(Schreber, 2000, p.83 fn42).

Schreber is even more of a scientist than Kraepelin, for he is open to experiences - auditory hallucinations no less - that the psychiatrist has programmed himself not to register!

2. without the subject

Schreber is his own non-pathological ego. Ask who speaks, subtract all the mad behaviour, alien voices and objective realities, simply reading Schreber for the text he claims to author as his own, and that is the result you obtain. The thing about this finding (and again, this is in radical contrast to most contemporary theories and fantasies of psychosis) is that it seems to have nothing to do with the unconscious. On the contrary, the psychotic who speaks in Schreber as Schreber appears rigorously ego-bound. Schreber *is* his own ego. Or at least that is what he keeps asserting, in the most scientific fashion possible.

Though - or rather, precisely for this reason - the results are anything but scientific. It is instructive once more to compare Peirce, defining the subject of scientific inquiry, and here worlds away from Schreber:

a person is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is 'saying to himself,' that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time. When one reasons, it is that critical self one is trying to persuade; and all thought whatsoever is a sign, and is mostly of the nature of language.

(Peirce, 1955d, p.258)

It is as if, in Schreber, there is no such subjective division. His thoughts are not what he is 'saying to himself,' as rather what the voices (the rays, the nerves, the Upper and Lower God) say to him. His ego retains its monadic, indeed, passive nature throughout. Which gives it a certain rigour and seeming stability. As Lacan puts it, the 'preservation of the ego's identity does not seem to him to require justification' (1993, p.27). This is quite extraordinary, given the insane things that Schreber is effectively 'saying to himself' through the 'miraculously created birds' and 'fleetingly-improvised-men.' The ego is beyond doubt for

Schreber, beyond the doubt induced in the neurotic by the sheer fact that he is 'not absolutely an individual.'

The voices Schreber hears are beyond doubt too. Utterances like 'I am the first leper corpse and I lead a leper corpse' constitute, in Lacan's words, 'a kernel of dialectical inertia' (1993, p.22). The preceding text in the Memoirs runs:

That I must at least have had some germs of leprosy is shown by the fact that for a long time I had to recite certain strange-sounding incantations, such as 'I am the first leper corpse'

(Schreber, 2000, p.94)

As the quote indicates, Schreber not only felt compelled to recite this incantation, but what is more, to understand his subjective plight through it. The leprosy text has an axiomatic quality, necessarily real, however crazy. Alongside the injunction that we ask 'who speaks?' in psychosis, Lacan insists that we pay attention to the presence of such verbal fragments ('inaccessible, inert, and stagnant with respect to any dialectic') within the delusional text (1993, p.22). Such fragments of speech again mark the difference between a Peircean world and a Schreberian one. Peirce's semiotic is decidedly dialectical: not only is it that 'all thought whatsoever is a sign'; all signs have their meaning in other signs, including the thought-sign (*'plus fort que moi imperative irresistible'*) that one submits to, in yielding 'to the lesson that the universe has to teach.' Such a lesson can never take on the absolute value of Schreber's leprosy, for it is always subject to future interpretation: 'the meaning of a proposition' cannot be exhausted by an imperative interpretation, for that very interpretation 'is itself a proposition' (1955d, p.261). Meaning is so contingent for Peirce that it does not even, strictly speaking, exist: 'the meaning of every proposition lies in the future' (p.261).

The failure of this splitting in Schreber, the failure of the symbolic order, consigns him to 'an imaginary dimension,' a non-dialectical realm of absolute presence,

and absolute suffering.⁹ Schreber's is a *passion*, in the literal sense of the word (from the Latin *pati, passus*, 'to suffer', whence also our word 'passive'): his text recounts the fate of an monadic ego beset by an alien universe.¹⁰ But that universe is only so alien. For when it speaks to Schreber, it does so as another ego. This will seem a paradoxical statement. Above I described how Schreber finds himself observing a universe of 'objective reality,' a world quite literally 'void of him,' as any scientific vision must be (Lacan, 1993, p.79). And yet the fact is that this abstract universe, the very universe itself, with all its voices, miracles, and bodily tortures, persecutes him as only another ego can. This will constitute the second part of my response to the question of who speaks in Schreber: another ego.

3. by way of our own paranoia

But to fully appreciate the scope of this imaginary alienation, I want to take a detour through the field of the neuroses. For one might imagine that all discourse, or at least all 'healthy' discourse, proceeds *via* an ego-ego relation. I have made reference at various moments below to what I have called the 'common-sense' view of madness, meaning by this the tendency to equate psychosis with irrationality, be it that of a delusionary totality, a somehow unrepressed unconscious, or even just sheer chaos. I have suggested that, on the contrary, there is something all too rational about psychosis, precisely because of the privileged role the ego plays within it. Now the common-sense view of madness has, as its corollary, the fantasy of a non-neurotic neurotic, the idea, that is, that 'we normals' have an unproblematic relation to the ego. Of

⁹ Suffering, as Lacan writes, 'is a fundamental characteristic of the imaginary' (1993, p.69).

¹⁰ Incidentally, and keeping in mind the differences between Peirce's vision and Schreber's, there is room here for a theory of the link between science (not to mention creative work) and trauma. What induces in us the desire to *see things*, regardless of how abnormal or repugnant to reason, and to channel that vision into the world, if not that we have learnt, from prior experience of the shattering and suffering of the ego, that a truth beyond the everyday appears there, and in some tragic sense, releases us. I've often suspected that science, like ancient tragedy, which appeared simultaneously, has its roots in pain.

course practice always belies common-sense. The very difficulty Schreber occasions in his readers (the need for the counter-intuitive deduction I performed in section one below, simply so as to make sense of the text) suggests that when you *actually* encounter a non-neurotic ego like Schreber's, you tend to lose the plot. And this raises a strange question: who speaks in the neurotic, as he reads Schreber, or for that matter any text, if not the ego?¹¹

In the following paragraphs, I will investigate the ambiguous function of the ego in neurosis, focussing on how the neurotic reading of both fiction and reality can serve, by comparative contrast, to deepen our understanding of paranoia. For we are all a bit paranoid really. The question is why the psychotic's paranoia assumes such scientific, objective, indeed depersonalised dimensions, and yet remains so ego-bound. The distinction between neurotic and psychotic paranoia will lead me to a discussion of the neighbourhood of discourse more generally, concentrating on the way the order of language itself serves to stage these two very different disorders. Only the psychotic has no stage.

The fact is that the question *who speaks?* is not specific to the Lacanian investigation of psychosis. In a sense it guides any reading. To show how this is so, I want to turn to Hegel, whose Introductory Lectures on the Philosophy of Aesthetics articulate this thesis so compellingly (1993). According to Hegel, the beauty of art is infinitely higher than that of nature for it is a beauty that is 'born again . . . of the mind' (1993, p.4). Art does not aim to deceive its readers with an illusion of reality, so much as to pretend to deceive them. The communicative power of the work of art lies precisely in the fact that we recognise it's artificiality, its status as a work within a given genre, following certain conventions, set in a

¹¹ This is the place to cite my debt to Octave Manoni's 'Writing and Madness: *Schreber als Schreiber*' (1998). Manoni asks the intriguing question why the *Memoirs* do not constitute a work of literature, adding that 'the reasons for which Schreber's *Denkwürdigkeiten* are not accepted as literature . . . would make valuable subjects for analysis. They would allow us to sketch in a part of the ill-defined frontier that delimits literature properly speaking' (p.44). In questioning the distinction between delusion and literature, and seeking to think through, rather than simply solve, the difficulty which Schreber's text occasions in its readers, Manoni's article inspired many of the thoughts that lead to the current chapter.

particular frame. '[W]e assume something further behind it, something inward, a significance, by which the external semblance has a soul breathed into it' (p.23). For what the work really points to, beyond the page, is the existence and actions of a creative consciousness, as that consciousness works through a given set of symbols to express itself through them. What we seek, when we read the actions and speech of various characters in a novel, is in fact the author behind them. The aesthetic is this seeking.

It is not just our reading of literature that is informed by such a drive. For Hegel, the reason art is superior to nature is that art, in its very artificiality, 'accentuates and reveals' the artificiality of 'the whole sphere of the empirical' (p.10). For reality is desire. The question 'who speaks?' inheres to all our discourse, ever sliding - for 'every word points to a meaning and has no value in itself' (p.23) - ever sliding along chains of signification towards that yearning absence that is the Other in us.

Just so the human eye, a man's face, flesh, skin, his whole figure, are a revelation of mind and soul, and in this case the meaning is always something other than that which shows itself within the immediate appearance.

(Hegel, 1993, p.23).

In other words, to follow Hegel with a fully consonant Lacanian discourse, 'whenever a puppet talks it's not the puppet that talks, but someone behind it.' (Lacan, 1993, p.51). The very functioning of desire - the desire that expresses itself in a reading, a conversation, a puppet show, or even a failed attempt to make sense of Schreber - desire avails itself of a form of paranoia. *Who speaks?*

For just who is it, in reading beyond the 'immediate appearance' of the other, who speaks in us? I want to answer this question once more by way of literature, for literature, as Hegel reminds, gives us a privileged access to workings of

desire. Let me begin with Freud, who, in his 'Creative Writers and Daydreaming,' articulated a link between the erotic and ambitious wishes expressed in child's play (*spiel* in German) with the script of the drama (again, *spiel*) through which a playwright will come, in later years, to repeat them. The child's play continues in the adult for 'we never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another' (1953-75b, p.145), whether that exchange takes the form of a work of art, or whether it fleshes itself out in the drama of living 'when,' now in Lacan's words,

the tragic hero (both Oedipus and each one of us potentially at some point of our being, when we repeat the oedipal drama) renews the law on the level of tragedy.

(Lacan,1982, p.42).

Lacan is commenting upon Hamlet, seeking to illustrate 'the tragedy of desire,' and thereby to show the 'essential co-ordinates' of the 'topological system' of neurosis. 'The story of Hamlet,' he writes, 'reveals a most vivid dramatic sense of this topology, and this is the source of its exceptional power of captivation' (1982, p.11).

So what role do these characters play? Lacan's topological reading of Hamlet, which, reading beyond the realm of 'immediate appearance,' translates the cast of the play into the figures of his algebra, gives something of an answer here. 'The play is dominated by the Mother as Other [*Autre*],' Lacan argues (p.12), proceeding to show how Ophelia assumes the position of the incestuous object (*objet a*), while her brother Laertes becomes Hamlet's 'semblable,' his mirror, or *ego ideal*, which, 'according to Hegel's formula . . . [is] . . . the one you have to kill' (p.31). Here Hamlet's 'identification with the mortal phallus' is clearest; the fatal nature of his victory over Laertes exemplifies the fact that the phallus 'will be able to appear only with the disappearance of the subject himself' (p.34). For 'one cannot strike the phallus,' who also appears as Claudius, and behind Claudius the father he obviously stands in for, 'because the phallus, even the real phallus, is a *ghost*' (p.50).

The point of this little schematisation is to show that the 'tragedy of desire' expresses itself in a 'constellation' (p.15) of speaking positions. One might even call it a 'split personality', given that the characters who inhabit these positions are all the product of one individual: Shakespeare.¹² For if this topology is something like the 'soul' which Hegel seeks behind the work, it needs to be realised that the nexus of intersecting figures I have just sketched is nothing like a monadic ego. There is, as Lacan would say, no *petit homme* hiding there within the unconscious and silently directing it all. Even the *objet a* function which Ophelia performs in the play is predicated upon her position within the matrix of characters. The author of any drama is, at best, a set of identifications as they work their way into conscious reality, whether as separate characters in a play, or separate interlocutors in a conversation. The multiplicity of voices who speak in the neurotic avail themselves of the fact that 'one's assumption of the ego is thoroughly ambiguous, one's assumption of the ego always revocable' (p.14). For the object of desire is not so much a thing, as rather a set of relations, a *nexus*, which is also a net, a trap like the one to which Hamlet is logically lead.

The 'exceptional power of captivation,' which Hamlet has for so long held, points, it seems to me, to the fact that we, as readers, experience a similar topology in approaching it. While the reason Schreber's text is so hard to approach is that we unconsciously seek its author, as we would any other neurotic, in the multiple content and cast of his delusion, rather than in the individual who abstracts himself from it. Schreber, in offering us an actual thing, an ego, simply presents us with the wrong sort of object. For the neurotic reads to be released from the ego. I think this is how one should understand Freud's claim that the pleasure of experiencing a work like Hamlet proceeds from 'a liberation of tensions in our

¹² Compare Manoni's critique of the idea of viewing the psychotic utterances as 'symptoms of a split personality.' The reason we fall into such an interpretative trap 'is because when faced with psychotic thought *per se* we tend to have recourse to neurotic defences . . . Thus we risk seeing in him [ie Schreber] a division which is really our own' (1998, p.56).

minds.’ In situations of aesthetic receptivity, the ego of the reader recedes from its relative tyranny to allow some experience of the multiple psychic agencies which the work emplots and channels. ‘It may be,’ Freud adds, ‘that not a little of this effect is due to the writer’s enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame’ (1953-75b, p.153). Could one go so far as to say that the literary work, in effecting a ‘liberation of tensions,’ effectively interprets us? Perhaps that is the real future of a psychoanalytic literary criticism: not to ‘analyse’ the text, as rather to show how the text analyses us? By way of our own paranoia.

4. only the psychotic has no stage

However that might be, the question, to return to Schreber, which this depiction of neurotic paranoia raises is yet again a strange one: just what then is paranoia for the paranoid? Almost the opposite: ‘In delusional speech the Other is truly excluded, there is no truth behind, there is so little truth that the subject places none there himself’ (Lacan, 1993, p.53). Take the set of ‘miraculously created puppets’ Schreber encounters at the very onset of his delusion: ‘the Senior Public Prosecutor B., Counsel of the County Court, Drs N. & W., the Privy Councillor Dr W., the lawyer W., my father-in-law.’ Schreber may well be paranoid, but there is no truth behind these puppets. They do not even strike him as ‘capable of holding a sensible conversation’ (Schreber, 2000, p.18 fn.1). They are ‘fleeting’ and ‘improvised,’ subject to the same ‘withdrawal of libidinal interest from the external object’ affecting all of Schreber’s interlocutors, including God himself (Lacan, 1993, p.90). Yet the message these little others give back to the subject, when they are seen to speak, is as delusionally certain and direct as the voices within. ‘The circuit closes,’ Lacan writes of another paranoiac,

on the two small others who are the puppet opposite her, which speaks, and in which her own message resonates, and herself who, as an ego, is always an other and speaks by allusion.

(Lacan, 1993, p.52)

There is none of the edginess and unease typically associated with paranoia, which is to say neurosis. Paranoid jealousy, to give another example, concerns not a particular man, but 'a more or less indefinite number of men.' One's certainty of the little other's culpability

is repeatable indefinitely, it re-emerges at every turning point of experience and may implicate fairly well any subject who appears on the horizon, and even ones that don't.

(Lacan, 1993, p.42)

Psychotic paranoia is a function of certainty, a certainty radically beyond any neurotic experience. There is no need to find one's desire beyond the 'immediate appearance' of the other, for the puppet effectively says whatever the 'order of the world' requires it to. Indeed, the paranoid little other is as certain as the paranoid ego. Hence the strangely depersonalised and abstract dimensions it assumes. This is the predicament of imaginary alienation which I flagged above; for the abstract certainty which the psychotic discovers in the little other before him has, as its corollary, an abstract and objective universe experienced in personal, alter-egoic, terms. God, as another such puppet, is, for Schreber - and there is no contradiction here - one with the objective reality of the universe itself. 'I must follow a healthy egoism' the Judge asserts, of his relations with God and His world, as if he really had any choice but to experience reality as his own alter-ego (Schreber, 2000, p.251). Schreber's ego-ego relation with God gives the 'essential coordinates' of the 'topological system' of psychosis, as much as the cast of Hamlet does for neurosis.

And from these materials, Schreber must weave his story. For no one, excepting perhaps the autistic, lives without a narrative, a place in time. The very need to constitute oneself in a story seems to explain the genesis of the paranoid's

delusion. The simple fact is that the only *plot* available to Schreber, in this imaginary ego-ego domain, is a dyadic one, a *plot against* him. A final comparison with the neurotic's play with symbols will help me illustrate this predicament. At the start of his illness, Schreber writes, 'a newspaper was put in front of me in which something like my own obituary notice could be read.' Even, he reasons, 'if this and other occurrences really were visions, there was *method* in them' (p.85). Whether this is a Shakespearian reference or not, the contrast with Hamlet is marked. If the neurotic can assume something of his own in the madness around him, it is because the stage upon which he appears is relatively fixed. I am referring to the structure of language. The neurotic, that 'plurality of heads (that is several individuals in one and the same skull)', can emplot himself in a variety of positions and through a variety of characters, because he feels that, whatever drama he enacts, the edifice of language will always be there.

A story from the Spanish mystic Ibn'Arabi will help illustrate what I mean by the edifice of language. 'One day, while I was sitting with him,' writes Ibn'Arabi of his master Abu Ja'Far Al-'Uryani,

a man brought his son to the masterThe man informed him that his son was one who carried the whole of the Qur'an in his memory. On hearing this, the master's whole demeanour changed as a spiritual state came upon him. Then he said to the man, 'It is the eternal which carries the transient. Thus it is the Qur'an which both supports us and your son.'

(Ibn'Arabi, 1971, p.65)

This literally uplifting anecdote is of course delusional, like any other religious text. For the only truth is that of desire, a truth not even Lacan, who is in fact dead, can guarantee. Yet the fact that 'the big Other does not exist' (for 'the meaning of every proposition lies' not in Al-'Uryani's 'the eternal', but rather 'in the future,' and, as such, is subject to desire) does not cancel out our need for the guarantee of something which *seems* eternal enough to carry the transient. Without such a delusion the theatre of human interaction simply cannot occur.

This is as true in the modern materialistic era, as it was in thirteenth century Seville, or sixteenth century London:

The dialectical correlate of the basic structure which makes of speech a subject to subject speech that may deceive is that there is also something that does not deceive.

(Lacan, 1993, p.64)

In our scientific era, this non-deceptive element is matter itself: 'it is out of the question that it, matter, should deceive us' (p.64). Of course it could, as could any other 'non-deceptive' symbol of reality, including the very idea of *reality* itself. 'Perhaps,' Peirce writes, 'there isn't any such thing at all. It is but a retrodution, a working hypothesis' (1992d, p.161). The reason for adopting such a working hypothesis - the belief in reality - is that something, somewhere, must necessarily be posed as a point beyond language - a phallus - so as to accord language the stability and surety you need to 'renew the law on the level of tragedy,' and so plot the 'constellation' of your Oedipus complex through it.

The newspaper, 'modern man's way,' according to Hegel, 'of saying his daily prayers,' could be said to perform this same Qur'anic function (Hegel, cited in Anderson, 1991, p.35). Yet even the newspaper slips from Schreber's hands to become part of the plot against him. The ego's identity, in psychosis, may well be rigorously preserved, but the price of this is that the stage shifts wildly, in fact *really* does not exist. For Schreber's very language is under threat from the monstrous 'writing-down-system,' which offers such a cruel parody of Al-'Uryani's Sufi vision:

Books or other notes are kept in which for years have been *written-down* all my thoughts, all my phrasesI cannot say with certainty who does the writing downI presume that the writing-down is done by creatures given human shape on distant celestial bodies after the manner of the fleeting-improvised-men.

(Schreber, 2000, p.123)

The maleficent souls who wield the plot against Schreber are attempting to exhaust Schreber's brain of all its thoughts, in the belief that if they succeed in doing so, 'the time would come when no new ideas could appear in me.' That would be the moment at which Schreber's 'power of attraction' would vanish, and with it God's presence, and with it the very 'order of the world' which their communion now serves to guarantee. Hence Schreber's compulsion to engage in constant acts of thinking (up to and including the 'not-thinking-of-anything-thought'). For there is a

danger which he is constantly aware of, that all this phantasmagoria might be reduced to a unity which doesn't annihilate his existence, but God's, which is essentially language.

(Lacan, 1993, p.100)

In the absence of a law to found the Symbolic and give it its non-deceptive status, its staging quality, the guarantor of Schreber's reality is the little other whom God has become. Imagine if the person sitting next to you guaranteed - and he alone, for nothing else is - the very existence of your language. Yet even this does not capture it, for God understands nothing about living beings, he cannot even tell them from corpses, indeed he has about as much substantiality as any other of the 'fleeting-improvised-men.' It is as if Schreber really has managed to kill God, in a way no neurotic ever could. For the neurotic, to kill God is to re-enshrine him elsewhere; 'we never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another,' as Freud writes of the child's phantasy, and its recapitulation in artistic creation: the phallus / ghost which Prince Hamlet ever fails to vanquish. The idea of non-deceptive matter is just another version of this. Whereas Schreber's un-anchored world is as good as Godless. And even that might disappear.

g) case-studied

Kierkegaard II – the Sequel

Why write poetry? For the unemployment.
Les

0. I have no idea

The music stopped, huge banners unfurled on the stage, my two guards stood (Kalashnikov in hand) beside me. The only intelligible words were the periodic exclamations of 'РЕД РОАР!' ('RED RAW!'), with which I punctuated a text of advertising matter randomly drawn from the back pages of a 1939 issue of ОГОНЁК (*Ogonyok*, 'little flame'), a popular Russian magazine with articles on sabotage, handicrafts and great war victories. Vacuum cleaners, Champagne and hair product. Even communist societies had advertisements. Kalashnikovs behind me. And it sounded meaningful to anyone who didn't speak Russian, so why not? You will buy. David had me on stage, dressed as Stalin, in Russian, and in front of six thousand drugged, dancing and demented Gay and Lesbian party-goers, delivering a to them incomprehensible totalitarian speech, in fact an advertisement for RED RAW 1999, a Revolutionary Dance Party, then some six weeks away. It was New Years Eve, 3.00 am, I was at a dance party held at the Melbourne docks and, like RED RAW, under the artistic direction of David Chisholm. Performing a three minute speech, in a foreign language: 'РЕД РОАР!' ('RED RAW!'). Grace Jones ('feeling like a woman / looking like a man / walking, walking in the rain') appeared on the same stage an hour or so later. We believe this to be the world's first live dance party advertisement.

Do you ever get the feeling that you *have no idea why I just did that?*

I had that feeling immediately after delivering Kierkegaard – the Movie at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia (CSAA)'s annual conference in December 2001, in Hobart. In repeatedly interrupting an academic paper at a conference entitled What's Left of Politics? with a blatant advertisement for my upcoming postdoctoral application¹³ I had no idea what I was doing. I was staging the world's first live Postdoc advertisement. And I was doing so in the course of a polemic argument for the desirability of turning Cultural Studies into the academic discipline that welcomes and encourages experimental inquiry. But what I was also doing, I realise in hindsight, was re-enacting the model David had given me at the dance party three years before. Re-enacting it, without even realising it. I had been, as Louis Althusser could have put it, interpellated. I'll return to this above.

1. Cultural studies in Cultural Studies

In what follows, I want to discuss three audience responses to that academic paper and to show where those responses lead me. The reason I am doing so is that I am more and more convinced that our theories of ideology suffer a fundamental flaw. They fail to incorporate the richest source of data that we, as humanities academics, have at our disposal: the fact that we are all teachers. What richer source could we have for studying the transmission of ideas and beliefs than our own social practices? I am referring to the classroom, but also to our conferences, and even collegial visits to the pub. Wherever it is that we garner new ideas and directions, that is where we will be most likely to learn about the mechanisms of cultural and indeed political transmission generally.

So let me leave David and the dance party aside for the moment, to launch Kierkegaard II – the Sequel, which I am presenting as the trailer to a broader

¹³ A project that would involve me learning to surf in Cornwall so as to write about the embodiment of idealist philosophy in Wagnerian opera. Any backers?

project, something like a cultural study of Cultural Studies. The idea is to study the practice and production of Cultural Studies (the teaching, the conferences, the formal and informal interactions), rather than the ideas *per se*. In this instance, rather than just set forth my new reading of Althusser's theory of the 'Ideological State Apparatus' (1994), I want to show how that reading was generated, in response to the comments and critiques I received when I delivered my first Kierkegaard paper. The result will seem dialogic and informal and that is precisely my point. It's because I'm using the data most ready-to-hand to further the study of where ideas come from: people like us. Who interpellate each other.

And to investigate how we can get more of them. For there is a utopian aim to this sequel, as in the initial paper. The main polemic thrust of my Kierkegaard paper was the claim that a radical academic politics would, regardless of left or right and other such group affiliations, involve opening a space for new types of intellectual practices. I argued that Cultural Studies would have a real (as opposed to just postulated) political impact if it saw as its charter to provide space and facilities for otherwise unthinkable projects: projects like Kierkegaard's trip back to Berlin, to see if repetition is possible. For you cannot teach students how to learn by simply giving them more facts. You have to provide an example of learning for them to emulate. In other words, teachers need to show the same radical openness to the new that they wish to inculcate in their students, or they are simply not teaching. They can do so by supporting, and allowing themselves to be engaged by, crazy projects: their own, or those of others. That's the world I want to be in.

