

## **To Love—To Live**

### **Barrow and Cart**

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—PROLOGUE

From the residue of meaning, an ensemble of shadows. From the glint of souvenir, pliable impressions. With these words we work a poetics of encounter, of being, keeping, homage, of paying homage to fragility, to object and to interspecies—ways are found to engage motion from within and around co-extensive bodies. With the consolation of images, we follow the terse rhythms of routine and street where dwelling is a case of affective dissent. Zones of departure appear through testimony as well as chance, taking their own form. A footfall brings us as observers into quiet spaces which refuse self-estrangement as we travel by way of an unquiet ground. Breath, respiration, aspiration. Precipitation. Sculptures of mist are also the language of lives, of kinship between object, footfall and air. A language of brackets,

questions, ellipses, of two voices and more. There may be a man, a dog, a barrow. There may be a woman, a trolley, a cart. Wheel barrow. Shopping cart. Air. How shall this image be made?



—WHAT IS WRITTEN

Apace, you and I moving in same and other directions. You with weight, and I...

‘... summoned by the void ... sustained by the indiscernible truth, we who are finite fragments ... so here and now, already and forever’.<sup>1</sup>

But oh so not written, a passing by, asymmetrical. Three hearts, beating. Four hearts, five. And still more.

—WHAT IS SPOKEN

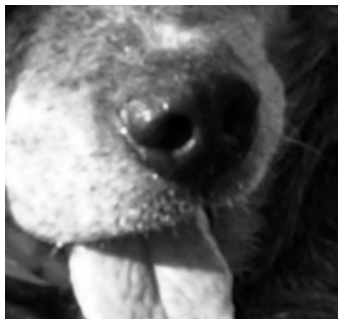
This is, perhaps, a poetics in the arts of affect and image, place, trace, memory, interspecies. To live as academic, among ...

Tentative beginnings; looking for home.

We could be asking ‘What place poetics as cultural theory?’ ‘What place the ephemera of the kind that doesn’t become the work of the academic but drifts ... yet has its own palpable presence, albeit fleetingly so?’

The piece works in conjunction with Carole Maso’s novel *Ava*, published in 1993 (Maso is also the author of the novels *Ghost Dance* and *The Art Lover* and the collected essays, *Break Every Rule*).<sup>2</sup> *Ava* is a novel of traces: ‘Ava Klein, 39, lover of life, world traveller, professor of comparative literature, is dying. From her hospital bed on this, her last day on earth, she makes one final ecstatic voyage ... People, places, offhand memories, and imaginary things drift in and out of ... consciousness and weave their way ...’.<sup>3</sup>

Hers is a writing of people, places, chance and caught memories. Things that drift. Things that stay.



The dust jacket of *Ava* notes that Maso's writing dwells in '... fragments ... combined to make a new kind of wholeness, allowing environments, states of mind, and rhythms not ordinarily associated with fiction to emerge'.<sup>4</sup>

Rhythms not ordinarily associated with academic writing and its cordoned, published, practices of emergence.

We animate environment, states of mind and rhythms not ordinarily encountered, committed, ranked, in our work and theory lives. Perhaps unsayable accounts, the all too often left unsaid, the necessarily left unsaid.

We too are interested in the,  
'poignancy of mortality, the extraordinary desire to live, the inevitability of time passing and death—the things never done, never understood, things never said, or said right, or