So, whatever happened to Kierkegaard – the Movie? I was on a panel of Derrideans who all said nothing. I've no idea what was going on there. Not that I was trying to minimise Derrida's influence on us in the CSAA, as rather to redirect it. For the truth of the matter is that the definition of revolution ('taking ideas as things to act first and then theorise later') and poetry, which I garnered

from Kierkegaard's Repetition (1943), is less a critique of the Grammatology (1976) than an explanation of its power. The Grammatology doesn't tell us what deconstruction is, it just does it, smashing whole fields of knowledge with one and the same exploding kernel of post-Saussurean insight, letting the ideas, terminologies, systematisations and so forth, come later. Act the idea first, theorise it later. (As perhaps happens with all learning).

Which brings me to my first respondent, who said something very similar. For Amanda MacDonald first set me on this path, by drawing an analogy between the model of experimental practice set forth in Kierkegaard – the Movie, and her experience of foreign language teaching. Amanda suggested, in response to my paper, that the teaching of language is fundamentally concerned with changes of mechanical practice and habit. It forces a radical altering of one's habits of bodily association (sound production, hearing, recognition of visual markers) and of intellectual association (new lexica, and new grammars by which to link them), which is why learning a foreign language is both so traumatic and so liberating. It forces you, just like Kierkegaard's crazy trip back to Berlin to see if repetition were possible, to change your daily motions, and so serves to generate new ideas and experiences. As I said, I am attempting to work out, through detailing these responses, how new projects come about, such as the one I sketched above: the plan to theorise ideology and interpellation through a study of the practice (the teaching, the conferencing, the collegiality) of Cultural Studies. Something in the links Amanda offered between foreign language, trauma and change inspired me to bring my experience of learning and teaching into the space where I usually consider politics and culture. I was interpellated to think them anew: Althusser is writing all about us.

And to remember that it was while I was studying Beginner's French, and round the time of those two dance parties that I had – I have no idea why I just wrote that - my first experiences of gay sex. I was twenty eight, already with MA and teaching experience. I turned up for my first French class, an intensive summer-

semester course, only to discover that it was in fact located in the very room in which I had, only two months before, taught my last history class. I had been tutoring in a course entitled Pirates and their Enemies. As you do. Suddenly I was on the other side of the desk. And getting ideas. All the while rehearsing for RED RAW, A Revolutionary Dance Party. And dragging up all my old Russian too. Experiencing ‘the transformation of metaphor into metamorphosis’ as the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson once phrased it, describing the practice of Velimir Khlebnikov, the great pre-Revolutionary Russian poet (Jakobson, in Pomorska & Jakobson, 1983, p.137). I was reading a lot of Jakobson at the time of that Hobart paper. I realise this is going to become a bit of an acknowledgments page, but then I have always thought that acknowledgments pages are the most interesting and valuable sections of intellectual books. Why not construct a full article in the genre, indeed on the topic? For if acknowledgments constitute indications of receipt, the receipt of ideas, what could form more valuable archival material for the project sketched above? And what better way to foster the sort of discipline for intellectual creativity I am polemicising for, than to highlight the processes by which ideas are inherited and transformed.

Stephen Muecke, to turn to my second interlocutor, responded to the paper by suggesting that I had made a shift from the historicising perspective of my earlier book, From Here to Tierra del Fuego (2000) which had sought to know the truth of the past of that little South American island, and from there the rest of the world, through a massive Marxist apparatus. Having launched that very book a few months earlier in Melbourne, Stephen proceeded to suggest that I was now treating truth, or whatever functions in its place, as something located in the future. This suggestion suddenly crystallised in me the realisation that I had indeed changed directions. Immediately I thought up a trajectory of my own. My work on Kierkegaard suddenly, because of Stephen’s usage of the word ‘future,’ seemed to derive from my reading of Charles Saunders Peirce, whose most compelling semiotic theses are, as Jakobson once remarked, concerned with the

future-orientation of meaning. As Peirce put it, the ‘meaning of every proposition lies in the future’ (Peirce, 1955d, p.261). This is so because, now in Jakobson’s words ‘the sign opens a path toward the indefinite future, that is, it anticipates, it predicts, things to come,’ and it does so on the basis of its prior history of meaning (Jakobson, in Jakobson & Pomorska, 1983, p.92). Yet that past history can never fully determine a future one: ‘it is clear that the frame law is only a condition for all possible future occurrences,’ while

it is in the context of each occurrence that the verbal invariant of the verbal sign – its general meaning – acquires its new, particular meaning. The context is variable, and the particular meaning of the word undergoes renewal in each new context.

(Jakobson, in Jakobson & Pomorska, 1983, p.92)

This, for Jakobson, explains ‘the creative power of language,’ the power both to determine the future, and to be radically redirected by it, in ‘each new context.’

I rushed to blurb all this out, in response to Stephen, and to link it up to what I had discerned in Kierkegaard’s practice: by changing the context in which a philosophical concept, repetition, was to be performed, transforming it from a library debate to a physical trip back to Berlin, Kierkegaard effectively expanded the concept’s possible field of meanings. Which only reinforced my general argument for the importance of allowing and fostering renovations in institutional practice as a way of fomenting new ideas. While these very reflections, it seems to me, serve to reinforce the suggestion I made in relation to Amanda’s comments: that we are interpellated by the analogies others give to our own ideas (in Stephen’s case, an analogy between the experimental method, and a future orientation) and thus set to think them through new frames.

Futurism! I think that the other thing that resonated for me in my rush to embrace the Jakobsonian future was the series of associations that he bears for me. This is the man (a friend of Mayakovsky, Filonov and Malevich; a contemporary of

Picasso, Stravinsky and Einstein; a scientist of the new, who went on, later in life, to collaborate with Nils Bohr) who in 1919 announced the futurist project in linguistics, as one dedicated to 'the overcoming of statics, the expulsion of the absolute' (Pomorska & Jakobson, 1983, p.56). Nor did these concerns ever leave him. As Krystyna Pomorska comments, for all the changes in Jakobson's interests right up to the 1980's, you get the feeling that 'everything is given from the start, as if there were a project for life,' one formed in the foment of those initial, wild, revolutionary decades (p.162). While for me, 'the overcoming of statics,' the launching into the future, the realisation that 'static perception is a fiction' occurred most powerfully at the age of twenty, when I, a second year Russian student, turned up in Moscow. I was to live there for the next ten months, as a student at the Pushkin Institute of Russian Language and Literature. It was 1990, the final year of the Soviet Union, and everything was being smashed open. All my preconceptions, and everyone else's. We broke the law daily, and with glee, while fighting off massive depression with black market caviar, vodka and champagne nightly. Statues of Lenin were being torn down all around us.

And maybe it was that youthful realisation that the future is radically open ('the particular meaning of the word undergoes renewal in each new context') that spoke to me some ten years later, at RED RAW 1999, a Revolutionary Dance Party, where I stood some ten metres above the dance floor, dressed as Stalin, perched on a ledge and preparing to act my part in David's production, at a dance party, for six thousand queers!, of Stravinsky's equally revolutionary The Rite of Spring (1979). I was the official translator for the event. On all the walls of the massive shed hung banners inscribed with the Russian which I, again trawling through my collection of Soviet magazines from the 1940s, had pilched from a series of advertisements for Soviet toothpaste, cod-liver oil, chewing gum and domestic appliances. And a few I'd written to myself. I was next to Sarah

Pax, the famous drag queen¹⁴, ex-*Les Girls*, who was swinging on a huge moon crescent, like a chick in a James Bond film. There were my own words, my own advertisements all around me. And I was nervous. There had been a debate among the producers as to whether the ledge on which Pax and I were to perform should be fenced in with safety wire. To stop us falling. It was decided not to. I became increasingly nervous at the dress rehearsal, and then leading up to the night, even in my dreams, nervous with fear that I might actually fall off that narrow ledge. Which would be pretty suicidal. But not pretty. Something clicked in my mind, just a few hours prior to the actual performance. I started thinking psychoanalytically, as I had been taught to, and realised that the reason I was so afraid of falling into a sea of bare-chested men was because that was exactly what I, still to realise those desires, wanted. I wasn't frightened, dressed up as Stalin, and perched on the ledge of the millennium's last rite of Spring. I was seething with desire. Leaping. With revolution.

One night later, I asked him: 'Have you ever felt like you don't know who you are?' He replied, 'No.' It was late, late, the after-after parties had all finished, our drugs had worn off, nothing remained but the ringing in my ears from two nights of unceasing music, bodies, dancing. I thought for a minute, then stopped thinking, got out of my bed, and into his. And down twenty eight years of resistance.

And how is this all about learning? I have tried to show how the analogies offered by both Amanda, and Stephen, in response to my work, in fact served to generate new projects, this one included. And I have been led to suggest, simply following the chain of my own associations, that these encounters (for it is the reality of dialogue that I am attempting to track here, the creative power of dialogue) had both a prospective and a retrospective power. In hearing other people's analogies and metaphors for creative learning I was being directed, without even quite realising, back into my own most intense experiences of newness, those times, and everyone has them, where one experiences the

¹⁴ I saw Pax on commercial TV two nights ago, advertising *Jarrah*TM coffee! It's nice to see that drag queens are starting to get properly remunerated for the good they do.

'transformation of metaphor into metamorphosis.' Now I want to disrupt this narrative. Or rather, I want to introduce the event that really sparked this writing. As in what got me working on the chains of repression that would have held it back. The semioclast. Which gave me a job to do. To rescue my desire.

The third of my respondents, John Frow suggested I think again. The problem, he argued, with founding an academic discipline on the model of creative practice is the problem of institutionalisation. John didn't refer to the Russian revolution but rather the recent 'happenings' of the sixties. He said that my Kierkegaard paper had reminded him of Harold Garfinkel and ethnomethodology, the branch of sociology which Garfinkel invented. Garfinkel encouraged his students to perform experiments in the disruption of everyday life. In one such experiment, students were asked to go home and act as if they were lodgers. The reactions, variously intense and hostile, that this elicited served to reveal the precarious, and in many ways invisible, sets of rules and regulations governing such seemingly natural practices as the family home. Such experiments, John said, were obviously quite powerful and new, but the attempt to institutionalise them within the bureaucratising context of university life was not a success. By the mid-seventies ethnomethodology had been defeated in debate, and was already outmoded and unfashionable in practice. How, John asked me, do you institutionalise creativity, something inherently anti-institutional?

I replied that he was right, in my Kierkegaard paper I had indeed been trying to write institutional policy, much more than philosophy, perhaps even to collapse the distinction and that, ummm, yes, that's a good question. Is it possible to institutionalise creativity? Or is it only ever a lucky accident in a world of reification and control? My gut feeling, during that question session, was that there was more to say on the topic, but I couldn't find it. And the panel closed soon after. And the conference ended. And we all left Hobart, and went back home.

I was a bit disconsolate at the fact that my Kierkegaard paper had a hole in it. One of the things about doing experimental (ficto-critical, multiple personality disorder etc) writing is that people don't often criticise it; they usually just ignore it. Perhaps some of the reason for writing in a crazy way is to put yourself beyond critique. As in the dumb reason. It's only the real critics like Frow who will cut through the crap anyways and treat your message for what it was: an attempt to speak well, and then these things you haven't quite thought through yet that put a hand over your mouth. Thank God for our critics. Let me shift metaphors again. One of the world's great cosmological myths, the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria, begins its account of Creation with the *shevirah*, the 'breaking of the vessels,' a divine ceramic shattering that brings the world into being (Scholem, 1965, pp.112-5). When your work – a vessel, a statue, a scream – is broken by a well-aimed critique, you of course end up disconsolate. But if the criticism is a good one, there is always an element of relief there as well: I don't have to keep holding up the same façade, which some part of me knew was flawed anyways. Just as in the Lurianic myth, there is a certain release in that breaking, as possibilities open up in the space where one was previously upholding the certainty of a completed work. I am reminded again of Jakobson, who writes of the sign that it

always possesses a general meaning and is based on a general law; everything that is general is truly related to the indefinite future. The past is an accomplished fact, whereas a general law cannot ever be totally accomplished. It is a potentiality whose mode is the *esse in futuro* [trans. 'to be in the future'].

(Jakobson, in Jakobson and Pomorska, 1983, p.92)

Every radical breaking redirects us, by reminding us that the 'general law' that seems to pertain to a concept is only ever contingent upon its next utterance. That, in a way, is the message of this whole book. It's not simply, with Heidegger, that you only learn what a hammer is when it doesn't work, though

that is, of course, a great bit of wisdom. It's that we live in the future. Which does not exist.

That being the case, the critic asks, what are you really trying to say in all this? What is your desire? I had been, as Louis Althusser could have put it, interpellated. I'll return to this above.

2. The Discontinuous Institute

But let me drop all these metaphors. And let me rest in abeyance for the next few pages the themes I have just raised: analogy, dialogue, futurism, creativity, revolution, critique. They will return, but firstly I am going to continue performing the project of this paper, Kierkegaard II – the Sequel, a study of sequelae. The paper, as I said below, seeks to study the practice and production of Cultural Studies (the teaching, the conferences, the formal and informal interactions) as its way into the question of ideology. Specifically it traces the generation of a set of ideas, those I am in the process of dramatising here before you, out of the response garnered from the performance of a paper, Kierkegaard – the Movie, at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia (CSAA)'s annual conference in Hobart, December 2001. Returning to that origin, and continuing the narrative of my archive, will involve shifting themes quite dramatically. For, following John Frow's comments, I now had the institution to think through. The bricks and mortar.

Thinking about it in the concrete terms of my own institutional experience over some fifteen years, and also remembering the feeling of sudden dislike I get on encountering strikingly good new art (and prior to allowing myself to breathe in its freedom), sparked me to remember how little we like having to deal with others who think and speak differently. I mean, we can be real zombies. Institutions are about habit and repression. It's no accident that Freud uses architectural

metaphor, and does so again and again, to model the ego and its repressive mechanisms (eg. 1975e, p.99). People are like bricks. So: how do you institutionalise creativity, something that undermines, and makes subject to time (we have no idea what the future is!) places that don't want to be. Fragile vessels.

I'll continue my narrative of the reception and after-life of my paper, for it will show how I eventually found an answer to this question. A few months after the conference, I stumbled across a paper by Harold Garfinkel entitled 'Practices for Following Rules and Applying Instructions' in The Penguin Modern Sociology Reader (Ed. Peter Worsley, 1970, second-hand). The Reader features, on its cover, two long-hairs (a tall male with beard and scarf, and a woman with a fringe that comes down over her eyes) alongside a close-cropped pin-stripe business type. All are Anglo. Next to the pin is a small Indian male, in a hounds-tooth suit, with wide lapels and huge sideburns. The Penguin Modern Sociology Reader is clearly out-of-date. Not to mention bizarre. For it features Garfinkel. And he is out there. In his talk, on rules and instructions, Garfinkel argues that you

find in the complex of ordinary, mundane accounts that there are practices for locating monsters but there are also practices for burying them. There are practices for refusing the existence of exceptions.

(Garfinkel, 1970, p.659)

Huh?

What is a monster? A monster, it turns out, is a way to stuff up a list of rules and instructions. It's the exception the rules have not covered. So if we are playing tic tac toe, and the rules say that 'two persons play tic tac toe,' a monster is a question like 'Any two persons? When, today? Tomorrow? Do we have to be in sight of each other? Can we play by mail? Can one player be dead?' (p.658). It rapidly becomes apparent that no set of rules or instructions, whatever the game, whatever the genre, or even institution, is ever exhaustive. As Garfinkel

puts it (with some glee): 'My classes can tell you that creating such problems is the easiest thing in the world' (p.659). (But how do you institutionalise creativity?)

Though that is perhaps an understatement. The following strikes me as pure genius. I mean, imagine teaching your students to generate this little monster:

We sit down to play a game, and we decide that it is going to be chess. You make your move. I take all of the pieces off the board, and I shake them up, and this may go on for three or four minutes. Then I finish, and I put the pieces back on the board. The positions have not been changed. Now the thing that is apt to happen is that the person grabs my arm and asks, 'What are you doing?'
 I answer, 'I'm playing chess.'
 'You're not playing chess.'
 'Show me in the rule book where it's not permitted.'
 'All right, it's not in the rule book. It's still illegal. Why are you doing it?'
 'I find that whenever I do it, I win.'
 'Oh, what a load of bunk that is. Nevertheless, don't do it.'

(Garfinkel, 1970, p.660)

Such scenarios served to reveal the 'located character' of the rules of chess, the fact that they only make sense amid a further set of (invisible) rules and instructions.

Though there is something of a monster here too. After all, can one really claim the existence of a rule against something as crazy as the following?:

I tell you 'All right, I won't do that.' In the next moment, instead of picking up my pieces, I will do it with your pieces. Is there any way you can turn me off? You can finally say, 'Get the Hell out of here.' At that point, I might say, 'Why should you be so mad? I'm just doing what my father taught me to do. Where I come from we do it as a matter of course.' Or I might say, 'If you wait for ten minutes, I'll settle down. I'm just like that.'

(Garfinkel, 1970, p.660)

It is hard to imagine a set of rules, invisible or otherwise, specific enough to (predict and) outlaw that.

And there are all sorts of strange consequences to be read into this. For the fact that no rule is ever fully articulated could allow you to present a set of them in a much more shorthand fashion than usual, in a gesture even. Garfinkel posits a scenario in which 'it would be enough for you to signal that you know the game of chess simply by raising your eyebrows.' When there is a question as to what the rules are, 'the rules are given in that fashion' (p.660). The logic of using a raised eyebrow to convey rules is, he implies, no different to that of using a set of written or verbal instructions like 'two persons play tic tac toe.' In both instances, the rules are radically incomplete.

It transpires, turning to what Garfinkel calls 'practices of etc,' that there is an element of *ad hoc* in the performance of any rule-based activity.¹⁵ 'Practices of etc.' refer to the way the rules are actively refashioned whenever a monster arises. The above chess-board example may sound a little parodic, but it illustrated a common enough process: the way one invariably comes to claim - 'All right, it's not in the rule book. It's still illegal' (p.660) - that the monsters were in fact always already illegal and covered in the rules. In this way one 'retrospectively-prospectively' maintains the stability of the procedure, game or otherwise, in question. In this way, one sutures over the fact that, really, there are no rules. At least for a second or two.

Wild teaching. Wild implications. It didn't survive. The sort of work Garfinkel promoted, and I think this was part of John Frow's questioning of my Kierkegaard paper, was clearly very dependent on his own personal lunacy. Once you lose such a performer, you only with difficulty find others who are capable of a similar

¹⁵ One might recall Benjamin's comments in his "Critique of Violence" (1978) on the anarchic and even improvisational nature of policing: 'The existence of the police, as Walter Benjamin put it, "really marks the point at which the state . . . can no longer guarantee through the legal system the empirical ends it desires . . . to attain" ' (1978, p.28). They just make it up on the spot!

logical anarchy. Garfinkel's is an example of a successful, but brief, personality politics. For as institutional policy, it was doomed to fail. People don't like to change their habits. However officially radical, people, both within the university and outside it, are basically conservative. They do not want the shock of the new to disrupt their breakfast. And lunch. And dinner. For three weeks. Of your kids pretending to be lodgers. I may sound a bit conservative myself here, but I am trying to come to terms with Frow's critique, with my own personal experience, and with the author who further jogged my thoughts on the topic: Niccolo Machiavelli. For I am basically paraphrasing Machiavelli here. And lest Machiavelli seem either dated or conservative, one should remember that Antonio Gramsci referred to the former's Il Principe as both 'a manifesto' and a 'revolutionary utopia' and suggested, all the while languishing in a fascist prison, that the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary party of today should model itself on Machiavelli's work. It should see itself as 'The Modern Prince' (Gramsci in Althusser, 1999, p.13).¹⁶

But why? Machiavelli basically shows that a venture like Garfinkel's will never succeed.

So long 'as their old ways of life are undisturbed and there is no divergence in customs, men live quietly' (Machiavelli, 1975, p.36). Machiavelli is explaining how the Renaissance Prince for whom he writes is to act so as to hold a new territory. Extirpate the family of the old prince, and change neither the laws nor the taxes. That, Machiavelli writes, is how France has managed to hold Burgundy, Brittany, Gascony and Normandy for so long. People are innately conservative: 'Men nearly always follow in the paths of others and proceed in their affairs by imitation' (p.49). Allow them, as ruler, to follow in their everyday paths and they will come to respect you. Machiavelli advises us, as potential

¹⁶ Funny how we seem to have forgotten this in Cultural Studies, where Gramsci has such a patron-saint status. But isn't Machiavelli the real author of Gramsci's 'national-popular,' which is to say, isn't he the real founding father (or rather one of them, the earliest) of Cultural Studies itself? We should read popular culture through *his* eyes.

rulers, to 'proceed . . . by imitation' as well: 'always follow in the footsteps of great men, and imitate those who have been outstanding' (p.49). The call to copy appears throughout The Prince. When detailing Cesare Borgia's rational use of cruelty to take and subdue the Romagna, Machiavelli writes: 'As this point deserves close study and imitation by others, I will not leave it out' (p.57). Indeed, The Prince is in many ways an *emulatio*, a text of edifying examples, and can be profitably, albeit estrangingly, read alongside Thomas A' Kempis' contemporaneous The Imitation of Christ (1952). But it is equally true that the theme of imitation functions as a sociological postulate in Machiavelli's The Prince, just as it does in Freud's Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1975d); it explains why people do not like change. They want to imitate what has been tried and proved in the past.

This is why a Garfinkel is doomed to institutional failure:

It should be borne in mind that there is nothing more difficult to arrange, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than initiating changes in a state's constitution. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old order and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new. Their support is lukewarm partly from a fear of their adversaries, who have the existing laws on their side, and partly because men are generally incredulous, never really trusting new things unless they have tested them by experience.

(Machiavelli, 1975, p.51)

This remarkable passage seems to me just as relevant in explaining modern university cultures as Renaissance polities; just as useful in explaining the resistance I was educated under to ideas drawn from poetics, from the philosophy of science, from the classics, from sheer personal pleasure. Why do people resist Renaissance? Well, who wants to trust someone else's idea of Renaissance? Unless he or she has an army.

For Machiavelli is not an innate conservative, in the sense of someone who believes that only tried and trued forms of power can be allowed to succeed. The chapter I have been citing is entitled 'New Principalities Acquired by One's Own Arms and Prowess' (pp.49-53). At this point in the argument, Machiavelli says that we need to make a distinction between two types of innovators: those who rely solely on their powers of persuasion, and those who back their words up with force. The former, Machiavelli writes, always come to grief,

as was the case with Frà Girolamo Savonarola who came to grief with his new institutions when the crowd started to lose faith in him, and he had no way of holding fast those who had believed or of forcing the incredulous to believe.

(Machiavelli, 1975, p.52)

Compare Moses, Cyrus, Theseus and Romulus, who had armies on their side, and so prevailed. The fact is that 'all armed prophets have conquered, and unarmed prophets have come to grief' (p.52). Again, Machiavelli may sound innately conservative, but there is something quite surprising here. For however much he claims that men are resistant to change and innovation, too weak-willed to support revolution, too 'fickle' to do anything but by force,¹⁷ he simultaneously reminds us that the Hebrew Kingdom, the Persian Empire, the Athenian Polity, and, most powerful of all, the Roman Empire, were all founded by radical innovators, prophets even. I am reminded of Spinoza's Tractatus-Politicus

¹⁷ For some reason such theses are equated with conservatism, while unwritten rules (but where? and do they really hold? after another term of John Howard, the publicly elected prince of Unaustralia?) dictate that we have to celebrate the creative power of the populace, what Lenin would call "spontaneity" (1952, p.49). This is also why Freud's most powerful sociological statement 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,' with its equally negative portrayal of group behaviour, has been excluded from the canon of the modern social sciences, for all its power to explain politics, demagoguery, fanhood, sainthood, not to mention Freud's own little coterie (1975d). I'm not suggesting we simply shift from celebration to denigration, by the way. It's rather that the celebration (love) of the masses that has characterised so many post-seventies studies of the 'national-popular' gives the other, as all uncomplicated loves do, no room to breathe. We would show more love of 'the people' if we treated them with greater ambivalence, for that would at least recognise their existence as subjects. This critique, strangely enough, could apply to Althusser as well (albeit inversely, and for all the fact that the 'celebration of the popular' school rejects him and his supposedly elitist 'scientism' (Forgacs, 1999, p.210)). See

(2000), with its equally conservative-sounding equation between power and right. But there is a curious corollary to taking such *realpolitick* on board, indeed deriving an ethic from it. In Spinoza's system 'revolutions are,' Etienne Balibar comments, 'by definition illegal and illegitimate – till they have succeeded!' (Balibar, 1998, p.35).

I was reading Machiavelli, only a few months ago, because one of my students wanted to think about politics. We'd already gone through More's Utopia (1961) and it seemed to me that we could do with a bit of balance. I found myself intrigued by what I was reading, both for the way it seemed to make sense of my immediate realities, and the way it threw me back into the questions raised by Frow, about institutions, conservatism and Harold Garfinkel. And by its (recall Gramsci's diagnosis) paradoxical utopianism!

I went back to Garfinkel, laughed my way through the monsters, had a glance at 'practices of etc' again, and this time found myself enchanted by what Garfinkel calls 'let it pass.' Garfinkel is, remember, writing about 'Practices for Following Rules and Instructions.' The comments on chess and tic tac toe, which I cited above, are actually just illustrative, for he has a specific archive of field data. Specifically, he is observing how administrators treat coding rules in dealing with the contents of a psychiatric clinic. This may seem a little trivial in comparison to the murderous Borgias of Renaissance Italy (Machiavelli), and the republican Regents of Baroque Holland (Spinoza). And it hardly amounts to an army. The fact that ethnomethodology 'deals with trivial subjects' is the first in the list of reasons given for its decline in Abercrombie, Hill and Turner's authoritative Dictionary of Sociology, which is where, incidentally, I read about Garfinkel's lodger experiments (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1984, p.84). But then, 'let it pass' has a lot to do with the trivialisation, which does not mean eradication, of the new.

Linda Clifton's reading of the theme of love in Althusser's later work, which helped me through many of the ideas in this paper (1996).

'Let it pass' is Garfinkel's term for ignoring the rules when an exception comes along, so as to uphold the rules. It goes like this:

'What's that?'
 'It could be this; it could be that.'
 'Garfinkel's coming in Friday afternoon. He's going to want it done.'
 'Let it go. Enough is enough already. We could spend from now until hell freezes over trying to decide about that date.'
 'It could have been the day of first contact.'
 'It could have been the date of the last day of the preapplication.'
 'If it's a preapplication episode, then it's not the date of first contact. There's already a history of that person. It's the end of something, not the beginning.'
 'Well now, which could it be?'
 'I don't know. Ask Sadie. Maybe Sadie knows.'
 'Sadie says she doesn't remember, but she says this . . .'
 'Don't believe Sadie. Let it pass.'

(Garfinkel, 1970, pp.661-662)

In the following paragraph Garfinkel proceeds to explain that

'Let it pass' is a practice in which something that was prohibited by rule was right if you did it anyway. You were not supposed to do it. Everybody knew that you were not supposed to do it. You read the instructions or you consulted the procedure. You knew you were not supposed to do it. You did it. Let it pass. It was right anyway. That is to say, if you did it then it was done and it was right.

(Garfinkel, 1970,p.662)

In conclusion, Garfinkel stresses that there is no corrective dimension to any of his researches. He is *not* trying to show people ways in which they could make their following of rules and instructions easier by eradicating all the 'monsters', the 'practices of etc.' and 'let it pass.' For the fact of the matter is that if you excluded such strategies, 'this would leave you without an enterprise' (p.662). He simply offers a picture of how rules and regulations function for the people who follow them. Such a focus underlines the realist nature of Garfinkel's work.

Ethnomethodology, after all, simply means the study of people's (from the Greek *ἔθνος*, *ethnos*, ethnic) methods of approaching the world. One could call Machiavelli, or Spinoza, ethnomethodologists too. One might also think of the general tendency in Cultural Studies to focus on the ways people in particular cultures approach their worlds. That's ethnomethodology too. I am attempting a similar project here, in tracing the evolution of a set of ideas from the giving of a paper, to the responses it garners, and on to the new ideas these lead to. That's my way into the theory of ideology.

As such, the critique of triviality could apply to this very essay, not to mention Cultural Studies in general, where it so often has been applied. For none of these projects seem to concern the great questions of power, of nationalism, of Capital. And nor do cultural studies of fans of Kylie Minogue (of which I am one). Now let me answer John Frow's question: how do you institutionalise creativity, something inherently anti-institutional? How do you avoid just doing another Garfinkel, and fading into obscurity? How can you maintain, and make standard, the sort of newness I wanted to champion in that earlier paper, Kierkegaard – the Movie?

I want to launch my response with a bit more high trivia. Reading the introduction to Julia Haig Gaisser's wonderful Catullus in English, a Penguin compilation of English language translations of Catullus (2001), I read of the old debate as to the correct ordering of the poems (traditionally: poems 1-60, the polymetrics; 61-64, the epithalamia, the epic, the Attis poem; and 65-116, the elegies and epigrams). 'Whether these groups,' Gaisser writes, 'were arranged and published as books by Catullus or another is open to question' (p.xix). What, I asked myself, do you mean 'published'? Surely publication is something to do with printing, with printed books. How can a roll of papyrus, a text written on it by hand, and then passed by hand to another, constitute publication? I mean, you could just as well describe a note that someone dropped in to see you, or called for you on the phone, as a publication. And why not? Because it lacks the

system of authority (an editor, a business-manager, someone to reject submissions, a public who treat certain forms of writing as 'publications,' and others not) that would elevate it to that status.

Well, the authority is irrelevant. This is a Derridean point. For just as *writing* is, at least in the way he decides to refashion the concept, a symbol for any form of 'instituted trace' (1976, p.46), be it a mark on the page, a sound you make as you speak, a common way of behaving even, the word *publication* is by no mean necessarily monopolised by contemporary print-literate societies. Recall Jacobson, the true exegete of Derrida, on the 'general meaning' of the symbol: 'everything that is general is truly related to the indefinite future' (1983, p.92). So why not make it, in the future, mean whatever you want? Using the Latin derivation as a way of jolting a few more meanings out of the word (or rather, as a way of planting them in), one discovers that it is derived from the adjective *publicus, -a, -um*, which simply means 'public.' *Publication* means nothing more than 'to make public.' You can publish work by delivering it orally, just as you can publish a joke by telling it in the pub. Any utterance that spreads beyond your own two ears has, in this sense of the word, been published. In all its various receptions. From telephone notes on. Only some publications spread further than others. Please this one. One could likewise cut up and put back together the word *institution*. For that's the truth of Derrida; he's a revolutionary who says there's no reason why this word (*writing*, but really any word) always has to mean what it's always meant. We live in the future. Which does not exist.

My breakthrough with Garfinkel (about a year or so after Kierkegaard – the Movie, percolating through Amanda and Stephen's comments) was my realisation that Garfinkel may have failed to institute ethnomethodology within the academy, but there I was reading about it. There was John Frow telling me about it, passing on the example, albeit negatively. Even my canonical Dictionary of Sociology, which lists all the problems and critiques of Garfinkel, still couldn't help passing on the wonderful lodger experiment. I started to realise,

after a year of thinking intermittently about Garfinkel, that actually, he had managed to form an institution all right. We'd all 'let it pass.' Who's to say that that is not an institution, something that stands through the passage of time? After all, you're reading about it now. It's just been republished. Officially. Just as it was when Frow spoke about it in public to forty people in Hobart, others of whom might have gone and chased it up too. The word *officially*, by the way (and I am saying this to give another example of futurist etymology, which uses derivation to break open future possibilities, regardless of whether the word *still* means its roots or not, and to tug on Heidegger's forelocks a little in the process) is from the Latin *officium*, which meant 'a favour, a duty, or a service.' We let it pass. And it's new.

As such, Garfinkel's work constitutes an institution, a *discontinuous institute*, whose existence, through repeated retellings, serves to stage and to regenerate (at least in my experience, for it's where this article came from) intellectual creativity. It constitutes, as Louis Althusser could have put it, an 'Ideological State Apparatus.'

3. And now for a word from our sponsors

But he didn't put it that way. Interpellation, in Althusser's theory, is something way beyond our - Specifically it traces the generation of a set of ideas, those I am in the process of dramatising here before you, out of the response garnered from the performance of a paper, Kierkegaard – the Movie, at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia's annual conference in Hobart, December 2001. Returning to that origin, and continuing the narrative of its sequel, will involve the confession I'm now revising the paper for publication that I didn't even realise at the time but this third section of this essay where I turned to apply my data to a re-reading of Althusser didn't work, neither of which made much sense, or even

dialectic. Ideological miscognition. Knock knock. He says its completely out of our hands. And I know he is right. But

I'm going to look rationally at this nervous breakdown, meaning, I'm going to try to continue my cultural studies in Cultural Studies project through an analysis of it. For the neurotic mess which I made of my argument at this point centred around my reception of the eminently contradictory figure that is Althusser himself. I am tempted to say that this entire paper was generated by my fascination with, and confusion about, him who among other things: was crazy, let-off on grounds of insanity, killed his wife and fellow communist, Hélène; taught Derrida, Foucault, Macherrey, Goldman, Badiou, Balibar, Bourdieu, Milner, and many more; put Machiavelli, Pascal, Spinoza, Lenin, Lacan on the map and onto the agenda for that whole generation of French Intellectuals, and by extension, for us too; whom he thus taught also. What is one to make of the contradiction of a figure who, like so many Marxists, wanted to claim that every single one of our words and actions are generated by the reproductive mechanisms of Capital (even adding that the school is, in contemporary society, the apogee of these processes), and yet was one of the most powerful and successful - to go by the sheer productiveness of his students - teachers of philosophy since Kojève, and remains so? How could Althusser be so convinced of human powerlessness, given the power he did in fact exercise?

You could of course try to claim that this is no contradiction, that Capital generates its own resistance (à la Foucault, 1978, p.95) and add, with Althusser himself, that 'the subjects "work", they work by themselves' (regardless of, and perhaps alleviated by, conscious thoughts to the contrary), to reproduce our subjection (1994, p.135). Like The Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1999). I don't buy it. Mainly because I have in front of me the text which registers my nervous breakdown. I can see that I was attracted to Althusser by *what didn't work* in all his brilliance. And I believe an analysis of that will show a great deal

about how institutions are transmitted, and ideas generated, in the same step.
Knock knock.

What I wanted to show, in my original draft, was that Althusser's theory of Ideological interpellation, that process of subject formation which occurs through the operation of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (1994), like the school, the media, the arts, is actually a theory of **the ideologue**, the one who uses language to alter our way of being ourselves in the world, and so programs change. It's a theory of teaching, indeed a reflection of Althusser's own practice. He was talking about himself, his own extraordinarily powerful practices. And about Lenin. Who changed the world. But also about advertising.

Of course "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)" doesn't present itself that way (1994). On the contrary, it is a theory of the *status quo ante*, of how 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs) like politics, teaching and popular culture serve to maintain it. Althusser's task is to understand how the capitalist system manages to reproduce itself, through a consideration of how it manages to reproduce people to function in it ('the subjects 'work', they work by themselves') voluntarily.

Particularly through the school. Unlike systems characterised by serfdom or slavery, capitalism tends decreasingly to provide on the spot training (witness the decline in apprenticeships, something already apparent in 1969, when Althusser wrote) and more and more to produce 'competence' (p.103) outside the workforce. It reproduces a voluntary and competent labour force through the school. So, 'What do children learn at school?' They learn 'know-how': reading, writing, adding, all the skills necessary for performing in the work force, 'including elements . . . of "scientific" or "literary culture", which are directly useful in the different jobs in production' (p.103). They learn, as Althusser puts it sardonically, 'to 'speak proper French.' Which is to say, secondly, that they learn the rules of 'good behaviour,' among them 'rules of morality, civic and professional

conscience' (ibid.) Which translates as: they learn the division between manual and intellectual labour, blue and white collar work, their place within it, and ultimately, a respect for it, as natural. In sum, the school teaches not merely *know-how*, but *know-how* 'in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its practice' (p.104).

The Political ISA occupies, to give Althusser's own metaphor, 'the front of the stage,' but 'behind the scenes' it is in fact the school that serves to maintain the capitalist polity, through all the processes described above (p.116). The rhetoric suddenly rises magnificently:

This concert is dominated by a single score . . . the score of the ideology of the current ruling class which integrates into its music the great themes of the Humanism of the Great Forefathers . . . Nevertheless, in this concert, one Ideological State Apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music: it is so silent! This is the School.

(Althusser, 1994, p.118)

Note in passing the aesthetic language Althusser avails himself of here: the 'stage', the 'scenes', the 'concert', the 'score.' On the following page we read of 'the obligatory . . . audience of the totality of children' (p.119), the 'roles' they are taught to enact (p.119), the 'ability' (a performative criteria) required of them (ibid.), and so forth. But let it pass. The predominant function, and the reason the silent music metaphor is called upon, of ideology, is to present its apparatuses as 'a neutral environment purged of ideology' (p.119). So too, the great Medieval ISA that was the Church appeared ' "natural", indispensable and generous for our ancestors a few centuries ago' (p.119). The school simply seems to teach us (as the church did for an earlier age) to be ourselves, and to work.

As such the school 'interpellates' us; in Althusser's famous phrase, 'ideology interpellates us as subjects' (p.128). A juridical term meaning to 'summon one to

answer,' interpellation refers, in Althusser's usage, to the process by which various social apparatuses address us as a particular sort of subject, and induce us to respond in the appropriate voice. The theory of interpellation is strikingly dialogic and herein, I believe, lies its superiority to most other theories of ideology, discourse or culture (and how many theories of culture, once you leave Arnold behind, have anything real to say about either dialogue, or – the point of this paper - learning?). Attempting to account for the reproduction of the capitalist *status quo*, Althusser puts forward the following preliminary formulation: "*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*" (p.130). He means by this that society addresses us through particular categories (black, white, male, female, lazy, stupid, well-behaved etc) and demands that we slot ourselves into them, to speak as ourselves. Althusser gives the following 'highly "concrete" example':

we all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?', answer (since it's obvious) 'It's me'. And we recognise that 'it's him', 'or 'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there.'

(Althusser, 1994, pp.129-30)

There are a whole host of assumptions to such a response (*'c'est moi'*), such as the assumption that my being and consciousness can indeed be expressed in this language, and through its pronouns. Just as when I said 'yes, that's me, that's what I was saying' in relation to Amanda, Stephen, or John's comments on my paper. For suddenly my ideas were completely different, and yet I assumed them as mine with all the future consequences adduced below. I had been interpellated by someone knocking on my paper and asking 'is this you also?'

The point, and, Althusser reiterates, 'the elementary ideological effect,' is that such reformulations seem to be our own, when in fact we are subject to them, in the double sense of the word:

(1) a free subjectivity, a centre of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submissionThat's why they 'work all by themselves.'

(Althusser, 1994, p.136)

Though there are always those *I have no idea why I just did that* situations where the farce of conscious choice becomes a little more apparent. For Althusser those moments of realisation open up the possibility (and 'dare'; I have to say I respect the wisdom in his use of that word (p.130)) of science. For me, they serve to remind that we have 'always-already' been interpellated into much of what we do and think well before, so that I repeated David's dance party advertisement format in a paper given three years after the event, thinking that this crazy act was of my own authorship. But I'd been slotted in there, years before. And strangely enough, my performance in that add served to literalise precisely what it is an Althusserian reading of advertising claims adds do to us, when we view them on screen:

advertising has no 'subject.' Obviously people invent and produce adverts, but apart from the fact that they are unknown and faceless, the ad in any case does not claim to speak from them, it is not their speech. Thus there is a space, a gap left where the speaker should be; and one of the peculiar features of advertising is that we are drawn in to fill that gap, so that we become both listener and speaker, subject and object.

[. . .]

The need for relationship and human meaning appropriated by advertising is one that, if only it was not diverted, could radically change the society we live in.

(Williamson, 1978, p.14)

We become subjects through the operations of ISAs, we find ourselves in their language and so satisfy the 'need for relationship and human meaning,' that is, the need for dialogic input to stay human. It's all just like teaching. Or performing. Only it's 'always-already' happened.

Let me return to Althusser's preliminary formulation: '*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*' (p.130). Actually, Althusser proceeds to argue, there is no such thing as a concrete individual; one presents things that way for the sake of theoretical clarity, but what comes first is the subject: '*individuals are always-already subjects*' (p.132). 'Our coming,' as Benjamin put it, 'was expected on earth' (1973b, p.246). Althusser paraphrases Freud on the rituals which surround the expectation of a birth, and the naming of the child, on the existence of a family structure prior to the individual who will come to be slotted into it, on the things which pre-determine our subjectivity years prior to our physical existence as apparent "concrete individuals," which is to say, as subjects of myriad prior interpellations, gender 'roles' among them:

this implacable and more or less 'pathological' [. . .] structure that the former subject-to-be will have to 'find' 'its' place into 'become' the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance.

(Althusser, 1994, p.132)

The invocation of Freud is convincing. Althusser nearly always is. Hence the nervous breakdown? Something wants to escape here. Althusser in drag. (Where did that come from?)

This passage reminds me, just off the cuff, of that little known theory of 'ideational mimetics' in Freud's Jokes and their Relationship to the Unconscious (1975f, p.192). Not that Althusser, or for that matter Foucault, ever theorised jokes, jokes like Garfinkel's; how different things would have been if they had.¹⁸ Attempting to understand the functioning of exaggerated movements in physical comedy, Freud suggests that we, as audience, mime out the movements we see on stage in our own bodies, or rather 'through the medium of . . . [our]memory-traces of expenditures on similar movements' in the past (p.191). Perception and imitation are closely related: 'an impulsion of this kind to imitation

is undoubtedly present in perceptions of movements' (p.191). In physical comedy the cathectic gap we feel between the habitual movement (for it is our 'memory-traces' that perform the perception) and the exaggerated one, is released as laughter (ibid.). Freud adds that physiology has shown that 'innervations run out to the muscles' during processes of ideation as well (eg. a different level of cathexis occurs during the thinking of concepts of largeness, as opposed to those of smallness) and that our 'memory-traces of expenditures on similar movements' are brought into play here too:

I believe that these mimetics exist, even if with less liveliness, quite apart from any communication, that they occur as well when the subject is forming an idea of something for his own private benefit and is thinking of something pictorially, and that he then expresses 'large' and 'small' in his own body, just as he does in speech, at all events by a change in the innervation of his features and sense organs.

(Freud, 1975f, p.194)

In other words, and to take this back to the realm of ideology, following Freud's own suggestion that these ideas 'may be as useful in other branches of aesthetics' (p.195), we perform the representations we encounter in our own bodies. So that my acting in David's Dance Party advertisement was in a way what my audience were doing as well, in perceiving me there. It as if Williamson's words ('one of the peculiar features of advertising is that we are drawn in to fill that gap, so that we become both listener and speaker, subject and object') could be applied to all perceptions. Perception is a form of performance. In one's own body. Which makes it a matter of desire. Say something.

This is where I am completely at a divergence with Althusser who has nonetheless (but here I am going to argue that it is precisely for this reason) interpellated my brains out. For my fascination with Althusser is precisely because, testing his theory out, performing it in my own body, I think he is wrong.

¹⁸ I am indebted to Andrew Sartori, for a comment to this effect, some ten years ago now.

I would say that it interpellated me to the extent of this research and writing precisely because ‘the elementary ideological effect,’ the sense of “That’s obvious! That’s right! That’s true!” (p.129), did not, in my case, occur. To the contrary. I wanted to write about Ideological State Apparatuses, because his seemed to me the most glaring case of ideological misrecognition, in the sense of a blind universalisation of one’s own subjective position, for Althusser’s is a theory of his own job as curriculum setter for a whole generation of French intellectuals. And that to me indicates that the ISA theory works to draw me in, and articulate myself through it, precisely because I think I have found the chink where it *does not work*. Which only makes sense, for it gives me and my desire something to do, some work to doIt provides an agenda for the generation of the new. The return of the future.

Let me cite Franco Moretti, who argues in The Way of the World, his study of the *bildungsroman*, that ‘*most contradictory* of modern symbolic forms,’ that this very contradictoriness is the source of its extraordinary success: ‘in our world socialisation itself consists first of all in the *interiorization of contradiction*,’ the next step being ‘to learn to live with it, and even transform it into a tool for survival’ (1987, p.10). Althusser presents all his readers with a challenge, the seemingly impossible task of reconciling the totalised and completely void-of desire world he presents, where everyone has ‘always-already’ been interpellated, even before birth, with his own existence as inspirational author, political activist, extraordinary teacher; not to mention murderer, and manic depressive ‘*Je suis le grand Althusser*’ as he was heard, a few years before his death, disgraced and derelict, to shout while wandering the streets about his old école (Corpet & Boutang, in Althusser, 1993, p.vii) Do the subjects really ‘work’? All the time? Aren’t we fascinated by just the opposite?

I am suggesting, to approach this contradiction from the other side, from the agencies which produce it, that Althusser has actually totalised and homogenised a system of infinite variation (a variability his predecessor, Spinoza, was much

more want to point out). He does so by giving it the meaningless (in this context, for once you totalise it as everything, it's equivalent to calling it nothing) name of Capital. I do not reject his insistence that all discourse be seen as a form of interpellation. It's as good a metaphor as any. But I assert that there are modalities within this, and that they, furthermore, are where the real politics, for teachers and intellectuals like us, take place. For ideological interpellation is also a specific function of those agents who wield words that captivate our desire, our desire to slot ourselves into them, and perform them 'our' way. Poets are obvious specialists at this:

*This also is a chain of thought, a way
To begin to speak of things you find hard to confess,
In helpless silent moments, to a friend
who got away and brings
News from home and news from comrades,
And you must hurry to open your heart in time,
Before the foreign country forestalls you and alters him.*

George Seferis, *from* 'Last Stop'

But so are revolutionaries like Lenin, who announced, in What's to be Done that social democratic agitation must aim to foment a political consciousness among the workers whereby they will 'respond to *all cases, without exception*, of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter *what* class is affected' with a 'materialist analysis' (1952, p.117). When this succeeds, the

most backward worker will understand, *or will feel*, that the students and members of religious sects, the muzhiks and the authors are being abused and outraged by the same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life, and, feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to respond to these things, and then he will organise [. . .] another day he will demonstrate [. . .] another day he will teach a lesson to the gendarmes [. . .] etc.

(Lenin, 1952, p.119)

The other group who specialise in this training of responses, both words and actions, to new phenomena are teachers. Oh, and add men.

But isn't that Williamson's point, in adding that 'The need for relationship and human meaning appropriated by advertising is one that, if only it was not diverted, could radically change the society we live in.' The ISAs may well serve to foment invisible oppression but they could always, can be, indeed often are wielded otherwise. In another life, Althusser might have been a copy-writer for Nestlé. Isn't this why Williamson is interested in Althusser? Because she finds her activism in the contradictions in his work? Althusser, who makes all endeavour meaningless, nonetheless gives her, and her great expository talents, a specific job to do: to teach the ISA theory, reformatted to her own style (for she adds, contra Althusser, albeit without trumpeting the fact, that these apparatuses 'could radically change' us, if wielded well). She finds her work, a space for her desire to foment change, in the gaps in his work, just as we might find ourselves in the wide open spaces of Lenin's 'most backward worker', Seferis' friend (before the foreign country alters him). These people specialise in getting us to perform, Althusser foremost among them, Althusser, who captivates our desire by challenging us – in our own bodies - to prove it exists.

There are two critiques of Althusser here. The first, which I have just delivered, that he fails to appreciate the specificity of the **ideologue's** work, which is also a failure to recognise its political potential, not to mention its future orientation. The second concerns the functioning of interpellation itself, which I think works just a bit too smoothly in his theory. I adduced as evidence of this my paper-based nervous breakdown, which seemed to say something about how one's desire gets caught up in the contradictions people like Althusser present, rather than the obvious truths. But here I think it's necessary to complexify this figure of desire, because my presentation of my drive to outthink Althusser has elided one all too Freudian fact: that it's all, ultimately, about sex. An oedipal complex. That is what we misrecognise in simply re-writing a paper like this, and eliding all the

mess of its initial nervous breakdown composition (how many academic books have the nervous breakdown edited out of them? I would suggest all. The hints as to its absence provides much of the interest in reading them). Althusser certainly argues for the pathological nature of his own compositions, when coming to disinter the edited-out moments, the madneses and repressions that led to them, in his perhaps equally revolutionary, “confessional” The Future Lasts Forever, the autobiography of the murderer who tried, perhaps more than any other scientist on record, not to be a subject (1993). And so subjectified all his readers. Your desire lies hidden here. You will buy.

I immediately think of Frida Kahlo, because of a recent article which programmed me to. My newest New Left Review has an article by Peter Wollen which discusses how Frida Kahlo has risen, in the last thirty years, from a position of obscurity (remembered as Diego Riviera’s wife, as one of Trotsky’s friends, or not at all) to her current cult status across the globe, as evidenced in ‘exhibitions, catalogues, books [. . .] postcards, calendars, wall-posters, folding screens, diaries and feature films’ (Wollen, 2003, p.119). Wollen is well-placed to write about this, for he, as organiser, in 1982, of the first retrospective outside of Mexico of the then little known Kahlo, was one of **the ideologues** who put her on the map. Attempting to analyse the reason for her extraordinary posthumous success, Wollen considers the power of Kahlo’s ‘outsider’ status (p.121), and takes into consideration both its interpellative effects on him, and then on the broader public who have given her such a saint’s reception: ‘like the classic cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe (or the Mater Dolorosa)’ (p.122).

Wollen details how Kahlo fascinated him, back in the seventies, because she, in her concern with figuration, autobiography, popular culture, in her femininity and even domesticity, seemed to represent that ‘repressed other side of modernism’ (p.122). Re-reading his catalogue essay from then, Wollen sees that he was trying, at the time, to ‘develop a theory of what was not yet called postmodernism’, and that he was inspired by, and drawn to, Kahlo’s work

precisely because of the possibility it offered to outthink the modernism then hegemonic in art history circles (p.122). (Again, it's what doesn't work that draws us in and interpellates us, for it gives our desire something to do: some work. As does Kahlo's now-cult status, which Wollen wants to both analyse, as in 'to break down,' and to redirect through this essay of his, entitled 'Fridamania'). Wollen discusses a similar phenomenon, in addressing the power of Kahlo's 'outsider' status: her nationality, her gender, her 'deeply wounded' body (p.123). Yet by reminding us 'that even an artist like Jackson Pollock has an outsider aspect' (p.130), Wollen seems to suggest that all real art does. Certainly this is the thesis of Harold Bloom's great unread The Western Canon (1994); all of the canonical authors, beginning with Dante the heresiarch, who elevated his own girlfriend to the same status as the Virgin, are complete freaks, not to mention anarchists, fucked anarchists who founded empires, like Jackson Pollock, who painted Blue Poles, the repressed new Australian flag. Nightmare, plurality and the adoption of an alien aesthetic. Which is only appropriate for a country based on immigration, ie. grief.

But more than anything it is the way Kahlo explored in her painting and life the 'tragic drama of the body' (p.122) that draws one in. Terribly wounded when a electric train collided with the bus on which she, at age eighteen, was travelling, Kahlo highlighted her injuries both by painting them, and by wearing (and painting herself wearing) traditional Tehuana costume over them, with all its associations of feminine strength, tradition and, in Mexican folklore, matriarchal power. The 'cripple / Tehuana' complex, and the story of Kahlo's relationship with her adulterous husband, reminds Wollen of Sylvia Plath:

The energy driving interest in Plath plainly comes from a complex of victimisation, blame, abjectness and fascination with violence, inwardly and outwardly directed. Much the same could be said about Kahlo.

(Wollen, 2003, p.124)

Lacan states that ‘there is something originally, inaugurally, profoundly wounded in the human relation to the world’ (1988, p.167 (the same Lacan who will theorise teaching as the activity that involves not so much the teaching of facts and ideas, as rather of learning itself: what we really teach students is *how to learn* (1998, n.p.)). Recalling Freud’s ideational mimetics, one might state that Kahlo’s work, and cult, allows one to re-enact, in one’s own body, a wounding that we ever try to deny, that denial being the very definition of neurosis. Her work brings our wounds to the surface, and simultaneously offers them the reparative cloth of a redeemed and restored tradition.¹⁹

Another reason for the diffusion of Kahlo’s work is that ‘it reproduced well – and this is meant as a compliment rather than a reproach’ (p.124). If that comment reveals worlds about the romanticism of contemporary discourses on creativity, it should also open our eyes to the fact that the very aim of art, as teaching, as activism, is to reproduce itself. And it is not merely the ‘pathological’ dimensions of the work which occasion this: the works ‘prevailed, in part, because of their sheer quality’ (p.124). In fact, Wollen’s article is in many ways a contribution to this prevalence, for he is effectively trying to pare away the mythic halo surrounding Kahlo’s work to allow us to focus all the more on it. Clearing away the discourses, the otherness, the cliches, calendars and fridge magnets we import to her work, we still ‘find Kahlo’s paintings staring us in the face’ (p.129). There is a certain utopianism here in this article of Wollen’s, an excellent piece of criticism, because it allows us to see the work with greater clarity, which I find persuasive enough to prompt me, in my consideration of Althusser, to discard my

¹⁹ Here is Bernard Cassen, honorary president of ATTAC (*Association pour la Taxe Tobin pour l’Aide aux Citoyens*, which is militating for a tax on global currency speculation): “Our fundamental aim, as I have often said, is to decontaminate people’s minds. Our heads have been stuffed with neoliberalism, its virus is in our brain cells, and we need to detoxify them. We have to be able to start thinking freely again, which means believing that something can be done. That is why our slogan ‘Another world is possible’ amounts to something like a cultural revolution. It means that we are not condemned to neo-liberalism, we can envisage other ways of living and organizing society than those we have at present. So our task is to persuade the largest number of people possible of the viability of such alternatives, and prepare the ground for a Gramscian hegemony that would allow different policies to be realised” (2003, p.56). ATTAC is as much about reconstruction as destruction. Isn’t this a bit like Kahlo’s art?

own 'pathological' associations with him and accept that it is in fact the excellence of the work, 'staring us in the face,' that interpellates me. It demands, like the empirical phenomenon that disrupts all our previous theories, that we find a world that will make sense of it; a world in which our desire can once more breathe easily. I think what Wollen is effectively putting forward here, 'daring' to put forward as Althusser would say, is the possibility of science, a possibility only attained through the paring away of one's identifications²⁰, and then perhaps only in utopia. Or Book Five of Spinoza's Ethics: 'The Power of the Intellect, or Human Freedom' (n.d. pp.199-224), which reconciles science and desire, without sacrificing either term.²¹ All three betoken the possibility of peace. The aim, as Yeats says, of all art (in Heaney, 1980, p.10), the goal, Peirce writes, of all inquiry (1992b). Which must be close to death.

Be that as it may, here I want to return to the way that captivating, indeed inexorable, brilliance of Althusser's logic challenges me, as indicated below, to outthink it, to find my own ideas in its gaps. In the future. It's like a horror movie, horror being the most ego-impacting of modern filmic genres. For those pathological identifications (and why else all the calendars, catalogues and so forth masking artwork like Kahlo's?) mask a set of ideas which actually scare me.

The deepest contradiction in the theories I have presented in sections one and two below concerns whether I am writing about teaching / poetry / agitation, and all their one-way transmissive processes, or about collegiality, about dialogue. After all, I found myself drawn to write about conference experiences rather than

²⁰ A comment of Andrew Lewis's headed me in this direction.

²¹ Though this diverges from Althusser's aim to 'outline a discourse which tries to break with all ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (ie. subjectless) discourse on ideology' (1994, p.130). You have to be dead to carry out Althusser's project, which is why we can only 'dare to be the beginning' of it; not that he would have, at least prior to the murder, accepted that reading. Whereas Spinoza theorises something like what Freud and Lacan would call desire. The approach may be perilous but certainly not fatal, in fact the opposite. Or chapter 3j above, which tries to sketch some of the terrain mapped out for us by Spinoza, back in the Baroque.

classroom ones even though I was trying to discuss the teacher's role as an ISA, a demagogue even. I think the reason I couldn't decide if I was talking about transmission (Althusser as demagogue) or about dialogue (the results of his teaching, in the work of his students), is that the real learning, perhaps the only learning, occurs at those moments where the distinction no longer applies. Teaching works when it is no longer actually teaching, and certainly no longer hierarchical (keeping in mind that you can only, as teacher, stage such moments by assuming the hierarchical position, and atmosphere of safety, that will allow the students' desire the room to upturn it. As for collegiality, I have no idea how we maintain it). It is when we induce students to perform in their own bodies, as their own (like the audience to one of Freud's comedies!) the knowledge we give them that we truly teach. And it's why real teaching approaches the collegiality of a conference. The other reason it is anti-hierarchical, in fact literally anarchic, is, as I stated above, because subjects are drawn in and interpellated precisely by what doesn't work. And that is also why, to quote Jakobson once more:

it is in the context of each occurrence that the verbal invariant of the verbal sign – its general meaning – acquires its new, particular meaning. The context is variable, and the particular meaning of the word undergoes renewal in each new context.

(Jakobson, in Pomorska & Jakobson, 1983, p.92)

Each student is a 'new context,' as is each interlocutor in a conversation. Creativity finds itself in dialogue because in listening to another's ideas, trying them out in our bodies, our unconscious desire seeks out what the other isn't saying, and attempts to articulate it. Which is also the case in reading, watching, or hearing work like Seferis', or Lenin's, or Wollen's, work which interpellates us to produce a response; though these private scenarios are clearly less powerful in eliciting the new: witness how rarely they make us blush. Dialogue is the ultimate. We renew the other's words in responding to them, and don't know what we're saying in the process, for the 'elementary ideological effect' is the feeling that we speak from consciousness, as authors of our own words, when in

fact it is our unconscious desire seeking what the other isn't saying, which is to say, their desire. This is a mechanical process in as much as it occurs prior to consciousness, though it is possible, with training, to open the pathways to such expressions of creative desire and make them appear even more palpably: as in art. Or intellectual work. The Jakobson quote actually comes from a book of dialogues on his work, between him and his wife, Krystyna Pomorska. It is the single volume in which Jakobson addresses the theme of creativity in the most sustained, and convincing way. As does Pomorska, and how much of his work is actually hers? You can hear them both speaking in each other's gaps, interpellating the other.²² For dialogue is utterly, utterly radical, the real source of change, creativity, interruption - 'one of the fundamental devices,' Benjamin reminds us, 'of all structuring' (1973c, p.148). It's radical because in dialogue we have no idea, literally no idea, what we are doing.

It's scary, because it means that the school, for all its role in the 'reproduction of the relations of production' (1994, p.113) also serves to stage this insanity. And that both are involved in learning. Which is also pretty funny.

²² What is an author? Here is Al-junaid, a ninth century Sufi, on Al-Hārith b. Asad al-Muhāsibi, his master (though dialogue problematises such a status, as Hegel also pointed out (1977, 111-119); of course it was his very awareness of that fact that made al-Muhāsibi master, a possibility Hegel elides). Al-junaid writes: 'Al-Hārith b. Asad al-Muhāsibi used to come to my house and say "Come out with me, and let us grind." I would say to him, "Wilt thou drag me forth from my solitude and spiritual security into the highways and allurements, to behold lustful things?" He would answer, "Come out with me; there is nothing for thee to fear." And when I had come with him to a certain place where he sat down, he would say to me, "Ask me a question." I would reply, "I have no question to ask thee." Then he would say, "Ask me whatever comes into thy mind." Then the questions would rush upon me, and I would question him, and he would answer accordingly forthwith; then he would return to his dwelling-place and make them into books.' (al-Junaid, in Arberry, 1950, pp.46-47). The critique of Hegel was, in another context, suggested to me by Andrew Lewis.

ha ha ha

Of course,

something does 'work' in all the mechanisms Althusser describes. The 'relations of production' are indeed reproduced. I think that Machiavelli's (also Peirce's, also Freud's) theory of a human preference for habit and imitation are much more likely to explain those repetitions than Althusser's bizarre conviction that people actually believe in what they think they do. For when you look around you, it's all so much 'let it pass', 'practices of etc' and laughing at the gaps in the system, not to mention sexual repression. The last thing you do in such a world is take it's rhetoric seriously. That's insane.

But then, Althusser was a teacher, and found himself universalising that utopic world where one requires that a theory actually work for it to be accepted. The world we inhabit as intellectuals. With its corollary privilege: the right this gives us to reset the agenda.

4. And Now the Edifice

It's worth remembering that Marx saw himself as simply passing on the true kernel of Hegel (which, in terms of the above, means he let himself be interpellated by Hegel). It's worth remembering this because my treatment of the *discontinuous institutes* of Harold Garfinkel, of Louis Althusser, of my friends in the CSAA, will raise heckles in the minds of Marxists for whom 'determination in the last instance' (in Althusser's rather Jesuitical phrase) is provided by the

economy, not the idea (Althusser, 1994, p.105). One of Althusser's greatest contributions was to unwrite this opposition between deed and word. I will try to show how he did this in this final section of my argument, further to advance my characterisation of the relative power of the interpellative agencies – teaching, art, politics - I have been discussing.

For what I have written certainly serves to accord language and its users a power way in excess of that allowed it by nearly all Marxist thinkers (with the exception of Lenin). Whereas artists think this way, almost by definition. Take Kathy Acker, who introduces a book of her non-fiction essays, (while writing from a Moscow hotel room, with a *fin-de-siecle* feel all about her, in 1997) with the following words: 'I'm sitting on this bed, between writing spurts, idly beginning to read a novel by Maurice Blanchot entitled (in English) The Most High' (Acker, 1997, p.ii). Acker adds that The Most High is introduced by Alan Stoekl, who quotes a 1937 letter from George Bataille to Alexandre Kojève, which Acker herself in turn cites to show Kojève's influence on Bataille, and not just on Bataille but also on Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan and Queneau (p.iii). Her translation of Blanchot takes her to Kojève, the Russian, who, himself under the influence of Alexandre Koyré, explicated Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (1977), and so turned a generation of French intellectuals into Hegelians (and how many, in turn, into Marxists?). 'The problem, it suddenly comes to me,' continues Acker with regard to Bataille's millenarian obsession, 'with this end of the world, with the apocalypse is that the mind is so powerful that what is thought comes to pass' (p.iv).

Althusser is only so far behind. Only he's a Marxist. With another lesson to teach. '[D]etermination in the last instance,' Althusser tells us, comes from the economy. Institutions are about material processes of production ('the base'), not ideas and their future translations ('the superstructure'). Of course this is all pretty metaphorical. The words 'base' and 'superstructure' are, as Althusser remarks, founded on 'a spatial metaphor,' one intended to 'endow the base with

an index of effectivity' (p.105). It is an index of 'effectivity' because it indicates 'the determination in the last instance of what happens in the upper "floors" (of the superstructure) by what happens in the economic base' (ibid.) And it serves to model the conviction, cornerstone of most modern Marxisms, 'that the upper floors could not "stay up" (in the air) alone, if they did not rest precisely on their base' (p.105).

Let me turn to Perry Anderson's Considerations on Western Marxism to show just what is at stake here (1976). Anderson attacks the generation (and this includes Althusser) of Marxists who succeeded Lukács, Gramsci and Luxembour, all three of whom were active revolutionaries as well as theorists, for their failure to maintain real links with revolutionary activity, ie. with class struggle at the base. The 'structural divorce of this Marxism from political practice' became, he writes almost 'consubstantial' with the tradition itself (p.29). For Anderson, membership of Stalinist parties like the French Communist Party has nothing to do with real political practice, nor does tenure within an academic institution. The truth of this critique of Althusser, the Frankfurters, Colletti and so forth does not stop Anderson from upsetting his polemic with intriguing, even contrary, footnotes. 'The Spanish case,' he writes in footnote 4, p.28, 'remains an important historical enigma.' Faced with the question as to why Spain produced no important Marxist theorists, no Gramsci, no Adorno, no Althusser, 'despite the extraordinary combativity of its proletariat and peasantry,' Anderson finds himself suggesting, directly contrary to his own base-superstructure thesis, that it was the absence of a strong philosophical tradition, the absence of philosophers of the stature of Italy's Benedetto Croce, the great Hegelian whom Gramsci took on, that led to this state of affairs. This is, however, only a footnote suggestion: 'a solution' to the Spanish enigma would, he notes, 'be central to any wider analysis of the conditions of the emergence and development of historical materialism as a theory' (p.28, fn.4).

Anderson's book is a prolegomena to such an analysis. His studies of the production and trajectory of Marxist theory are in many ways studies of the formation of ideology itself. Here I ally my project to his, which I suspect might even have suggested it. For Anderson's book is as much an ethnomethodology, a cultural study even, of how Marxists approach the world as anything else. And it has definite results. Anderson produced a sequel to the text, in which, shifting from footnote to 'After word,' he expands on the possibility of a 'limit to the notion of a unity of theory and practice,' further to argue the need for 'a science of history', one *necessarily* removed from present day struggles, a science perhaps not dissimilar to the tradition of history Croce represented (p.111). In other words, the study of the production of Marxist thinking in the twentieth century eventually leads Anderson, beyond his own presuppositions about 'praxis', to accept that the superstructure of teaching and learning may well, in certain instances, be even more powerful than the base of economic process and class struggle. What is the power of his book, if not another instance of this?

But this would be, to return to the spatial metaphor, impossible. How can the upper floors stay up, suspended in mid-air, if not for the base which grounds them. Actually, Althusser goes on to say, it is metaphoricity which grounds them. For having paid a sop to the 'materialist' postulate of 'determination in the last instance' (a sop to his own communist party - 'Let it pass') he proceeds to theorise this 'spatial metaphor,' precisely as a metaphor. And that is radical. The advantage of the edifice metaphor is, Althusser writes, that 'it makes something visible' (1994, p.105). It describes things about the world with great clarity. While the disadvantage is 'the fact that it remains metaphorical: ie. it remains descriptive' (p.106). A curious position. It leads to the following wonderfully politic project: Althusser says that he now wants to discuss the workings of the ISA's, and will disregard the economic processes which 'in the last instance' cause them, for

It now seems to me that it is possible and desirable to represent things differently. NB: I do not mean by this that I want to reject the classical metaphor, for that metaphor itself requires that we go beyond it.

(Althusser, 1994, p.106)

Which manoeuvre allows him to focus on the way superstructural relations of Law, the State and Ideology reproduce both themselves and the economy. So Althusser invokes the obligatory edifice metaphor, and then claims that in ignoring it (‘Let it pass’) he is merely realising the truth of its metaphoricity, the further to express the scientific position the edifice metaphor is given in illustration of. Of course what he is really doing is dismissing the whole idea, which is almost to dismiss Marx himself, of a distinction between word and deed. For Althusser may well be a member of the French Communist Party, but he’s read all that Spinoza - ‘Marx without a beard,’ in Plekhanov’s wonderful phrase (cited in Anderson, 1976, p.64, fn.30) - and he can’t ultimately abide by anything that gets in the way of an idea. So he smashes the edifice.

Althusser’s Spinoza is the one for whom *ordo et connexio idearum rerum idem est, ac ordo et connexio rerum* (‘the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things’ (Spinoza, n.d., p.41) in other words, for whom thought (superstructure if you like) and reality (thus for base) are the same. They both signify. And it was Althusser who introduced a whole generation to Spinoza, and for that matter Machiavelli. For Althusser was, beyond all else, a teacher, in a position (*L’Ecole Normale Supérieure*) that gave him immense power to place certain ideas on the agenda. Althusser’s position is, in this respect, archetypal of the twentieth century Western Marxists Perry Anderson surveys (and I would include Anderson himself in this framework): their very practice as teachers / philosophers/ critics radically contradicts their theoretical assertions of ‘determination in the last instance,’ whether that determination comes in the form of the various movements of the commodity form, or whether it be some model of the primacy of class struggle in the generation of theory. They are all great teachers, and as such they bear a radical (albeit disavowed) faith in

the possibility of institutions of cultural transmission and change to have effects upon whatever it is that makes this world what it is, which could be otherwise. In other words, they all believe (in their actions if nowhere else) in advertising.

And once you take a Spinozist perspective, or for that matter a Derridean, or Jakobsonian, or Peircean - in short, a semiotic – view of things, you see that the creation of verbal or visual matter with the aim to persuade is as much a production of reality as the commodification of labour-time, or the creation of use-values, or whatever. In using the word advertising I am thinking of the Dance Party add I appeared in for David, but also of the things people teach, which cause to turn our attention (*to animadvert us*, as the old English phrase has it) to other ways of acting. Surely that is why Marxism has appealed to so many artists (Acker, Passolini, Benjamin) for so long; it's all about production, the productive power of the act. Which could be an advertisement, why not?

‘[T]he mind is so powerful that what is thought comes to pass.’

5. And now for a word from our sponsors (reprise)

I disagree with the hypostatisation of commodity exchange as the solitary agent of interpellation and I would apply this criticism not merely to Althusser, but to neo-Lukácsian work like Moishe Postone's albeit magisterial Time, Labour and Social Domination (1996). I have repeatedly used the word ‘interpellation’ below to describe the effect of hearing reinterpretations of my Kierkegaard paper from Amanda MacDonald, then Stephen Muecke, then John Frow. And I have tried to show how the relative power we have as teachers, artists, colleagues to interpellate others, and so call forth the new. A power not unlike Althusser's. When Althusser writes that ‘all ideology hails or interpellates concrete subjects as concrete subjects,’ I agree, and add, yes, that is just what you are doing in your writing, because you are an **ideologue**. Althusser says as much:

The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently performing are also, in this respect, rituals of ideological recognition, including the 'obviousness' with which the 'truth' or 'error' of my reflections may impose itself upon you.

(Althusser, 1994, p.130)

Note, yet again, how you are said to be 'performing' this reading. Note it further on, where Althusser rearranges some data 'for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theatre' (p.131). Note on the next page, how he makes reference to 'the actors' in this *mise en scene* of interpellation' (p.132). Re-read Althusser's great 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' essay, and wherever you find the word ideology, submit art. And remember that it's all about pleasure. Teaching. Governmentality. Revolution.

Althusser himself exemplifies the same shift I am trying to perform here, from the study of a subjectless and all-including ideology, to a study of **the ideologue**, in his late Machiavelli and Us (1999). Attempting to explain Machiavelli's strange power over philosophers from Spinoza on and down to us, Althusser writes that 'he hails us from a place that he summons us to occupy as potential "subjects" (agents) of a potential political practice' (p.32). Althusser in fact uses the word interpellation to describe this process; this 'effect of captivation and interpellation is produced by the shattering of the traditional theoretical text' (p.32).

Machiavelli, just like Peirce, Spinoza and (I hope the benefit of this research will be to show) Jakobson, 'hails us from a place': a place of continual revolution. Or possibility. Which could be the same thing. '[W]hat truly belongs to the order of the unconscious,' Lacan, Althusser's great colleague and teacher, remarked, 'is neither being nor non-being, but the unrealized' (Lacan, 1977, p.30). I am trying to claim, finally, that great artists like David Chisholm, and great teachers like Machiavelli, Althusser, Jakobson, Derrida, my friends in the CSAA and from Crossroads, are united in the capacity to put the unrealised on the agenda. Lacan too. And that some of them open up projects of liberation that only the

most poetic of Marxists (but isn't that what we should all be?) could term Marxist. Like the project to expand the space of learning in general. Napoleon: 'Like a musician loves his music, I love power.' The project to assume power.

Napoleon could recognise an analogy between his praxis and creative work. It is logical, if surprising, therefore, to read that he in fact initiated the main modern, pre-Marxist, meaning of the word *ideology*. The **ideologues**, for Napoleon, were those who 'misled the people by elevating them to a sovereignty they were incapable of exercising.' In other words, the **ideologues** were the revolutionary proponents of democracy (Napoleon, cited in Williams, 1976, p.126). I like this definition of the ideologue: *one who promotes the impossible*. I especially like it because the particulars of Napoleon's claim have in so many ways been disproven by the future that is now. I like the way Napoleon's definition puts the function of ideology in our hands, as teachers, as artists, as critics, all of whom deal with the same daily project: the transmission of the unrealised. Which could involve the following:

- *The tradition of the future:*

a definition of culture that Cultural Studies could usefully adopt.

- *Taking ideas as things to act first and then theorise later:*

The way to become an **ideologue** is to reproduce the idea through its enactment. As revolution. Or advertisement.

And then there is

- *The discontinuous institute*

the enduring, albeit unacknowledged ('let it pass') power, presence and authority of those who have enacted the idea, eg, radically creative voices like Gorz's.

'the discontinuity of socialist strategy is that of history itself.'
(Gorz, 1973, p. 151)

That is Andre Gorz, my favourite Marxist. Gorz argues as follows. Technological change is a good thing. It means we don't have to work as much. Yet our society is such – under Capital – that only those with jobs can have access to goods, to resources, and to the main forms of social power. So we are forced, socially, so as to not imperil democracy itself, to engage in various job creation programs, up to and including programs of sheer environmental destruction, simply so as to create more jobs. When actually, automation is a great thing. So stop working. Pay people not to work. Guarantee everyone a minimum wage for life, regardless of whether they work or not. Enjoy your machines. Don't work for the revolution. Don't work at all. Start right now by legislating, as they have in France, for a thirty-five hour week. Then a thirty. This is *le socialisme difficile*. Let me cut right into Gorz's text:

fragmentary and direct recognition that change is *necessary because it is possible*. The demand for change, in other words, does not arise out of the *impossibility* of tolerating the existing state of affairs, but out of the possibility of no longer having to tolerate it. It is the demonstration of this possibility (whether immediate or not, and whether capable or not of being expressed in action), in every field of social and individual life, which is one of the basic elements in the ideological work of a revolutionary movement.

(Gorz, 1973, p.168)

In other words, it's about teaching. You can find more of Gorz's writing in Strategy for Labour: A Radical Proposal (1967); Socialism and Revolution (1973); Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work (1985); Capitalism, Socialism, Ecology (1994) and Reclaiming Work : Beyond the Wage-Based Society (1999), which has the wonderful French title of *Misères du présent, richesse du possible*.

Advertising.



h) catalogued

Unaustralia

REVIEWED John Carroll, The Western Dreaming: The Western World is Dying for Want of a Story (HarperCollins, Sydney, 2001), \$32.95; Jennifer Rutherford, The Gauche Intruder: Freud, Lacan and the White Australian Fantasy (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne 2000), \$24.95.

1. the apparition of culture

The great stories, John Carroll claims, recur through time. Our 'Western dreaming' acts to reproduce 'a canon' of them, a definitive set of nine, which include the Deluge, the redemption of Mary Magdalene, the death of Achilles, the fate of Oedipus, the call of Mathew and so forth (2001, p.16). Drawing on a range of popular, literary, visual and philosophical sources, Carroll attempts to show how this set of stories materialises in our lives at pivotal moments of cultural remembering. Like some Harold Bloom ouija board. Whether we want it to or not. For it's not merely that a director like John Ford might consciously model a film like The Searchers on The Iliad, and so resurrect, in a contemporary western, the hero archetype found in Homer. This sort of recurrence happens anyway. Of 'the modern Diana myth,' Carroll claims that 'the primal force driving through it is Magdalene,' the archetype of 'the good hearted prostitute' (p.44; p.46). Oh dear. The same for Marilyn Monroe: 'once again the mythic source was Magdalene . . . Marilyn is failed Magdalene' (p.45). So watch out. 'Anyone, anywhere, at any time' could turn around and suddenly find him or herself in the plot of one of the stories listed above (p.1). After all, it happened to Diana.

Well, it didn't happen to me. I find this idea of cultural transmission by quantum leap utterly loony - religious, in the silliest sense of the word. Carroll's own book acts to disprove it. He retells the canonical stories, and they don't work. You

don't get the feeling he tells us you should get 'when one of the archetypal stories begins to speak through a life, charging the air' (p.41). Part of the problem - I mean beyond the fact that it's all nonsense - is in the author's *Hey mate, I think we just bumped into Jesus* attempt to translate classical literature, starting with the epiphany on the road to Emmaus, into an idiom that might speak to the Australian present. Listen to this description of Oedipus' thought processes:

this oracle stuff, his rational self tells him, is mere superstition, for those who are a bit backward. I shall teach the hysterical virgin priestess of Delphi who is boss (p.153).

Carroll's idea of popular speech is about as real to life as Volapük. But the problem is deeper than this. The characterisation conveyed by such lines is simply too banal to create the 'charged' impact their author is seeking. What he really wants is a sense of drama.

I kept thinking of the way Søren Kierkegaard retells the story of Abraham and Isaac in Fear and Trembling (1960, p.136). Abraham is on his way to Mount Moriah, and with him is his only son. Abraham has faith in the Lord's commands. So he climbs to the mountain top, places Isaac on the altar and raises his knife. At which point Yahweh gives the sign and Isaac is saved. That's the typical story. Kierkegaard now draws back - 'countless generations knew by heart, word for word, the story of Abraham; but how many lost their sleep over it?' - to evoke the image of a comfortable Copenhagen church (p.136). This is where things get strange. Kierkegaard asks us, now in our present-day 1843 surrounds, to imagine a member of the congregation, a neighbour of ours, a man who 'suffered from sleeplessness' (p.136). This man hears the narrative in a sermon one Sunday. Inspired by Abraham's extraordinary faith, and now wide awake, he comes to believe that the Lord has placed a similar charge upon him. So he leaves the church, and goes home to slit his own son's throat. Glory to Abraham!, writes Kierkegaard, he had faith enough to kill his own child. My point

is that the story of Abraham, that venerable father of the Church, ('countless generations knew by heart, word for word . . .'), is all in the execution.

*A smile fell in the grass
irretrievable!*

For the story is really Kierkegaard's. It only breaks open the narcissism of its audience because of the way he wields it. By likening Abraham to a psychopath in a news clipping. He's not repeating some age-old bit of the Western dreaming, as rather using whatever he can to cut our throats. Wake up.

When I read Carroll's book as a gesture towards such apparitions, moments in which things actually happen, I quite like it, and can even ignore the prose. After all, there is something refreshing in a book that is not afraid, in these niggardly times, to speak with scope. Carroll's focus on the apparition of culture has far more to offer the theory of reading and indeed poetry than any safely historicist work. For there are ways to use signs, and the histories they convey, to create those epiphanic effects of dread, of novelty, of irretrievability associated with mystic experience. The core theory of The Western Dreaming may well be metempsychotic nonsense. But the phenomenon it attempts to mythologise, the sense of sudden apparition, is clearly presenting as a lacuna in the post-structuralist corpus, as a new generation of scholars try to make sense of phenomena like S-11. It actually happened. If many are turning to the Freudian tradition to do so, it is because psychoanalysis has always asserted a link between the radically new and the law of the father.

2. repeating the law

Jennifer Rutherford's The Gauche Intruder: Freud, Lacan and the White Australian Fantasy addresses a similar terrain, albeit from a very different angle to Carroll. Reading the canon of great Australian novels, she critiques the failure

of literary criticism to provide 'an analysis of repetition' (2001, p.14). Patriarchal law, which 'the Australian Imaginary' triumphantly claims to suppress, returns, and it does so with violence. Rutherford's gambit is to approach the question of repetition in Australian literature and politics through a Lacanian model of the psyche, a model that will avoid the Deluge, the redemption of Mary Magdalene, the death of Achilles, the fate of Oedipus, the notion of a Dreaming, the archetypes, or rather stereotypes, that Carroll imposes on his archive. Again and again. She'll do this by talking about the law.

Rutherford argues that our stories of nation are patriarchal to the core. Of course 'morality play' novels like Robert Boldrewood's Robbery Under Arms, or Helen Spencer's Clara Morrison, repeatedly celebrate the 'dissolution of the rigid class hierarchies of English Society' (p.41). In such literature, old world patriarchy is replaced by a 'new egalitarianism' based on the performance of 'an idealised Australian character' (p.108). Take Jack, of George Johnston's My Brother Jack, who represents 'that lack of pretension, that frankness, that utter rejection of the obscure that marks the Australian "lad" ' (p.112). Rutherford's analysis serves to underline the fact that such a marking ('that utter rejection of the obscure') requires the presence of a feminised difference (in Johnston's novel, the despised character of Helen) so as to constitute itself as self. For if the 'Australian social revolution' has promulgated a 'new law under the governance of the sons,' that same law has trained its aggression upon whatever 'foreign' contaminants it can find *within* Australia (p.60). Patriarchal law returns, and it returns with violence, reinstating an intolerance to difference as the obscene essence of democracy itself.

And not just in literature. Rutherford shares with Carroll an awareness of the continuum between literature and reality. What repeats in the literary canon, repeats in the wider world as well. The Gauche Intruder opens with excerpts from interviews Rutherford conducted with One Nation polling booth workers during the 1998 federal election. 'It's an honourable thing to be an Australian,'

one told her (p.6). He proceeded to explain the sort of values One Nation stands for:

There's a code if you like about how you do things and how you treat people. I suppose it's respect for other people. You know, if someone needs help, you give them help. Out here you have a machine that breaks down in the middle of the night and you're trying to bale hayyou just make it available to your neighbour. Simple as that.

(anon, cited in Rutherford, 2001, p.6)

What the media, Rutherford argues, have failed to see, in attacking the 'racism, xenophobia and closed world-view of Hanson and her supporters' is that these hate-mongers articulate the same *love thy neighbour* ideal as the rest of us (p.x). They're as Christian as us! This manoeuvre serves to remind us that the 'fair-go' fantasy of moral community belongs to the racist as well. But if so, what else do we share with One Nation?

A psyche. Rutherford's argument is something like this: Identification with a collectivity of like-minded individuals ('a code if you like about how you do things and how you treat people') serves to fortify the ego's narcissistic boundaries. By affirming the ego's domain of similitude, such group identifications entail a considerable yield of pleasure. Yet narcissistic pleasure is not, in itself, enough for the human subject. Such pleasure cannot accommodate the fact that the ego has repressed a portion of psychic life so as to constitute itself out of, and in difference to, the polymorphous drives of the infant body. These repressed drives clamour for representation. The desire, both heterosexual and homosexual, which conveys them, will either be recognised or, if it remains repressed, will manifest in the form of an aggression directed towards the agency which represses it, the ego. Repressed desire re-emerges as self-hatred, ie. guilt. Rutherford's twist is to argue that such guilt is readily converted into an antagonism towards others: ' . . . aggression to the other is an extension of this primary aggression to the self' (p.125). The paradox of an ego-bound sense of

belonging and moral worth ('I suppose it's respect for other people'), combined with a virulent hatred of certain others, is hence explained as the consequence of a betrayal of unconscious desire. In other words, the Asylum Seeker issue is all about sex.

But I'm translating. Rutherford uses the language of Lacan's Seminar 7: On the Ethics of Psychoanalysis (1977b), and spends a great deal of time opening it, and its postulate of a primary masochism, out. Too much time, I think. Lacan's seminar may be endlessly rewarding, but the technical language in which it is framed is impossibly difficult to appropriate. I tripped up repeatedly on the transitions from Rutherford's exegesis of *ego-ideal*, *ideal-ego*, *das ding*, *the phallus*, and so on, to her analysis of the Australian archive. The language is just too unwieldy to carry over; and yet the effort to do so forces an unnecessary simplification of Lacan's "message" (if one can call it that). That said, when Rutherford addresses the Seminar *per se*, her comments are often enlightening and interesting. Her political analysis, on the other hand, is at times compelling; the gesture by which she analogises the structure of our nice moral communities to those of a pack of racist demagogues is Kierkegaardian in its estranging quality. It reminds you that politics, just like faith, the faith of Abraham, is the hardest thing in the world, something like killing your own child. But such moments in Rutherford's text are fleeting; you have to do a lot of work to release them from all the psychoanalytic language. I came to suspect that there are really two separate books here: one a Lacanian primer, the other a work of cultural and literary analysis. Both are good in their own right; together they obscure each other. And the effect is gauche.

When all she really needs to do is to kill Lacan. The Intruder: A / The White Australian Fantasy: why not cut all of the exegesis and retitle accordingly? Remove the Lacanian apparatus, and Rutherford's attack upon 'the narcissism and aggression that dominates the contemporary discourse of both the nation and the university' suddenly kicks in, with force (p.x). As our institutions, the

university among them, are increasingly colonised by personalities amenable to the *rationalisation* - an extraordinary word, given the *collective insanity* it effectively denotes - we all apparently require, Rutherford's group psychology becomes all the more apposite. When humanities departments are called upon, like some bizarre reality TV program, to cull more and more staff, whom do they turn upon, if not the intruders in their midst? Which is why, in a country with so little history of effective resistance to democracy (for that's really what she's talking about), work that draws parallels between One-Nation and the rest of us constitutes a powerful, and even brave, intervention. Why let Lacan, Lacan the archetype, get in the way?

3. life has no meaning

For Rutherford to excise all the Lacanian language from her Lacanian book would in fact be consonant with what she, following Slavoj Žižek's well-known reading of Seminar 7, articulates as the ethics of psychoanalysis. Desire, she claims, 'has its own law,' one that operates at an absolute difference to collective codes and mores (p.199). The ethics of psychoanalysis, in this understanding, involves ignoring all claims of the ego and the group, to open a space for the expressions of the unconscious. This is 'the same ethical attitude' which, in Žižek's words,

we could describe (according to the Lacanian reading of Antigone) as an unreserved acceptance of the death drive, as a striving for radical self-annihilation.

(Žižek, 1992, p.64)

That's Žižek, who calls himself, perhaps without laughter, a 'dogmatic Lacanian.' But what could 'radical self-annihilation' mean, for a Lacanian, if not the refusal to authorise one's speech through Lacan? Who is not even Lacan, but rather some collectivity of *We Lacanians*, some colonising ego, some system for excluding

intruders. Lacan is dead. The most radical self-annihilation is simply to speak for yourself. Something appears there. 'Without the deep structure of archetypal story,' John Carroll writes, 'a life has no meaning' (p.12). Thank God!

I mean, what a wonderful invitation! Listen to where he goes once you cut Jung's head off. Each chapter of The Western Dreaming begins with a description of a painting. For Carroll, artists like Raphael, Titian, Carravaggio, and especially Poussin, stand alongside novelists, philosophers and sociologists as the most significant interpreters of European reality. They appear as cultural commentators in their own right. I've quoted some of Carroll's prose above. Storytelling aside, I like the way he finds themes in these images and uses them to discuss John Wayne, Kierkegaard, Princess Diana etc. At his better moments, he brings these images into discourse and implies that painting is a form of speech, deeply historied speech. This strategy serves to remind us that aesthetic pleasure is always a symbolic phenomenon, even in the visual arts, which seem so thoroughly imageric. As such, it showcases the fact that the real stage of our actions (that *anderer shauplatz*, or 'other stage,' as Freud termed the unconscious) is always just out of view. Hidden by all those crappy archetypes. All that meaning.

The best chapters of the book are the ones on 'Vocation' and 'Fate,' which constitute a meditation on the contingency and thrown-ness of our supposedly autonomous selves. I am reminded of that John Mateer poem, where he stares at a piece of volcanic rock on his desk:

personality, igneous rock and oblivion are the same

'[W]e do not choose our parents,' Carroll states, in discussing Oedipus (p.89). Nor do we choose our personalities, nor the vocations they lead us to. An ascriptive (Carroll cites Calvin) view of consciousness is a useful counter to the radical free will presupposed in neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism takes

entrepreneurial success as *the* civic virtue and pretends that all may access it, just by trying hard enough. That's plain stupid. Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with business knows that entrepreneurs are as rare, as socially abnormal, and as unfit for any other occupation, as artists. Why should their particular scale of merit determine everyone else's access to goods and services? Why not determine it by the ability, an equally contingent talent, to shoe horses? The only reason, as Rutherford shows, is a patriarchal one. The liberals of this world are terrified by the idea of a multiplicity of scales, modes of judgement, genres, laws, a multiplicity, in short, of personalities, because it reminds them of what they most fear: the multiplicity of female desire.

At any rate, there are interesting moments and possibilities in The Western Dreaming, once you push God out of the way. But that's quite a tall order, and the prose is, as I said, an abomination. Don't read this book. Perhaps read Rutherford's. But the best place to discover how Australia is lived, without the deep structure of an archetypal story, without the fearful and lazy hatreds of our current ("the Australian people") government, without simply repeating oneself, is, as both authors remind us, among artists. Where culture appears. The following story has no meaning:

In late 2001, composer David Chisholm was hired as artistic director for a 10 PM to 10 AM dance party at *Freakazoid*, a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, intersex even, nightclub in Melbourne. Performances from the usual assortment of drag queens and freaks ran through the night and into the next morning. At 9.00 AM, the curtains began to part for the final show. The deep house music stopped, the windowless room fell silent, the drugs kicked in, yet again. The curtains parted to reveal a fifteen piece Mandolin orchestra, whose members were all Greek and Italian, of an average age of sixty. Nightclubs are always dark, even during the day. 'O Solo Mio' began, and nobody, neither the 'New Australian' pensioners on stage, nor the ageless crowd on the dance floor, knew where we were anymore. A Sunday morning.

Immigration, grief, neurological triggers to the spirit

Catalogue essay to ceramics by Angelina Brazzale at Synergy Gallery, Melbourne, 4th-13th May, 2002.

Angelina Brazzale's *columbines* refer to the nestboxes which the Etruscans used to provide for their pigeons in what is now modern Tuscany. They bespeak the utopia of all migrations: the possibility of a comfortably pillowed home to return to, the knowledge of always coming back to the same place, the surety of returning even as one departs. To populate an exhibition on immigration and grief with toy-like pigeons, baby goats (potential *scapegoats*) and boat people dolls is to affirm the centrality of journeying to the child's games and play. Any toy taken up, takes one somewhere, and carries with it the implicit possibility of returning to play again, and again, and again. The seriality and repetition of play is repeated in the spirals of Klee angels on the walls of the exhibit, as in the spiral heartbeats sgraffitoed into the hundreds of ceramic boat people.

Escapism is almost shocking when you consider the scapegoating to which eight thousand of the Australian population are now being subjected. At Maribyrnong, Woomera, Port Hedland, Villawood and Curtin, people are held as prisoner for the crime of being without civic documentation. It is a crime not to be a citizen. Something might escape us. Among those eight thousand are some five hundred and eighty child prisoners. The least one can say about this is that it violates treaties; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for instance, holds that 'in any decision regarding children the child's best interest must be a primary

consideration' (article 3.1). More directly, it violates people. 'Every mother I spoke to,' says Sydney lawyer Jacqui Everett, 'tells me the same thing about her children. They stop eating, they stop speaking, they lose weight, they don't sleepIt's all exactly the same symptom again and again.'

Is this the same symptom one detects in the Ministry of Immigration's recently announced competition for the design of the new detention centre on Christmas Island? The competition, according to the Ministry's 3rd of April press release, 'provides an opportunity for architectural organisations participating in the design process to showcase their talents.' Imagine working on such a project. *Stop eating, stop speaking, lose weight, don't sleep*, you could 'potentially earn international recognition in an environment where the illegal movement of people around the world is a growing international problem.' What is this saying, if not that *These are your dreams. Your horizons stop here, at a mandatory detention centre. You, like everyone of us, have an asylum prison inside you. Sew up your lips. And remember to shift the blame onto someone else, because that's the way to survive.* In self-loathing. The refusal to grieve.

There is something beautiful and courageous in seeking to rescue the language of migration, refuge, journey, hope and return from the self-loathing of the current directors of public policy. This exhibit gives asylum to creativity, a utopianism of vital significance. For the refusal to assume a tragic posture in Brazzale's work is the refusal to accept that our horizons end here, at the supposedly necessary sacrifice of someone else's ideal homecoming. In this exhibit, the homecoming is ours, and it is a delicate one, as the hanging ceramic *spines* and commemorative pouring pots (the latter decalated with newsphrases: 'War on Terror'; 'Axis of Evil'; 'September 11'), perhaps remind. Anything can break. To have spine, in a nation based on immigration - based, that is, on grief - is to assume custodianship for the hopes that drove us to this point. For the only way to grieve is to fall in love, once more, with what you lost on the way. An angel. A

freakbowl. A flotilla of boat people dolls, with wide-eyes and lashes. A series of commemorative pouring pots, these scapeboats and spines. Pigeons. The beguilingly happy anonymity of lots of different little things. A thousand poems choosing their own endings. A way of being at home. A child.



Odd on a Grecian Urn

REVIEWED David Ray, New Work,
Haeceity Arts, Melbourne
27 September to 12 October 2002.²³

David Ray's New Work features ten pieces. The majority are earthenware. Beyond that, it is hard to find words adequate to the collision of sculptural and ceramic forms which they present. It is as if the images traditionally adorning vases and urns have been extruded into the three-dimensional texture of these works. The effect is brain-bending. As if we were looking through eyes we didn't know we possessed. The trick is to maintain focus.

'White Man Dreaming' begins as a little man, who could be a garden gnome, only his face is pallid, or rather white, deathly white, his lips red, as if lipsticked on, and his eyes far too wide. He has a yellow scarf. And there is a sort of vase, a monstrous profusion, an accretion of turrets, red square towers and decaled eighteenth century balloons, growing out of his back and into the space behind him. Again, it's hard to know whether to call the work a vase, or a sculpture, or what But what disturbs me about 'White Man Dreaming' is that the lid of the vase, if vase it is, is located not on the man's head, but rather on the dream behind him. How can a dream have it's own lid? And why am I reminded of a funerary urn? For all the white men that have ever been before

*thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st*

These are not self-contained works.

²³ Many thanks to Elizabeth Campbell and Petra White for their comments on an earlier draft of this review.

It is not merely that they produce associations. The explosion of form radiates outward to effect the immediate surrounds as well. For there is something so collided and bent you half-expect the gallery to burst open too. Into ceramics and sculptures.

what leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape

I'm quoting some lines of Keats to try and recreate the effect of quotation in 'East/West', one of the best pieces in New Work. And also to search for a criterion by which these forms might be judged. 'East/ West' is a white porcelain vase that has been warped almost to the shape of a kneepad. It's slightly cracked.

ye know on earth, and all ye need to know

Moulded into this surface are a series of gold-brushed picture frames, some with traces of old-masters, others missing sides of the frame, curved and warped. A curved eyelid effect. An open lid. Searching for its own image. Or body. 'East/West' could be a comment upon the story-finding urge driving all these works.

In 'Gabriel', for instance, a cartoonish Rapunzel sculpture is visited by the archangel, here decaled onto a vase that rises to assume *Oh Attic shape* a fish-form lid. When *with brede / Of marble men and maidens overwrought* it works, this fragmentation - for what is the actual story? - serves to remind you of the way all objects contain stories. That is to say, the attempt to find one's way through the various webs of association, quotation and confusion presented in New Work could well open your eyes to that strange, and half-terrifying, process by which the objects surrounding us serve to symbolise not just what we know about ourselves and our everyday lives, but also what we don't know. There, in

that vase. There are stories in the things all around us, a fact nowhere more apparent than when you break one of them.

Though then again, and this is the unsatisfying side of this exhibit, there is always the possibility that collisions like 'Garbiel' are really just an accident. The overall effect is still powerful. You have the feeling that these works, and maybe the gallery too, are all on the verge of metamorphosing into something. They evoke the possibility of some post-apocalyptic world in which everything, all our everyday lives, will just burst into mythic presence. Which could be art. Osama bin Laden did this to us, you know. And that's perhaps the problem. It's a huge challenge for an artist working at the moment *not* to evoke debris, mangling, excesses of meaning, aquariums, waste-land. Politics has finally got modernist, and we, if we don't speak more powerfully, can easily become it's container. A Saudi urn. But such wrecked landscapes can easily overwhelm, in the sense that they fail to speak. Some of the pieces (I would put 'Can Do' in this category) are just too imaginative. This is not usually regarded as a criticism, but I mean by it that the images are in excess, and the possible effect of the work diminished. They don't speak to you days, or even lifetimes later. They're too imaginative.

Whereas 'Vision Collision', which is one of the quieter of these works, has made a hole in my week, and is still opening out.

*Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
as doth eternity*

Literally formed from the collision of two vase forms, the work has been sculpted into a see-through picture frame, at one end, and staring right back through it, a conch-like orifice at the other. The frame bears all the ornateness of a European Master, though the absence of the picture, and then the wall behind it, is disconcerting. For what you see, through this aperture, is, in part, the interior of the piece (an architecture of colonnades, and chess-tiled floors) and, in part, the

external space of the gallery, including the other people staring through 'Vision Collision' at you. It gives you a new perspective (on painting, galleries, architecture) and frames you to see through it, or even exist within it. I've no idea what it means. But surely that is the point of any creative container: to give us a lid we didn't even know we had, and invite us to open it. Out beyond thought.

An eyelid.

up

catalogue essay for Environmental Acts
at the maroondahart gallery, Melbourne, 10th October to 16th November 2002

The exercise bike on the Skylab space station had no seat. You don't need a seat in zero gravity. Astronauts are cool. In 1979, it collided with the earth's atmosphere and disintegrated. An exercise bike. We looked up.

*

Australia. Mandy Gunn's fence posts are not meant to look that way. Metal fence railings are typically vertical, set at intervals, and intended to contain, detain, protect. Not here. An installation comprising dozens of metal posts, laid horizontally on top of each other, and eight feet up, in rotating grid patterns looks strange. It feels like something was stolen. Perhaps the land.

Environmental Acts features the work of four artists: Mandy Gunn, Sue Kneebone, Donna Marcus and Jane Poynter. The following attempts to itemise some of their environmental work.

Whatever it is, it's not natural. 'Birdsville', another of Gunn's pieces, features a series of thirty six black emu eggs. Each egg has crude housing nails glued at points all over the surface, to stick out like spikes. It makes you think of birth. And pain. Yet if this is so, the title of the work, and the eggs' serial arrangement in a six by six grid, suggests a certain industry, as if the town it images was glued together with egg and nailed into thin air.

act 2 - naturally

'Naturally Disturbed' rises out of the ground. Taking as her theme the introduced species that have so radically altered the Australian landscape, Sue Kneebone sites the work on a circular patch of grass (astroturf). A series of cow's horns are set into the grass like plants, or weeds. They may be foreign, but they grow here now.

Grafted into the maroondah ~~art~~ gallery, this *in situ* piece again serves to remind you that an *environment* is by no means necessarily a natural, in the sense of unadulterated, one. Or rather, this is all nature as well. Derived from the French *virer*, to turn, the word *environment* simply means whatever turns, or spins, around you. Like a satellite. Or a gallery. They grow here now.

As does Kneebone's next piece, a human-sized cocoon, made of bark and held together with disturbing coils of string. It's called 'Sleeping Bag'. Maybe it's the bag itself which is sleeping. At any rate it is spun around something, suspended from one of the gallery's ceiling girders, that might escape.

act 3- a scientific vision

According to Sigmund Freud, whose only experience of weightlessness was the interpretation of dreams, there is a point in any dream where analysis comes to a halt: 'at this point there is a tangle of dream thoughts which cannot be unravelled

and which moreover adds nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown.' I cannot find this point in Donna Marcus' work. Yet - or rather, for this very reason - her work forms the navel of the exhibition. Multiple and identical aluminium kitchen steamers, welded at the seam and assembled into a perfect geometrical object (the icosahedron) bespeak a Platonic geometry worlds away from anything natural, human or otherwise. Plato claimed that polyhedra were divine. Marcus' 'Fullerene' is a transparent dodecahedron of tupperware jelly moulds; it is the dream of geometry. The triangular steamer lids, on the other hand, which Marcus arranges in tile-like patterns on the wall, hearken to certain Islamic traditions of geometric art. In Islam the soul seeking God releases itself from the three dimensionality of our experiential world to attain the sparser, and yet more comprehensive, two dimensional realm of ideas and principles, the world of the motivating intelligences. God is a tile pattern. But where is His navel? Where, if not (in the kitchen, that primal environment) in the terrific violence of throwing all these things together in the first place?



*

the question this raises : what is environmental art?

1. On July 11th 1979, Mervyn Andre, president of Esperance shire, became the first Australian official to issue NASA with a fine for littering, a fine which to this day remains unpaid.

2. The incriminating bits and pieces of Skylab (including 'a huge oxygen tank the size of a Volkswagen van') are now among the exhibits of the Skylab Arts Project at the Cannery Arts Centre in Esperance.

There are a couple of conclusions I want to draw from these anecdotes. Firstly, that in issuing the fine, Andre was tapping into a deep stratum of cultural imagining: the feeling that rubbish comes from outer space.

The outer space within us all
(these lungs, that oxygen tank).

Secondly, that art is litter. It taps into the energy of refuse, whether in the form of tears, aluminium tins, sweat, cow horns, house tacks, old metal railings, breast milk, these broken and cracked words. I think this is why environmental art will always find itself on such an uncomfortable edge. It can't outrightly reject human intrusions into the landscape because it derives its power from the detritus our incursions leave behind. It's the broken bits of subjectivity and pain that in fact count as art. There in that lead reclamation site, the wash-pit from the mine tailings, that bit of God in the dirt, where nothing grows. Broken Hill. Who broke it?

This is where one might recall the other meanings accreted into this word *environment*, for the *virer* mentioned above also led to our *veer*, to turn, as in the

head of a ship. The *environment* could be a veering as much as a subjection to rotation, something to steer, and to steer around, delicately, and here the word *government* comes in, derived from the Greek *kybernetes*, for helmsman. Governing a country well could itself be seen as an environmental act. As opposed to a collision.

act 5 - curtain

Jane Poynter's 'It won't be long now' features a series of five panels (in fact a concertina stretching and layering of the one photo) of sunburnt dirt, with an anti-erosion ditch veering scarlike through it. The repetition and sideward sliding of the image gives this scarification, intended to prevent the seepage of the harshly toxic leaden soil, a patterned and ritualised appearance. As if we were being initiated into something. The panels are transparencies. Pegged to a line running the width of the gallery, they hang like washing, Broken Hill washing. A light shines through the image and creates a slide / sunset effect on the back wall. Pools of words on the floor of the gallery

. . . .lonely, hot, dry, isolated,
flat, punctuated, still . . .

remind us that it's all about finding a language. Everything we do. Including staring.

Up.

i) bookcook

bookcook

A reading of Erica de Mane's Pasta Improvisata (1999)
by Ludwig Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1981)

p.9 I loved my family's southern Italian American cooking when I was a child, and even back then, before I was aware of where it all came from, I was proud to invite my friends over for a dinner of lasagne layered with ricotta and my mother's long-simmered meat sauce.

1. The world is everything that is the case.

p.9 My family also ate out a lot, almost exclusively at Italian restaurants, and I always ordered pasta. That was where I first learned that the world of pasta went beyond the tomato, garlic, and dried oregano triumvirate of my home and into the creamy Alfredo sauces that in the 1960s and '70s became the hallmark of high-class Italian restaurant cooking (the dish was always made tableside by a tuxedoed waiter using elaborate arm movements). I noticed the attention and care that were paid to the preparation of food, not only in the restaurants but in my own family. And my dedication to the art of cooking took hold.

2.013. Everything is, as it were, in a space of possible atomic facts. I can think of this space as empty, but not of the thing without the space.

p.10 As a teenager, I began by experimenting. My first great discovery was *aglio e olio* (garlic and oil sauce), which was something my family never cooked because my father was not a fan of the straight taste of olive oil.

As I entered adulthood, I'd make an *aglio e olio* sauce toward dawn for friends after a night of disco-hopping. It wasn't long before I varied the garlic-and-olive-oil base by adding anchovies, prosciutto, hot pepper, fresh parsley, and basil from my father's garden. Cooking was starting to become a life focus for me, a way of expressing myself.

2.1. *We make ourselves pictures of facts.*

2.141. *The picture is a fact.*

p.10 Pasta sauces lend themselves beautifully to the kind of improvisation I was doing. Even in Italy, where town feuds are fought over the correct ingredients for a true Bolognese sauce, each cook makes the classic sauces a little differently. While travelling through the provinces of Campania and Puglia in the south of Italy on the way to my birthplace a few years back, I stopped at many small trattorias and was served at least a dozen different versions of the ubiquitous (in that region) baked ziti with tomato sauce: one had mozzarella; one was seasoned with oregano; one included Pecorino and sausage; another had tiny meatballs. Each restaurant called the dish the speciality of the region, but no two made it the same way. I realised that this was what good cooking was all about – placing your personal stamp on the food you love best.

2.16. *In order to be a picture a fact must have something in common with what it pictures.*

2.161. *In the picture and the pictured there must be something identical in order that the one can be a picture of the other at all.*

2.17. *What the picture must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it after its manner – rightly or falsely – is its form of representation.*

2.171. *The picture can represent every reality whose form it has. The spatial picture, everything spatial, the coloured, everything coloured etc.*

2.172. *The picture, however, cannot represent its form of representation; it shows it forth.*

p.10 This is a book about the innumerable possibilities for combining Italian flavours. My recipes show you the many approaches you can take with the ingredients you are working with. I give examples to help you discover what herbs and vegetables go well together, how different cooking techniques vary the taste of the same ingredients, and how to substitute with seasonal produce or simply to use up something in the refrigerator.

3.324. *Thus there arise the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full).*

p.10 I also experiment with each key ingredient to show how much freedom you really have. For me the most interesting part of any cookbook is the options the author provides. After most recipes, I've added a section called 'Ideas' where I offer Italian regional variations and then suggest different directions in which you can take the dish. For example, a pasta sauce with tomato, shallots, and a touch of cream can easily be made piquant by omitting the shallots and cream and replacing them with garlic and green olives.

3.02. *What is thinkable is also possible.*

3.11. *We use the sensibly perceptible sign (sound or written sign, etc.) of the proposition as a projection of the possible state of affairs. The method of projection is the thinking of the sense of the proposition.*

4.031. *In the proposition a state of affairs is, as it were, put together for the sake of experiment.*

p.10 The wonderful thing about starting your culinary improvisation with pasta is that an extremely diverse range of ingredients can make their way into a pasta sauce and still retain Italian style. Looking through old Italian

cookbooks, I've come across sauces containing beets, dried apricots, cabbage, squid ink, sweetbreads, walnuts and even chocolate.

6.3432. We must not forget that the description of the world by mechanics is always quite general. There is, for example, never any mention of particular material points in it, but always only some points or other.

p.11 My love is for pasta in true Italian style, and I favour using ingredients most Italians would approve of, so you won't find cilantro, or miso paste here. Not that you can't make a great pasta dish using them; I just want to preserve the flavours and the feeling of real Italian cooking. My aim is to teach you how to use recipes creatively, but within the framework of the Italian flavour palate. My recipes can be taken as starting points, with many enticing variations suggested.

3.3421. A particular method of symbolising may be unimportant, but it is always important that this is a possible method of symbolising. And this happens as a rule in philosophy: The single thing proves over and over again to be unimportant, but the possibility of every single thing reveals something about the nature of the world.

p.11 As I show, Italian pasta sauces fall into two general categories: long-cooked and short-cooked. You can make a classic southern Italian sauce of calamari and tomato that is long-simmered, with a stewed mellow character, or you can use the same ingredients, quick-sauté the squid just until it turns opaque and tender, add chopped fresh tomatoes and herbs, and have it ready to eat in four minutes. The sauce will be bright and the squid tender. Same ingredients, two different tastes.

3.31. Every part of a proposition which characterises its sense I call an expression.

Expressions are everything – essential for the sense of the proposition – that propositions can have in common with one another.

3.311. An expression presupposes the forms of all propositions in which it can occur. It is the common characteristic mark of a class of propositions.

3.312. *It is therefore represented by the general form of the propositions which it characterises.*

And in this form the expression is constant and everything else is variable.

3.313. *An expression is thus presented by a variable whose values are the propositions which contain the expression.*

3.314. *An expression has meaning only in a proposition.*

p.11 Your memory will gradually become a resource you instinctively rely on to make such choices and improvise in the kitchen. The more you cook, the more olfactory memory you will acquire as well, enabling you to imagine beforehand what will result from a certain combination of ingredients or cooking techniques. Of course, there will always be surprises. I've been eating at a small Italian restaurant in my neighbourhood since it opened four years ago. I frequently order the same dish, which is listed as farfalle with squid and saffron, a combination or variation of which I often make at home. The restaurant's version tastes different, deeper. For ages, each time I ordered it, I tried to figure out what was special about it. The sauce is yellow from saffron. It contains white wine, probably a fish stock, and butter instead of the olive oil I invariably reach for when I cook squid. But there was something else in the sauce. One night I figured it out. The cook added rosemary with the saffron. An unusual combination. I would have thought a strong herb like rosemary would overpower the delicate saffron. But it didn't. It blended into a delicious rich taste. And the rosemary must have been added to the stock and strained out so no little green flecks appeared. That combination might never have occurred to me, but now I use it as a flavouring for seafood dishes – it works particularly well with shellfish. Even if you've cooked for many years, you'll always make discoveries, and those discoveries will stay with you. So don't be intimidated by lack of experience. It will make cooking all the more exciting.

3.1431. *The essential nature of the propositional sign becomes very clear when we imagine it made up of spatial objects (such as tables, chairs, books) instead of written signs. The mutual spatial position of these things then expresses the sense of the proposition.*

3.1432. *We must not say ‘The complex sign “aRb” says “a stands in relation R to b”’; but we must say, ‘That “a” stands in a certain relation to “b” says that “aRb”.*

4.014. *The gramophone record, the musical thought, the score, the waves of sound, all stand to one another in that pictorial internal relation, which holds between language and the world. To all of them the logical structure is common.*

4.0141. *In the fact that there is a general rule by which the musician is able to read the symphony out of the score, and that there is a rule by which one could reconstruct the symphony from the line on a gramophone record and from this again – by means of the first rule – construct the score, herein lies the internal similarity between these things which at first sight seem entirely different. And the rule is the law of projection which projects the symphony into the language of the musical score. It is the rule of translation of this language into the language of the gramophone record.*

6.362. *What can be described can happen too, and what is excluded by the law of causality cannot be described.*

p.11 I have always felt that the best cooks are those who have a naturally inquisitive palate. I’ve always had one. I remember as a child accepting a sandwich filled with bacon and cocktail olives from a kid down the street. I didn’t realise it was meant as a joke, and she laughed hysterically when I tasted it, but I actually thought it had potential. Constant tasting is extremely important for any cook. If you follow a recipe without tasting as you go along, you’re not really cooking, you’re just following orders. By tasting you learn how each addition to a dish changes it. Tasting while you cook is also a big part of the fun of cooking. You absorb a knowledge of what different foods are and what happens to them when they’re cooked. Before adding the tomatoes, taste the chopped leek you’ve just sautéed in olive oil as a base for your sauce. Maybe you’ll decide you don’t need the tomatoes, and dine on a dish of fettuccine with leeks.

3.262. *What does not get expressed in the sign is shown by its application. What the signs conceal, their application declares.*

6.36311. *That the sun will rise to-morrow is an hypothesis; and that means that we do not know whether it will rise.*

p.12 In the recipes in this book I give general amounts for all seasoning ingredients such as fresh herbs or capers, so you'll have some leeway. My hope is that I'll encourage you to think about what you are doing and participate more fully in the process. I do give fairly specific amounts for main ingredients, such as one large eggplant, two pounds of tomatoes, or half a pound of shrimp. This is to ensure that the quantity will come out to the desired serving size (all the recipes in this book are designed for four main-course pasta servings or six first-course servings, or for sauce for one pound of dried pasta).

2.12. *The picture is a model of reality*

2.11. *To the objects correspond in the picture the elements of the picture.*

2.131. *The elements of the picture stand, in the picture, for the objects.*

2.14. *The picture consists in the fact that its elements are combined with one another in a definite way.*

2.15. *That the elements of the picture are combined with one another in a definite way, represents that the things are so combined with one another. This connexion of the elements of the picture is called its structure, and the possibility of this structure is called the form of representation of the picture.*

2.151. *The form of representation is the possibility that the things are combined with one another as are the elements of the picture.*

2.1511. *Thus the picture is linked with reality; it reaches up to it.*

p.12 It's also important to study a recipe for guidance before you begin. Get a sense of what the cooking style and principles are. Will you be sautéing or baking or grilling. Or simmering something in liquid? When you really

start to become confident, try not bringing the book into the kitchen with you when you cook. You've got your ingredients, you know roughly the quantities you want to use, you understand the basic cooking method. Maybe you won't need to look at the recipe again. Maybe you'll want to take a look at it after you've finished, to see if what you did was what the recipe told you or if you went off and did something easier, better, or more suited to your own style. That is real liberation!

*6.54. My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognises them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it).
He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.*

p.12 The last thing you should worry about is making mistakes. Very few dishes are literally inedible, and unusual is almost always better than boring. In most cases what you consider a mistake your guests or family will find delicious. Don't tell them you screwed up the recipe; you'll just make them feel wrong to enjoy it.

It takes a while to train your nose to sniff out flavour. Marcella Hazan, the great cooking teacher and author, once wrote that she could smell the salt in food. I thought this was amazing and tried to do it myself. I couldn't. I still can't, although I can now tell whether or not pasta water has already been salted by smelling it. But I cannot smell a tomato sauce and make this same determination. Maybe someday.

*6.4311. Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through. If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present.
Our life is endless in the way that our visual field is without limit.*

p.12 I'm still learning. Cooking, after all, is a continuous process of discovery. Out of discovery will emerge your personal style and the real joy that

comes from pleasing your family and friends with your creations. Don't be afraid to grab a little freedom in your kitchen. You'll pick up techniques and learn while you cook. And there's nothing more inspiring than the flavours of Italy to serve as your well-seasoned guide.

(de Mane, 1999, pp.9-12).

~~6.52. We feel that even if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all. Of course there is then no question left, and just this is the answer~~

(Wittgenstein, 1981, pp.31-189).²⁴ Subcomandante Marcos:

. . . .apart from that, would be to come to power and install itself there as a revolutionary army. What would be a success for the politico-military organizations of the sixties or seventies which emerged with the national liberation movements would be a fiasco for us. We have seen that such victories proved in the end to be failures, or defeats, hidden behind the mask of success. That what always remained unresolved. . .

. . . .We went out into the world in the same way that we went out into literature. I think that this marked us. We didn't look out at the world through a news-wire, but through a novel, an essay, or a poem. That made us very different. That was the prism through which my parents wanted me to view the world, as others might choose the prism of the media, or a dark prism to stop you seeing what's happening.

Gabriel García Márquez and Richard Pombo:

p.71 It seems surprising that you speak in the name of minorities, when you could do so in the name of the poor or exploited of Mexico as a whole. Why do you do this?

Subcomandante Marcos:

. . . .to believe we can speak on behalf of those beyond ourselves is political masturbation. . .

²⁴ Unlike certain philosophers, I think that when you put something 'under erasure,' it means that it's wrong.

. . . .only represent the indigenous Zapatista communities of one region of the Mexican South-East has paid off. But our discourse has reached the ears of many more people than those we represent. This is the point we have reached. That's all. In the speeches we made in the course of our march to the capital. . .

. . . .we could not and should not try to lead the struggles we encountered on our journey. . .

. . . .We had to be honest and tell people that we had not come to lead anything of what might emerge. We came to release a demand, that could release others. But that's another story. . .

You could also think of **edible philosophy** as an attempt to construct some freeware ('a demand that could release others') of which genre recipes are prime examplesa novel, an essay, a poemI deliberately leave aside all issues of cultural appropriation and ownership, while also deliberately flagging them, for this is all about how to use someone else's culture and make it your own.

Don Quixote is always at my side, and as a rule I carry García Lorca's Romancero Gitano with me. Don Quixote is the best book of political theory, followed by Hamlet and Macbeth. There is no better way to understand the Mexican political system, in its tragic and comic aspects: Hamlet, Macbeth and Don Quixote. Better than any political columnist.

Or rather, I am citing authority the way Subcommandante Marcos does, when he describes how 'the Latin American boom' in literature helped inspire him and his fellow Zapatista revolutionaries to rise up and take six towns in Chiapas, in Southern Mexico, on New Years Day, 1994, the first day of the new North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA):

Next came Shakespeare. But the Latin American boom came first, then Cervantes, then García Lorca, and then came a phase of poetry. So in a way, you (looking at G. G. Marquez) are an accessory in all this.

(Subcommandante Marcos, 2001, pp.69-79).

This paper is dedicated to my Mum and Dad. I suggest you read it backward.

j) food for action

Foreign Cookbooks and the Case for a Positivist Postcolonial Studies

1.

Edward Said claims that the 'veracity of a written statement about the Orientrelies very little and cannot instrumentally depend on the Orient as such' (Said 1978, p.21).²⁵ If the 'Orient as such' cannot be represented by Western travellers and ethnographers, it is because, for Said, the attempt to translate foreign cultural practices into one's own language will always fail. You will only reiterate the codes, categories and prejudices of your own ethnicity. This claim seems simple enough, perhaps even irrefutable. Yet it has a curious corollary: the rigorous binding of culture to place. For if the 'Orient as such' is fundamentally intransmissible, where can it be located, if not there, on the ground, among 'the people'? That's why it's so interesting to see the approach cookery writers take to these matters. It's radically different to Said's. The presupposition of a text like Claudia Roden's A Book of Middle Eastern Food is not merely that you can

²⁵ Edward Said's Orientalism was first published in 1978. Taking as his subject 'the European idea of the Orient' (1978, p.16), Said famously diagnosed the way a set of European prejudices had crystallised, in both literary and scholarly writings, into a set of self-validating 'truths' about the 'nature' of Oriental society and psyche, its supposed 'despotism... splendour, cruelty and sensuality.' 'Almost from earliest times in Europe the Orient was something more than what was empirically known about it' (p.55). Indeed, the power of this 'imaginative geography' (p.49) was such that even twentieth century scholars in the field would find - in references to 'the Arab mind' for instance (Said 2000, p.105) - little more than confirmation of 'truths' that they already held. The paradoxical fact is that the more it was known, the more the region's 'actuality receded inexorably.' Not that Said wished to describe that actuality. As he later pointed out: 'I have explicitly avoided taking stands on such matters as the real, true or authentic Islamic or Arabic world' (p.349). For Said, this avoidance was more than merely tactical. His study of the overwhelming, and supposedly objective, discourse of Orientalism had lead him to see that, in language, 'there is no such thing as a delivered presence,' merely 'a *re-presence*, or representation' (Said 1978, p.21). Relying upon one's own 'institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding' much more than 'any such *real thing* as 'the Orient',

know another culture, but that you don't even have to be there to do so. You can recreate it in your own home. You don't even have to leave the house.

Mezze, or *hors d'oeuvre*, are 'one of the most delightful features of Middle Eastern food'; Indeed, 'they are almost a way of life' (Roden, 1985, pp.67-68). Roden proceeds to describe how you can make that way of life your own. She gives a recipe for it: 'In a large bowl, mix the rice with the tomatoes, onion or spring onions, parsley, mint, cinnamon, allspice and salt and pepper to taste.' (p.72) We are making *cold stuffed vine leaves*. Roden shares with Said a reservation against collapsing the multiple cultures of the region into one homogenous entity. So she gives an Iraqi variant (use spinach leaves instead of vine leaves), and an Iranian one (add 2 tablespoons chopped dill, and 90g seedless raisins). Cultural difference is a practical matter in such literature; they do things differently there; so you vary the recipe. Of course, not all cookbooks are so positivist. Elizabeth David, who intersperses her recipes with quotes from travel writers, regularly gestures towards the world of phenomena that cannot be transmitted from abroad. But her aim 'to bring a flavour of those blessed lands of sun and sea and olive trees into our English kitchens' is fundamentally the same as Roden's (1991, p.x). It is to transmit key features of a specific culinary environment to the at-home-reader, and to do so as authentically as possible.

The critique of Said's exclusive focus on the Western gaze is of course well known (eg Chun, 2001). Few Postcolonial theorists have, however, seriously questioned his critique of positivism, his refusal to allow that culture can be adequately represented. How could they? Postcolonial studies is almost by definition anti-positivist. This paper arose from a dissatisfaction with that state of affairs.²⁶ If I am the first critic to accuse Said of failing to include the recipe for

scholarly re-presentation was really little different to fictional representation in its indifference to the truth of the actual Orient (pp.21-22).

²⁶ And from my reading of the work of Jonathan Carter and Andrew Sartori, who have had a marked influence on my thinking of these matters. Thank you both. A debt also to Krystyna Pomorska, for this crystallising comment : 'the essential power of language, and consequently the

cold stuffed vine leaves in his purview of 'Western conceptions of the Orient,' it is because I believe that such recipes do indeed 'instrumentally depend on' the cultures from which they emanate. I am suggesting that we treat cookbook writers as cultural theorists in their own right, and take seriously their claims. To do so is to entertain a radically different understanding of the concept of representation, and, by extension, culture. Briefly put, I think the usage of these terms in contemporary Postcolonial Studies betrays their origin in literary studies and aesthetics, to the detriment of other ways of comprehending the form and transmission of human behaviour. It is a question of archive as much as anything. Said, and the majority of those who have followed and even seemed to critique him, have simply ignored technical literature like cookbooks, where the function of representation is less to provide a veridical statement about some supposed reality, or *thing-in-itself*, than to put in motion, and so replicate, a set of practices. After all, the recipes one finds in the works of writers like Roden go much further than typical ethnography in representing the Middle East. They allow for its effective recreation elsewhere. A recipe in Roden is more akin to a computer program, a chemical formula, or even a musical score, than a depiction. What is more, it's a Middle Eastern one.

These assertions will take some time to unpack. In the following section I will attempt to show that any cuisine is capable of codification - or rather, that it is in essence code, and so is amenable to transmission. This will take me through a series of reflections on the chemistry of cooking and its relation to whatever we mean by the word culture. I will proceed in the third part of the paper to address some recent academic analyses of recipes and cookbooks, to diagnose why we, in Postcolonial Studies, are so reluctant to allow that culture can be transmitted and, as such, known in places other than its place of origin. Needless to say these are large claims. They can be made even larger. For it is not merely the possibility of representing culture across space that is at issue. In including

privilege of the speaker, lies in the fact that language is capable of transporting us across both time and space' (Jakobson and Pomorska 1983, p.68).

recipes from al-Baghdadi's 1226 manuscript, Roden effectively transports a cuisine across time as well. Why not? When Ian Robertson, to cite one of my favourite cooks, offers us the recipe for *chicken in verjuice* from Bartolomeo Platina's De Honesta Voluptate et Valetudine, he is doing likewise - offering for our re-creation 'the way of life' that was Italian cuisine, in the ages prior to the New World introduction of tomatoes, maize and potatoes (1994, p.13).

But how is this possible?

2.

Most immediately it's a matter of chemistry. When Ken Hom introduces his Chinese Cookery with the claim that the 'recipes in this book were all tested with easily obtainable ingredients,' he is referring to the curiously Popperian requirement of repeatability that pertains to the recipe (2001, p.19). Anyone who has ever curdled their *tomato eggflower soup* will understand why (p.62). You need to set in motion a functionally identical set of chemical reactions to those enacted in Canton, where they make the soup, or it just won't work. Elizabeth David's A Book of Mediterranean Food is similarly peppered with words like 'discovery' and 'demonstration': 'A handful of the recipes in this book, learned when I lived in Alexandria, Cairo and Greece, demonstrate the cooking of the Near East' (1991, p.x). A kitchen demonstration is not dissimilar to a laboratory one. It hence occasions little surprise to read that Marcella Hazan, of The Classic Italian Cookbook, has doctorates in natural sciences and biology (1992, p.iii). Attitudinally, texts like these are more disposed to physical science and its realist outlook, than to cultural theory. Hence the necessity, evinced in all three, to ensure the provision of ingredients that will allow the correct chemical processes to occur. As Ken Hom puts it, 'if you want to cook authentic Chinese food there is ultimately no alternative but to track down a reliable source of the key ingredients' (2001, p.17).

Authenticity requires correct ingredients for its transmission, but - and this is interesting - it seems to bear no nostalgia for locally specific foodstuffs. An author like Hom is aware of the massive transplantation of domestic crops that has taken place over the last five hundred years ('the biggest human intervention in environmental history since the beginnings of species domestication' (Armesto, 2001, p.188)). After all, *tomato eggflower soup* relies on a product 'introduced into China less than 200 years ago,' probably by the Portuguese, who themselves received it from the Americas (Hom, 2001, p.62). As for contemporary globalisation, it has its advantages: 'one of the most positive and benign results' being that you can now find 'fresh ginger, bok choy and a limited spectrum of Chinese sauces and condiments' almost anywhere in Europe, America or Australia (p.15).

It is instructive to compare the status of a term like 'authenticity' in Postcolonial Studies. For Colin Graham, 'the paths of decline and difficulty on which authenticity depends,' predispose it to nostalgia (2001, p.61). Graham's work on Irish tourist advertisements seeks to show that the discourse of 'authenticity' is in fact far more canny than the standard deconstruction will allow. Yet he has little to say to those situations where 'authenticity' is given substantive, as opposed to simply rhetorical, power. Whereas for Hom, authenticity has nothing to do with rhetoric; it is a real measure of chemical and stylistic adequation; a measure of whether you have cooked the same food that they eat in Hong Kong, or not. Again, I think we should take such claims seriously, and see where they lead. For what is most interesting about Hom's positivist usage is that it implies - and this is decidedly not nostalgic - that cultural authenticity transcends the specifics of place. 'Hong Kong,' as he puts it in another context, 'is not only a geographic place, it is also a state of mind' (2001, p.8). It is hard to read 'decline and difficulty' into that statement, or for that matter, into its author's embrace of globalisation. I would suggest, contra Graham, that the real definition of nostalgia is the idea that culture is inseparable from place. Hom could not be

further from such a rhetoric of origins.²⁷ As for Said, Clifford (1986) and Spivak (1988), I'm not so sure.

In arguing that the discourse of authenticity in cookbooks applies less to place or provenance, than to the chemical properties of ingredients, I have sought to depict something of the real which cookbooks treat, and necessarily get right. This is not, however, to say that culinary transmission is simply a function of brute physical processes. The easiest way to disabuse oneself of such a notion is to turn to the virtual cookbook, a more common phenomenon than one might think. Let me introduce the virtual cookbook through a comment by Elaine Showalter, who writes, with clear distaste, of the growing intellectual interest in Food Studies. Citing a preference for an earlier generation of writers like Elizabeth David, Betty Fussell and M.K. Fisher, Showalter worries about whether 'the simple pleasures of cooking and eating' will survive their current intellectualisation: 'The next phase, perhaps, will be virtual or conceptual cuisine, where the food is not only deconstructed but imaginary' (Showalter 2002). This is funny, because one of the most intriguing things about the recipes M.K. Fisher scatters through her travel writings is that there is no need to cook them, for those recipes to have effect. Recipes function in her work 'like truffles, flavourful morsels that intensify the perfume of a pate of places and travels and experiences and people' (Taylor 1979, p.38). You sight-read them, just like musical scores.²⁸

But cookery writers have always been alive to the virtuality of what they transmit. Take Elizabeth David, another of Showalter's favourites. In her Book of

²⁷ Any cookbook writer must reject such a notion, if only from a knowledge of the history of ingredients themselves. After all, to take the Irish context, the potato itself is an import. As Armesto puts it, 'the staple of the Incas sustains Ireland.' (2001, p.187). Potatoes are about as Irish as Chinese tomatoes.

²⁸ Indeed, Fisher dates her beginnings as a cookery writer to a similarly virtual experience of her subject matter: 'A man next to me in the reading room kept leaving books about Elizabethan cookery, and so I started writing pieces about it for my husband. I wanted to amuse him. I think you must write toward somebody, toward a beloved object.' (Taylor 1992, p.38). How curious, that chemical formulae - 'not only deconstructed but imaginary' - can function as a lover's discourse.

Mediterranean Food, David insists upon correct ingredients and at times even furnishes addresses for their acquisition:

Dried fennel twigs from Provence, as also dried wild thyme on the stalk, and dried whole basil, can be bought from L. Roche, 14 Old Compton Street, London W1.

(David, 1991, p.64)

But such particulars should not lull one into thinking that A Book of Mediterranean Food was in any way a practical text. Published in 1950, at a time when the meat ration was 'a few ounces a week,' and the public diet confined to little more than beans and potatoes, most of the recipes in the book simply could not be cooked. David's inclusion of dishes like *Turkish stuffing for a whole roast sheep*, only heightened the 'spirit of defiance' in which the book was written, and by means of which it achieved its huge popularity (p.2; p.8). For the book's introductory aim ('I hope to give some idea of the lovely cookery of those regions') must be understood quite literally. David conveyed an 'idea' of these cuisines, a possibility for their intellectual re-creation, a formula that would serve - in the absence of the food itself - 'to bring a flavour of those blessed lands of sun and sea and olive trees into their English kitchens' (p.x). A formula for sight-reading.

Such virtual pleasures go even further to problematising the anti-positivism of contemporary Postcolonial studies. Even in the absence of actual ingredients you can transmit an 'idea of the lovely cooking . . . a flavour of those blessed lands.' What is more, that representation can then be activated years later, once the requisite ingredients are available. Such a transition from real to virtual to real only makes sense if you hold to a positivist theory of representation, only if you hold that it is indeed possible to give an adequate linguistic representation of the being of a cuisine. But how is this possible? How, given the way post-structuralism has served to undermine any claim to a transparent relationship

between the word and the world to which it refers, can one hold to such a position?

I want to answer this in two parts. The first step involves the assertion that any individual dish, in all its chemical particularity, and regardless of whether it has been inscribed in a cookbook or not, is already in itself a representation. What I mean by this is that the chemical compounds and physical practices that go to making up any dish are not merely the specific material of a cuisine, but also the sites for the enactment/inscription of a general set of social practices. Just as the commodity in Marxist theory is at once an empirical object, and at the same time a social inscription of the labour time that, on the average, and thus in the abstract, goes into producing it, so too, any empirically given culinary product is simultaneously inscribed with a generalised way of doing chemistry. That general way of doing, and its particular instantiations, together make up a cuisine. For it is as a form of writing, as code, that cuisine is transmitted both within, and beyond, its time and place of provenance. For it to be written down in recipe form presents no barriers to its transmission because it is already a form of writing. Jacques Derrida will, in like fashion, use the word 'writing' to describe behaviours like choreography, painting, sculpture, athletics, and even biology: 'All this to describe not only the system of notation secondarily connected with these activities but the essence and content of the activities themselves' (1976, p.9).

A cuisine is already a form of writing.

This is how I want to read Hom's claim that 'Hong Kong, is not only a geographic place, it is also a state of mind.' A 'state of mind,' in such a phrase, effectively means a *way of writing the real*. And a cuisine is just that. Whether we reflect upon the matter or not. The philosophical implications of such a stance are more than a little curious. For when Hom claims that 'the time and conditions are both propitious for the universal enjoyment of Chinese cookery,' this enjoyment, considered as the universalisation of a specifically Chinese 'state of mind,' or

way of writing, forms an intriguing riposte to Hegel's world-history (Hom, 2001, p.17). How would the Eurocentric trajectory of Absolute Knowledge as the writing of consciousness fare against this notion of writing as technique? For you could say that everywhere Chinese food is cooked, China is thought. Which would make modern European thinking rather more Chinese than is typically imagined, particularly for those who believe that Westerners can only access China by means of their own orientalist projections. You eat it.

But I'm not simply philosophising here. You find a similar understanding of culinary identity – as a general code, a form of writing - within the cookbooks themselves. This is most obvious when you see how cookery writers deal with variants and adaptations. Ken Hom's *cashew chicken*, for instance, uses cashews where 'the original Chinese version would have been made with peanuts' (p.130). Hom justifies the recipe's inclusion in a book of Chinese Cookery on the grounds that it 'uses the best Chinese cooking principles: velveting to seal in the juices of the chicken, and then stir-frying with spices to flavour it' (p.130). Of a Beijing recipe for *braised chicken with leeks*, Hom suggests using a Chinese clay pot, but adds that 'any heavy casserole will do' (p.134). The phrases 'any x will do' and 'makes a good substitute' are part of the vocabulary of such cookbooks (eg Roden, 1985, p.106). For the cookery writers know that the thing they are transmitting is as much a *way of doing* chemistry as any specific set of ingredients, utensils or chemical reactions.²⁹ A virtual reality.

²⁹ Indeed, contemporary philosophy often seems quite limited in comparison. Take Andrew Benjamin's assertion that abstraction involves 'the effacing of the particular's detail. Given both the distancing of location - the place of the abstract ideal is not the present - and the distancing of time - the abstract ideal is only present as a possible future - it is clear why any recourse to abstraction will have to involve the effacing of the everyday.' (2000, p.52). What is more, this effacing is of direct consequence to the thinking of authenticity: 'Defining that which is proper to human existence beyond the world of the everyday and necessitating the denigration of the ordinary, locates the reach of the authentic as beyond the fact of existence' (p.53). Benjamin will proceed to reject the very opposition between particular and abstract in favour of a thinking that tackles the simple present tense fact of 'having to exist.' Which is fine in its own way, and interesting : 'to begin to think is to recognise that thinking will have already begun. The fact of existence is already an insistent presence' (p.54). But the reason 'thinking will have already begun' is that any given thought is at once an immediate articulation and a general cultural pattern. Take the word 'everyday': it only means something in this sentence because of the practice of its usage within English generally, the history of its prior utterances and the future

They know that what they transmit is both virtual and real, because they find it in this form. A writer like Hom is simply giving an algebra for what is already - prior to all recipes and cookbooks - algebraic in form. I suggested above that all cookery writers are positivists, even those, like David, with slight misgivings. But that is perhaps the wrong way to put it. Positivism is a property of the cuisine as much as the author it is channelled through. For a dish, once in circulation³⁰, effectively says of any of its ingredients, be it a chicken, a few leeks or whatever: *any empirical instance of this ingredient, any such x, will do*. Which is why you can pluck it out of reality, put it into a cookbook, and then make it again, fifty years later. It is already a recipe.

The second step, in showing that cookbooks can serve to give an adequate representation of culinary reality, involves the question of repetition. For a dish may well be a recipe in itself, and so be amenable to re-presentation in recipe form, but this by no means guarantees an identity between the one instance and the other. Surely this is the point of post-structuralist semiotics: repetition necessarily entails difference. This is true, and nowhere is it more obvious than in the difference between food-as-recipe (the *tomato eggflower soup* I ate last night) and recipe-as-recipe (the virtual experience I had of that dish when first reading the recipe). Yet the same argument could apply each time a given dish is cooked. You could argue that each time you cook the same dish, you are actually cooking a different dish, that there is no such thing as culinary identity.

trajectory of its receipt on this page. You can't even speak without being split through by time and space; that is what *ex-sistence*, or standing outside, involves: the 'effacing of the everyday' *is* the everyday. And that is why it is susceptible to transmission. You only have to compare Claudia Roden to realise the comparative conservatism of Benjamin's view of the 'ordinary.' In her introduction to [A Book of Middle Eastern Food](#), Roden mentions her study of Al-Baghdahdi's 1226 [Kitab al-Tabikh](#), and the anonymous [Kitab al-Wusla](#) of 1261, adding that she included a few of the recipes from these manuscripts 'because they appealed to me, and I would like to be permitted to return them to the culinary repertoire of the Middle East.' (1985, p.17). For Roden, the 'everyday' is so code-oriented that you can actually program it to assume alien (in time, or space) cultural functions, which may become 'everyday' (again!) through this very process. That's positively cybernetic. And disturbing: for it opens up the possibility of appropriating what you read and putting it into practice.

³⁰ You could just as well read 'publication' for 'circulation' here. There's no reason why the word 'publication' (Latin *publicus*, the people) has to be confined to print-media, or for that matter, to print-literate societies.

But it would be truer to the usage of my cookbooks to claim that a dish has a general being, whose particular instances serve, at the limit, and in their very difference, to convey a functionally identical set of practices. This is what I was flagging above, in suggesting Postcolonial Studies shift from a literary / aesthetic view of representation-as-depiction, with its nostalgia for a being of culture ever outside of signification, to a technical view, which would focus on how a representation serves to put in motion, and thus replicate, a general set of practices.

I think this is the best way to understand Felipe Fernández Armesto's otherwise odd equation between cuisine and technology: 'Like other forms of technology, cuisine is easily imitated and transferred' (2001, p.135). Armesto is describing the fascinating influence, indeed dominance, of 'the culinary arts of Muslim courts' over the royal kitchens of medieval Europe, as can be seen from the cookery manuscripts of the latter. Armesto's usage of the word technology is fascinating because it collapses the apparent distinction between the social and the mechanical (not to mention the medieval and the modern). Both the social and the mechanical (and both, why not?, the medieval and the modern) consist (consisted) of the material instantiation and repetition of general practices. And both can be imitated and transferred. At this point I want to make a large claim. If a cuisine can be understood as a technology, and a recipe can be understood as a technology too, why should a culture be understood any differently? In asking this question I am pushing my usage of cookbooks as cultural theory to the extreme. And in the process I am seeking further to undermine the idea (an invisible assumption of much cultural theory, as I have been at pains to point out) that culture is intransmissibly anchored to any specific place. On the contrary, its generality - or repeatability - is its very being. As with any other way of writing the real.

3.

But why are we, in Postcolonial studies – and not simply Postcolonial studies, but Cultural Studies, and the other new humanities too, with the partial exception of Web Theory – why are we so reluctant to view culture as a technical phenomenon, ‘easily imitated and transferred’? *In essence*, imitated and transferred. Why is it so much more comfortable to think of culture as intransmissible, ever bound to particular peoples and places? I want, in this third section of my paper, to suggest some reasons for this impasse, before proceeding, in the fourth section, to hint at some ways beyond it.

There is perhaps no more vivid example of this reluctance than in academic writings on cookbooks. In seeking to show their ‘compilers saw themselves and projected their values’ through focusing on ‘the stories they contain, fragmentary as those stories might be,’ articles such as Anne Bower’s reading of North American community cookbooks show a marked reluctance to engage with the technical function of the recipes themselves (1997, p.138). For Bower, ‘a community cookbook is a subtle gap-ridden kind of artefact, that asks its reader (at least the reader who seeks more than recipes) to fill those gaps with social and culinary history.’ (p.140) Reading, in such an article, is a sort of rescue operation, aimed at a truth (of the past, of the present) ever out of view. Provided you ignore the recipes themselves. It is interesting to compare Roden in this respect, for she includes Middle Eastern tales, poems and descriptions of rituals in her cookbook, on the grounds that such peripheral discourse ‘will make the dishes more interesting and familiar by placing them in their natural and traditional setting’ (1985, p.18). These stories are - contra Bower - clearly of secondary importance to the recipes as agents of cultural transmission. Yet in as much as they serve to make the cuisine and its setting more ‘familiar’ their function is just as technical. One could, of course, seek to rescue a truth hidden in these texts of Roden’s, by treating them as evidence for the discursive productions of a certain (1960s, London, Jewish) diasporic consciousness. To my mind it is more interesting, once more, to take the author at her word, to see

where it will lead us. For Roden, her stories and poems have a technical function; they are means of re-creating, albeit virtually, key aspects of a Middle Eastern 'way of life.'

The implication is that poems and stories are themselves recipes. Mind, most of the academic writers I have read end up implying just this. In her 'Recipes for Reading,' Susan Leonardi critiques the updating of Irma Rombauer's The Joy of Cooking, and in the process shows a clear distaste for the unadorned recipe, that 'mere rule for cooking' (1989, p.340). Leonardi dislikes the way Rombauer's editors, influenced by 'the fifties penchant for science in the kitchen,' acted to eliminate the literary references and autobiographical chit-chat found in the initial 1930 publication (p.340). As Leonardi puts it, 'the shift away from recipe as highly embedded discourse akin to literary discourse moves the recipe away from its social context' (p.342). My argument problematises this claim, because it asserts that a recipe is in itself a social context. But Leonardi herself goes some way toward collapsing the opposition she asserts between the social and the technical. For she is intrigued by the notion that a narrative can, just like a recipe, be reproduced: 'folktales, ghost stories, jokes and recipes willingly undergo such repetition and revision' (p.344). Focussing on the giving and exchanging of recipes leads her to question whether a narrative might not itself function as 'a kind of recipe'; in the case of Nora Ephron's novel Heartburn, a recipe for 'how to survive a disastrous marriage' (p.346). If stories are hence understood as recipes, this lends a certain sense to Leonardi's critique of the pared-down fifties edition of The Joy of Cooking. For by reducing the peripheral text, the editors effectively reduced the number of recipes in the book.

But if Leonardi is effectively releasing poems, stories and novels from the unfortunate particularism of an overly Romanticist critical tradition, why does she need to *seem* to still subscribe to that tradition? This returns me to the question I have raised throughout this paper. Why are we so reluctant to allow that a culture can be transmitted and, as such, experienced outside its place of origin?

Doubtless because it implicates us. As Charles Saunders Peirce argued, the meaning of anything is simply the events it leads to (1992a). Under Peirce's definition³¹, the meaning of a book is not what it seems to say about the world, but what effects it has upon the world, which include what effects it has upon us. To think this way allows for a very different reading of Edward Said's Orientalism, the text with which I opened this paper. For Orientalism was, alongside Derrida's Of Grammatology, one of the most successful political interventions of late twentieth century scholarship. Whole disciplines were challenged to the core by it. As an example of intellectual politics, of disciplinary strategy, Said's book is hard to surpass. It may well be - if we take it this way, and I'm suggesting we do, and perhaps already have, even in spite of ourselves - it may well be that the prime meaning of that work is the recipe it gives for how to break in to an oppressive knowledge field and cause chaos there. For what I am calling a technical model of representation is equally a model for how one becomes influenced - ie. transformed - by other ways of writing the real. And that includes the ethical possibility of allowing oneself to be so influenced. In other words, it's also a theory of learning. And that's revolutionary.

Which is quite a scary possibility. It is instructive to read Lisa Heldke's comments on her restaurant and at-home travels through the cuisines of various cultures. 'When I went away to graduate school,' Heldke writes, 'I entered a world of experimental cooking and eating.' Yet something

made me feel uncomfortable about the easy acquisitiveness with which I approached a new kind of food, the tenacity with which I collected adventures. Was such collecting really such a benign recreation, like stamp collecting? . . . The unflattering name I chose for my activities was 'cultural food colonialism' which made me your basic coloniser . . . I found echoes of nineteenth and early-twentieth century European painters and explorers, who set out in search of ever 'newer,' ever more 'remote' cultures they could co-opt, borrow from freely and out of context, and use as raw materials for their own efforts at creation and discovery.

³¹ Which is also Spinoza's. See chapter one of Warren Montag's admirable Bodies, Masses, Power, Spinoza and his Contemporaries (1999).

(Heldke in Showalter, 2002).

It seems to me that the thing to render one anxious here is the possibility of learning, a far more traumatic process than one might think. Heldke's comments - a directly contrary view of the possibility of cultural transmission to that posed by Said - suggests that it is far more disturbing to imagine that culture can be transmitted than to think of it as an ever veiled *an-sich* of inarticulate place or being. Heldke thinks like a cook.

4.

Because she thinks through her *distaste*. Describing the late twentieth century diffusion of olive eating among non-Mediterraneans across the Atlantic, and into South Africa and Australia as well, Margaret Visser writes that 'human beings . . . are unique among omnivorous mammals in continuing to try eating foods they find repellent in the beginning' (1987, p.235). The olive is, after all, a hard taste to acquire, albeit a difficult one to relinquish once acquired. Mind the pip. In conclusion, I want to suggest that Postcolonial Studies take the anxieties Heldke evinces as its new point of departure.

We need to rethink just what it is to 'co-opt, borrow from freely and out of context,' and whether it is necessarily such a bad thing. Given that culture – the Middle Eastern cuisine Roden translates to us, Hom's Hong Kong, 'not only a geographic place' but also 'a state of mind,' Leonardi's recipes for surviving pain and loss, Said's critical strategy, Peirce's semiotic, itself derived from the medieval theologian Duns Scotus, who in turn had it from the Arabs, who translated it from the Greeks, all such forms of writing, from cuisine, choreography, painting, sculpture, athletics, biology and even philosophy, all such technologies, 'easily imitated and transferred' – given that culture is nothing but its own translation and transmission, the question of cultural appropriation

can never be far from the surface of a committed and realist cultural politics. Which is disturbing, not least because it can't be resolved. It can never be far from the surface because it is all about learning. And that's revolutionary. Or at least can be. And is precisely what Postcolonial Studies should be. I am suggesting, in sum, that we give back to the question of cultural appropriation its very status *as a question*.

Showalter cites Heldke so as to laugh at the supposed extremes of her intellectualising approach to food. I think she is to be commended, for being honest enough to make our 'cultural appropriation' anxieties manifest, however absurd they seem. It seems absurd to say you have stolen another's culture by recipe. And yet it fits within the logic of an intellectual culture which holds that to 'co-opt, borrow from freely and out of context' another culture is the same as colonialism (an intellectual culture simultaneously committed to a Saidian assertion of the impossibility of such borrowing; as always, the anxieties offer a good register of what the culture *effectively* believes; which is why, as I said, Heldke's honesty is to be commended). For I think it is fair to say that it is a widespread assumption, in the world of post-structuralist scholars, that cultural appropriation is akin to colonialism. I'm not discounting this possibility, on the contrary. I simply want to put my finger on the fact that few people ever unpack why. Or suggest that cultural appropriation might betoken other possibilities. Like communication. It is interesting, to mention another such possibility, to see Heldke associate 'creation and discovery' with this process. To say the least, this begs a question.

The following three comments are intended to show how Postcolonial Studies might, and in some ways already does, open up these questions.

By way of positivism.

4.1 And the example of Roberto Schwarz, a Brazilian literary scholar and Marxist theorist, whose insistence on the reality of cultural transmission grounds his articulation of the links between cultural appropriation and colonialism. By unpacking just how these things are linked, Schwarz frees some space for other ways of conceptualising the being, and even desirability, of cultural appropriation.

In an interview entitled 'Beware of Alien Ideologies,' Schwarz argues that

[a]nyone who deals with literary history – or to give another example, with the history of technology – cannot escape the idea of external influence, because these are areas in which the history of Brazil always appears as something backward, as a continual process of keeping up.

(Schwarz, 1992a, p.34)

Schwarz is responding to Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco, who had critiqued his earlier work on 'the importing of the novel to Brazil.' Franco, critical of the notion that European ideas had travelled to Brazil and colonised the local literary product, sought to reassert the particularity of Brazilian culture, on the grounds that 'ideas *are a social product*.' Schwarz does not deny this claim, 'but I still think that they travel' (p.34). His point, and the point of his famous 'Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination' (which travelled to the New Left Review in 1988) is that Brazil literally is backward. The 'artificial inauthentic and imitative nature of our cultural life' is a simple fact for Schwarz, one caused by 'forms of inequality so brutal that they lack the minimal reciprocity' necessary to foment a representative relationship between artist and populace (1992b, p.15). The distance of elite cultural producers from the social life of the majority of the population, itself a function of Brazil's skewed role in the global economy, necessarily inclines that elite to rely on foreign recipes, out-of-date ones at that. Brazil is literally backward. Commentators outside Brazil who have proceeded to use Schwarz's work have tended to focus on his corollary claim, the idea that such a 'morphology of underdevelopment' does, in exceptional cases, give birth to 'incredibly original' works among those rare artists who can stare this

predicament in the face, and make literature of the disparities it occasions (Moretti, 2001, pp.100-101). This Third World literature of *slippage*, if I can put it that way, has, of course, been widely celebrated. The reality of the imitative - and more than imitative, directly transmissional - processes which occasioned it tends to disappear in the process (eg. Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999). Because people don't really want to hear Schwarz's critique of the idea that culture is inseparable from place. Ideas travel. Nonetheless.

The political charge of Schwarz's analysis is predicated upon the thesis that culture is transmitted. Only, for him, the appropriation to worry about is *the reverse* to that which unsettles Heldke. It is the appropriation of European and North American culture by Brazil! He realises, again contra Heldke, that it is *you* who are colonised by the discourses you consume. And doubtless he seeks to colonise his First World readers in return, by publishing in the New Left Review. Well may he succeed. But however that may be, this belief in the reality of cultural transmission provides him with the leverage to crack open the economic forms which make Brazil so North American. One could say the same for Franco Moretti, whose complementary work on 'Planet Hollywood' I quoted in the paragraph above. For it is only by accepting that writing (not merely ideas, but forms of behaviour as well, culture in short) acts to give cultural forms *not merely* their slippages, *but also* their adequacy and internal consistency across time and space, that one can speak to the various forms of 'interdependence' in which we find ourselves. How else is one to explain the processes by which Brazil, and the rest of the world, becomes so North American? How else is one to see limits to those processes?

A bilingual, born in Vienna, early immigrant to Brazil, steeped in both Marx and Machado, Schwarz in fact appropriates the word 'interdependence' from Marshall Castello Branco. It was Branco who, shortly after Brazil's 1964 military coup, announced, in reference to his brutal regime's new and improved U.S. relation, that 'the era of independence was over and that of interdependence had begun'

(1992a, p.36). Schwarz's very borrowing serves to show, albeit in a minor key, that the act of appropriating from hegemonic discourses can also have a positive political valency. After all, if culture is its own appropriation, we have no choice but to borrow the very words we speak. But as such, we have a certain power to choose which; which discourses we will offer for the future's appropriation; and what spin we will put upon them. The cogency of such ways of thinking cultural appropriation will hopefully be apparent, and, what is more, useful. For that is why Schwarz writes. To be of use. Who does not? Keeping in mind that to be of use also means, for someone with a message to spread, to use us. (And that none of these attempts to manipulate the future are beyond a positivist praxis of writing. On the contrary, it is the critique of representation which cannot explain them. However much it avails itself of them).

4.2 I want to comment on the appropriative practices I have engaged within this very essay, before turning to the question of appropriating from indigenous cultures - for that, of course, is where the anxieties about appropriation are most pressing. Though I am suggesting, through this very way into the problem, that the blanket de-legitimation of cultural appropriation in the humanities often serves to mask other issues: foremost among them, an anxiety about creativity. This is where I imagine my essay will be of most use.

So, scholarship as cultural appropriation. Taking my lead from the cookbooks I use every day, I've sought to 'co-opt, borrow from freely, and out of context' the implicit philosophy of culture I detect within them. This, as I conceive it, is the task of a critical Cultural Studies, which I would formalise as follows: **(a)** to identify the ontological postulates implicit within a given cultural practice; **(b)** to put those postulates in the form of academic hypotheses; **(c)** to test those hypotheses against the received wisdoms of academic inquiry, so as **(d)** to see whether they inspire us to think differently.

eg: Cookery writers (or drag queens, ravers, junkies, poets, political activists, diplomats, or etc), in their actions, effectively think about reality as follows: *u, v, w* ; if we thought the way cooks act, our views on *slippage, global culture, ethnicity* would be as follows: *x, y, z*; when we compare those views with the ones we find in Hegel, Derrida, Schwarz, Clifford etc we find they have *more/ less/ an equally valid* explanatory power. Our research agenda changes accordingly . . .

In other words, it's an experimental science. Founded in a basic belief that: **(i)** ontologies are multiple; **(ii)** the academic is only one (albeit a multiple one) of them; and that **(iii)** translation is possible.

As will be readily apparent, such a science is predicated upon acts of cultural appropriation. To argue for its validity, and indeed creative power, let me simply tally up the results obtained in sections 1 to 3 above. This domestic science experiment has led me to read deconstruction backwards. I've claimed that Derrida is a positivist. It is precisely as slippage that culture transmits and maintains its identities. I've read Derrida this way, because it is how Roden, Hom, David would hypothetically read him. Such hypothetical philosophising has also led me to a reformulation of the question of globalisation, a form of 'interdependence' easily condensed, in political science, into a phantom of total Americanisation. As Jack Goody puts it, discussing globalisation:

It is a Western prejudice to view that process, like the establishment of a world system or modernisation or even capitalism in the broad sense ... as an adjunct of Western domination.

(Goody, 1998, pp.166-7)

Goody's article is entitled, revealingly, 'the Globalisation of Chinese food.' I've broached a similar phenomenon, by way of Ken Hom's Chinese Cookery. My work on Hom goes as far as to suggest that the spread of Chinese cooking techniques is as much an act of global writing (the spread of a 'state of mind'), as the spread of Hegelian philosophy, or for that matter Mickey Mouse. And this is to make mind a function of writing, rather than thinking *per se*, which ups the

ante on Hegel, and the best of his contemporary commentators (eg Nancy, 2002). Again, this is all the result of a cultural appropriation enacted upon the domestic science of cookery writing. I proceeded, still hypothesising, and now on to my third point, to suggest ways to wrest the notion of ethnicity away from its romanticist anchoring in people and place, and towards a presentation of it as technology, as technique. I did so because that's how my cookbooks, read out of context, would implicitly figure it. This could easily have slid into a critique of Heidegger too.³²

I'm arguing that cultural appropriations like these are ethically supportable. In fact, I think they constitute the single most desirable direction for a discipline like Cultural Studies to take. For, as I have tried to show through the above summary, they have the capacity to spark off all sorts of new ideas. I doubt many would argue with me here. By the same token, it's obvious that the argument doesn't end here. The question gets much hotter when we turn from Cultural Studies to Anthropology, the object of so much Postcolonial critique: is it ethically supportable to appropriate from indigenous cultures? Again, I leave this question in abeyance for the moment, to underline the fact that the reason I am taking the course I have in these last few pages, is that I'm trying to suggest that there is rather more to those anxieties than meets the eye. To this end, let me remind you of Gregory Ulmer, whose revolutionary reading of Derrida involved theorising creative practice as the experimental act of reframing old discourses

³² Perhaps via Poetics. After all, it is not only cookery writers who make available an identity between ethnicity and technology. A study of the high art of poetry, attuned to the thinking of poetry implicit in the statements and practices of poets themselves, would render similar results. Take Auden, who, in 'Making, Knowing and Judging,' writes of the poem as a 'verbal contraption' and reports that his first question of a new poem he reads is always a 'technical' one: 'how does it work?' (1975, p.50). The privileging, and even sacralising, of the figure of poetry within contemporary European philosophy would look pretty silly if viewed through the writings of actual poets. It's hard to find a more practical, pragmatic even, literature. This characteristic operates across ethnicities: Mayakovsky, for instance, in 'How are verses to be made?', put together what he called 'a study of the actual production processes' of poetry (1972, p.132). And then there is the fact that poets and artists, as McLuhan long ago noted, tend to be among the first to embrace new technologies and try them out (1964, p.61). How do philosophers manage to convince themselves otherwise? What have they got against technology anyway? As the gun lobby might say, it's the socially mediating function of labour within capitalism that's the problem, not the *iBook*.

through new genre, new media. And vice versa. That, according to Ulmer, is how you spark off the new: by co-opting, borrowing from freely and out of context. For creation is in fact a form of transmission.

I'm going to argue this by opening out some more of Schwarz's ideas. And I'm going to add (something both Ulmer and Schwarz omit to mention) that as well as being a form of transmission, creation is fraught with anxieties; that those anxieties are all about appropriation; and that they, like Heldke's, are thoroughly realistic ones.

What is literature? In 'Who can tell me this character is not Brazil?', Schwarz quotes Machado de Assis, the novelist who most succeeded, in Brazil's skewed nineteenth century cultural climate, to make literature. Schwarz quotes Machado's assertion that a literature 'should nourish itself on the subjects offered it by its own country.' Which sounds quite crude and nationalistic. Yet this requirement needs, Machado continues, to be understood in quite a complex fashion; the Scottish writer Masson, for instance, 'never said a word about thistles,' and yet 'there was an interior *Scottishness* in him, different and better than if it had merely been superficial.' (Machado, in Schwarz, 1992c, p.101). Schwarz quotes this passage to distinguish the national character of Machado's multiply-genred and dialectical work from the comparatively superficial Indianist novels of José de Alencar, his near contemporary. Now it needs to be said that the concept of national identity has, ever since Paz and the sixties generation who rejected his mythologising about national character, been subject to an unremitting deconstruction in Latin America (Bartra, 1992 being a prime example). Schwarz heads in the other direction. He returns to Machado's nineteenth century writings on national identity, and takes them seriously. He not only quotes Machado's national-literary criteria, but evaluates Machado's work in these very terms. Machado's excellence lay in the fact that he, like Masson for Scotland, transmitted a 'Brazilianess of this interior type.' He did so by capturing and recreating the morphological deformities of a culture that combined

European liberal and naturalist ideas with a slave economy. The ‘forms and formulae’ of Machado’s novels constituted ‘the literary transcription of real and decisive, though not obvious, aspects of the Brazilian historical process’ (1992c, p.106). National identity is not only real, it’s the object of the very best literary work (keeping in mind that for Schwarz, as for Machado, national identity means international ‘interdependence’ as much as anything else).

In Schwarz’s argument, Machado is so much the better novelist than Alencar, because he is so much more *transparent* to the reality of ‘the Brazilian historical processes.’ Of course, reality is a rather complex figure here. Machado’s work is a ‘transcription’ of ‘real and decisivehistorical processes,’ because it captures not the singular events, but rather the ‘forms and formulae’ of them. This accords well with Wittgenstein’s picture theory of meaning:

Proposition 2.17. What the picture must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it after its manner – rightly or falsely – is its form of representation.

(Wittgenstein, 1981, p.41)

This is the same as saying that Brazilian social reality, like Brazilian cuisine, is already algebraic in form; it’s already a logic. As a mode of writing (not merely ideas, but forms of behaviour as well, culture in short), social reality is already a ‘transcription.’ In Machado’s work one finds it posited on the page, rather like the recipes I discussed in section two above. Which were no more ideal in form than the cuisine itself.

Turning from the ontological presuppositions of this sort of argument (Schwarz’s, Wittgenstein’s, mine) to the ‘what is an author’ question it begs, one is compelled to say that an author is someone with no imagination at all. For we are worlds away from any notion of art as made-up, as fiction. Machado is so much the better artist than Alencar because he transcribes the ‘logical singularity’ of nineteenth century Brazil (Schwarz 1992c, p.106). If you read ‘logical singularity’

for ethnicity here I think you can see the power of the sort of Marxist analysis Schwarz performs here. At last! a Marxist theory that actually has something to say about ethnicity (by finding something to say about aesthetics). It is Brazilian historical processes which authors Machado's works. His role, and his genius – something way beyond an Alencar - is to be open to them. This leaves us with a positivist portrait of the artist as transmitter of the most secret, powerful and conflicted social logics. And this is as much as to say that creative discourse achieves, or at least aspires to achieve, precisely what post-structuralist semiotics claims to be impossible: the fomenting of a language *transparent* to social reality!

Which is of course the scientist's ethic as well. The fact that the ethical, and even ontological, drives of literature and science are so convergent perhaps helps explain the extraordinary fact that Schwarz's books of Marxist literary criticism actually reach the bestseller lists in Brazil. But ethical is a curious word here. For in as much as one is transparent to social processes, one is appropriating them as well. And this is the real point: art is all about theft. Any artist has to get over - for art is nothing if not an ethical posture, a stance on being - the fact that he or she is stealing what they say from someone else. *Je ne cherchais*, as Picasso used to say, *je trouve*; I discover, whether as artist or scientist, by taking the words and images out of people's mouths, ripping them 'out of context' and doing so with the same 'easy acquisitiveness' with which one explores and appropriates, by cookbook, foreign cuisines. This is what Heldke helps us to see. 'Ethnographic guilt' is just as much guilt about the possibility of turning into an artist, a far more traumatic process than one might think. Because it's all about learning. Taking on board. Which is another word for theft.

4.3 When these comments, on what it is to 'co-opt, borrow from freely and out of context' a culture, are turned to the terrain of traditional anthropological researches, that is, when the culture researched is palpably less powerful, the

questions get much more complex and contentious. Obviously there are all sorts of ethical dimensions, and sheer injustices, to claims to speak for others, whether in parliamentary or intellectual arenas. And words have tremendous power, something Postcolonial Studies has always been quick to assert, at least when considering their deleterious consequences (but they liberate as well; if we, as teachers, don't believe that – as in, if we don't act as if we believe it - then we have no right to teach). Much of the debates in the eighties and early nineties concerned the limits, and in some cases, the impossibility of really articulating the limits, to such practices of speaking for others. I have no answers.

What I have tried to do instead, in this fourth section of my paper, as a way of reopening the question of cultural appropriation and combating the apoliticism of its currently condemned state, is to point out the difference between **a)** claiming to speak *for* a given culture, your own, or that of others, and **b)** allowing that culture to speak *through* you. It's an important distinction, because it opens up the possibility for politically effective - and by the same token creative (Machado), and even scientific (Schwarz) - acts.

Though act is a curious word here. To speak *for* a culture is a voluntary act (often a usurpation, occasionally a gift). To have it speak through you can be. Certainly the latter is the aim of Spinoza's ethics, and of much creative and scientific practice too. But it happens regardless. For we are spoken through at every moment, everywhere and endlessly, by the positivity of writing itself. I return to Goody's point about the globalisation of Chinese cuisine. Can we - as self-styled Westerners - be so sure that we do dominate the world with our words? Or if we don't speak as Westerners, can we be so sure that our words don't have a power way beyond what's typically attributed them? Who's to say that the whites in Australia are not spoken through by Aboriginal ways of writing the real, just as they are spoken through by European, Asian, American ways? In their acts, as much as their words. Can we be so sure that indigenous ways of writing don't co-opt, borrow freely and out of context those white bodies so as to

speaking their own logical singularities through them? I don't know. As I said, I'm just trying to open a question. What I would say is that the extraordinary indigenous gallery at the centre of the new Ian Potter gallery at Federation Square in Melbourne, the new centre of the city itself, I would say that that gallery is an attempt at just such an interpellation.

If it has that effect - of appropriating the rest of us, and I hope the same for Schwarz's discourse - it will constitute a very powerful political act indeed.

[*quoted from:* a) Clark, p.131; Litvinov in Clark, p.119; Clark, p.135; Clark, p.138; Lenin, in Clark, p.29; b) Clark, p.135; Stepan in Clark, p.223; Clark and Krupskaya in Clark, p.136; Clark, p.23; c) Krupskaya in Clark, p.114; Lenin to Inessa, in Clark, p.156; Clark, p.135; Clark, p.72; Liberman in Clark, p.321; d) Clark, p.248; Clark + Fotiyeva in Clark, p.106; Clark, p.243; Krupskaya in Clark, p.76; Clark, p.193; Clark, 357; Clark, p.68; e) Krupskaya in Clark, p.176; Gorky in Clark, p.135; Clark, p.37; Clark pp.120-21; Clark, p.172; Fotiyeva in Clark, p.357; Krupskaya in Clark, p.330; ; Clark, p.356; Clark pp.93-4]

Leninheads

[*quoted from:* f) Stalin in Clark, Clark,pp.110-11; Krupskaya in Clark, p.53; Paleologue in Clark, 224; Krupskaya in Clark, p.140;; Krzhizhanovsky,in Clark, p.49; g) Lenin in Clark, p.60; Clark, p.134; Clark + Lenin in Clark, p.139; McNeal in Clark, p.33; Clark, p.357; h) Clark, p.130; Krupskaya in Clark, p.146; Clark and Krupskaya in Clark, pp.170-1; Israel, in Clark, p.133; Erenburg in Clark, p.132; Clark, p.175; Lenin in Clark, p.149; [Krupskaya, in Clark + Clark, p.102; Clark, p.355; Clark, p.28; Krupskaya in Clark, p.51; j) Krupskayya, in Clark and Clark, p.133; Krupskaya in Clark, p.126; Lenin in Clark, p.86; Krupskaya in Clark, p.130; Clark, p.307; Lenin in Clark, p.320; Clark, p.356; Krupskayya in Clark, p.175; Krupskaya, in Clark, p.31; p.l) Clark, p.45; Clark, p.252; Zetkin in Clark, p.424]

f - lenin the psychotic (ЛЕНИН Психопат)

'I had hoped to see the mountain eagle of our party, the great man, great physically as well as politically. I had fancied ЛЕНИН as a giant, stately and imposing. How great was my disappointment to see a most ordinary-looking man, below average height, in no way, literally in no way, distinguishable from ordinary mortalsUsually a great man comes late to a meeting so that his appearance may be awaited with bated breath. Then, just before the great man enters, the warning goes round: "Hushsilencehe is coming." The rite did not seem to me superfluous, because it created an impression and inspired respect. How great was my disappointment to see that ЛЕНИН had arrived at the conference before the other delegates were there and had settled himself somewhere in a corner and was unassumingly carrying on a conversation, a most ordinary conversation, with the most ordinary delegates. I will not conceal from you that at that time this seemed to me to be rather a violation of certain essential rules.'

The description reveals a good deal not only about Stalin, who had by this time adopted the name Koba, the romantic Caucasian outlaw and hero of the Georgian writer A. Kazbegi's *The Patricide* (1882), but about . . .

*

'At first, [Krupskaya told his mother] Volodya announced that he did not know how to gather mushrooms and did not like it, but now you cannot drag him out of the forest, he gets real "mushroom fever."'

*

‘ЛЕНИН, utopian dreamer and fanatic, prophet and metaphysician, blind to any idea of the impossible or the absurd, a stranger to all feelings of justice or mercy, violent, Machiavellian and crazy with vanity, places at the service of his messianic visions a strong unemotional will, pitiless logic, and amazing powers of persuasion and commandWhen anyone attacks his crude fancies with some argument drawn from the realm of reality, he replies with the gorgeous phrase: "So much the worse for reality!"'

*

'He does his work out in the open, rides his bicycle a lot, goes bathing and is altogether pleased with country life. This week we have been cycling our heads off. We made three excursions of 70-75 kilometres each, and have explored three forests - it was fine. Volodya is extremely fond of excursions that begin at six or seven in the morning and last until late at night.'

*

'We did receive newspapers, but, of course, with a great delay, and in sizeable batches. But Vladimir Ilyich very astutely devised a means of reading them in a systematic manner: he arranged them in such a way that he read one issue a day, taking into consideration the overall delay. This arrangement made him feel that he received the papers regularly, daily, though somewhat late. Whenever I tried to upset this order and maliciously picked out and read aloud news from subsequent issues, he blocked his ears and vehemently defended the advantages of his method.'

g - lenin the chief psychiatrist (Ленин Главный Психиатр)

Ленин subsequently wrote: 'Had we not felt such love (for Plekhanov), had we behaved toward him in a more circumspect manner, we would not have experienced such a crushing comedown, such a spiritual cold shower – This was most severe, an injuriously severe, injuriously harsh lesson. Two young comrades “courted” an elder comrade because of their great love for him, and, all of a sudden, he injects into this love an atmosphere of intrigue, and makes them feel – not like younger brothers – but like idiots who are being led around by the nose, like pawns that can be moved around with impunity, like ineffectual careerists who must be cowed and quashed. And the enamoured youth receives a bitter lesson from the object of his love: to regard all persons without “sentimentality,” to keep a stone in his slingBlinded by love, we had actually behaved like slaves.'

*

To his mother Ленин wrote: 'We are having a good holiday hereOur rooms here are good, and the board is good and not expensive,' while to Zinoviev he said that after three weeks he was 'beginning to come round.' It seems they lived in comparative luxury and were brought coffee every morning by a young girl who forty years later remembered Ленин as '*le monsieur russe, si poli, si gentil, qui apprenait à une petite fille à monter à bicyclette.*'

*

Ленин was attracted to Inessa not only personally but by her love of Beethoven which he shared - without being able to emulate her at the piano - and by the

similarity of her interpretations of Marx to his own. It is impossible to quantify her non-political influence on him, but after her arrival in Paris ЛЕНИН 's interest in the arts seems to have increased and he addressed a significant remark to his sister Maria in a letter of mid-January 1910: 'I have begun to pay more attention to the theatre; I have seen Bourget's new play La Barricade. Reactionary, but interesting.'

*

Had she been a princess, involved in stylishly shocking escapades writers probably would not have called her a rare beauty, but they might have referred to her arched eyebrows, fine, high cheekbones and firm jaw – all conveying a sense of feminine challenge. They might have mentioned her slightly over-full lips, presuming them sensuous, and her intense eyes . . .

* *post revolution*

Life and food was unpretentious and Angelica Balbanov later remarked [...] Her description of tea fits those of other visitors - most of whom called to discuss the best way of running Russia or the party and the problems which constantly beset both. The usual menu was black bread, butter and cheese, tea, and possibly a jar of something special for the guest.

h - lenin the librarian (ЛЕНИН библиотекарь)

From mid-May to mid-June he worked in the British Museum. ЛЕНИН made few visits to London without finding a reason for visiting the Reading Room [now the

British Library Reading Room] where, according to the actor Miles Malleon, he was long remembered, although not by his famous name but as Mr Ulyanov. Malleon asked an elderly member of the staff whether he remembered Ленин reading there. When this brought no response, he suggested that he might have worked under his real name of Ulyanov. 'Of course, I remember Mr Uliyanov,' he was told, 'a very charming gentleman, short, with a pointed beard. I remember him very well. Can you tell me, sir, what became of him?'

*

'What we're starved of here is *belles-lettres*. Volodya has learnt Nadson and Nekrasov almost by heart, our single copy of Anna Karenina is being read for the hundredth time. We left our *belles-lettres* (an insignificant part of what we had in Petersburg) in Paris [. . .] Volodya has for some reason, as if deliberately, become a great belles-lettrist.'

*

In the afternoon he would lead a party up the slopes of the Rothorn, returning in the evening with bouquets of rhododendrons and baskets of mushrooms. At Sörenberg, Ленин carried on his work with benefit of both scenery and library facilities, as Krupskaya later explained. 'We were quite comfortable,' she wrote, 'all around there were woods, high mountains and there was even snow on the peak of the Rothorn. Mail arrived with Swiss punctuality. We discovered that in such an out-of-the-way village as Sörenberg it was possible to obtain free of charge any book from the Berne or Zurich libraries' [. . .] In Berne, before leaving the city in 1916, he copied into his notebook the titles of a number of books he was apparently preparing to borrow. They included ten volumes on aesthetics, five volumes of Ruskin's Modern Painters (1834-60), a book on impressionism, and collections of Goethe, Victor Hugo, Dante, Byron, Schiller, Ibsen, Lessing, Daudet and Shakespeare.

*

‘No, comrade ЛЕНИН. I am not naive enough to hope to modify your ideas or to convince you. Moreover, on this issue, I share the advice of Count Pierre Bezuhov, the character in War and Peace who says that each man has his opinion, and who does not believe in the power of words to convince another person. And, I might add, especially to convince someone like you.’

*

‘I was struck by the order in the flat,’ says Ilya Erenburg, about to embark upon a distinguished literary career. ‘The books stood on shelves, ЛЕНИН's desk was tidy; it wasn't like the rooms of my Moscow friends.’

*

ЛЕНИН liked the nearby Zurichsee very much, and the libraries were better than those in Berne, he told his mother, so they would probably stay longer than they had intended. He quickly settled down to a regular routine, visiting the library as soon as it opened, reading there until lunchtime, then returning and working again until it closed. On Thursdays when it was open only in the morning he and Krupskaya would take a snack of nut chocolate, walk up the Zurichberg, which rose above the Zurichsee, find what she called their favourite spot in the thick woods where there was no crowd, and lie reading till it was time to go home. It was in his new quarters that ЛЕНИН completed his main work on political economy, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline.

*

‘The weather here [Cracow] is delightful and I frequently go cycling. No matter how provincial and barbarous this town of ours may be, by and large I am better off here than I was in Paris [. . .] Paris is an inconvenient place to work in, the Bibliothèque National is badly organised - we often thought of Geneva, where work went better, the library was convenient and life was less nerve-racking and time-wasting. Of all the places I have been in my wanderings I would select London or Geneva, if those two places were not so far away.’

*

‘Vladimir Ilyich and I were on our way to the library and met the Lunacharskys, who were on their way to us’ Krupskaya later said. ‘Lunacharsky's wife . . . was so excited she could not speak . . . we went . . . to the Lepeshinsky's emigrant restaurant. We wanted to be together. The people gathered there hardly spoke a word to one another, they were so excited.’ Like most other Russians living abroad, ЛЕНИН believed the massacre would spark off revolution. Indeed, during the next few days he spent some time in the Geneva library brushing up his knowledge of the military tactics he thought would soon be valuable.

* *post-revolution*

A small green-shaded electric lamp stood on his desk before which was drawn up a plain wooden chair with wicker seat and back. The rest of the furniture consisted of a chair for visitors, bookshelves and two revolving bookcases, which he had designed himself and which he called his whirligigs and which, with the shelves, held about 2,000 volumes.

*

‘They would drink tea, or milk brought up in a big pitcher from the cellar. Often they would sing, ЛЕНИН being the soloist and enjoying especially “You Have

Charming Little Eyes.” During this period, although Ленин read any revolutionary literature on which he could lay his hands, he kept up with his law books – ‘On the assumption that I might soon be permitted to return to the university, I read my university textbooks,’ he later wrote – but also read a great deal of fiction, and became an admirer of the poet N.V. Nekrasov. ‘What is more,’ he wrote, ‘my sister [Anna] and I used to compete to see who could learn the greater number of Nekrasov’s poems by heart.’

*

‘We were newlyweds, you know,’ she wrote, ‘and brought beauty to this exile. If I did not write about this in my memoirs, that does not mean that there was neither poetry nor youthful passion in our life.’

j - lenin the cook (Ленин Шеф-поварь)

‘Volodya has even learned to help himself from the larder and eats out of turn, ie., not at the proper times. Whenever he comes in, he starts eating. Now he drinks milk before going to bed (instead of wine) and eats eggs in the mornings. Ленин himself once revealed that the parcels from Russia included fish, caviar and smoked sturgeon fillets. ‘We are greatly enjoying these dainties and thinking of the Volga as we eat them,’ he told his mother. During his first months in the city, as he carried on with his Party work, constantly lecturing and writing, he had anxiously awaited publication of Materialism and Empirio-criticism.

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‘Vladimir Ilyich was registered as a Finnish cook and I as an American citizen.’

* *post-revolution*

His own conduct, the veering and prevarication as Schapiro saw it, was once simply explained by Lenin when he had gained power: ‘For me, theory is only a hypothesis, not the Holy Scripture; it is a tool in our daily work.’

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‘There was a big crowd at Gorki's place, much noise and bustle. Many played chess, others went boating. Ilyich said very little about this trip. He spoke mainly about the beauty of the scene and the quality of the local wine.’

* *post-revolution*

This majority quickly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples which the Constituent Assembly had rejected and which now became the first variant of the Soviet Constitution. And it was to this assembly that Ленин proudly announced on 11 January that Soviet power had been established for two months and fifteen days, five days longer than the Paris Commune had existed in 1871.

[. . .]

‘Now about these decrees, don't forget that we are in the midst of a revolution. Our government may not last long, but these decrees will be part of history. Future revolutionaries will learn from them – perhaps from these very decrees of Larin's which now seem so absurd from you. We ourselves keep the decrees of the Paris Commune before our eyes as a model.’

* *post-revolution*

And on the desk there was usually a mother-of-pearl paper-knife. He would never have cut flowers in the room but was fond of a large tubbed palm which he looked after himself.

*

‘Ilyich liked the simplicity of the service, the fact that coffee was served in a cup with a broken handle, that we ate in the kitchen, that the conversation was simple.’

*

‘ . . . after reading volume 1 of Marx’s Das Kapital that “The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated”, she wrote that her ‘heart beat so fast that it could be heard.’

I – (я ЛЕНИН) Lenin the I

* *revolution*

A few days later ЛЕНИН began his journey into exile, travelling under unusual conditions since, at his mother’ request, he was permitted to break his journey in Moscow. And before leaving St Petersburg he wrote to Krupskaya telling her – in a letter partly written in invisible ink – that he wished to marry her.

* *revolution*

The nub of the letter, read at a meeting of the Committee, stated: 'We should at once begin to plan the practical details of a second revolution.' The proposal astounded the members who ordered that all copies of the letter should be destroyed and it was purely by accident that a single copy was preserved.

* *revolution*

At this point I (a book) leapt out the in window

* *revolution*

As Ленин spoke, Zetkin has written, 'his face shrunk before my eyes. Furrows, great and small, innumerable, engraved themselves deeply on it. And every furrow was drawn by a grave trouble or a gnawing pain. An expression of unspoken and unspeakable suffering was on his face.'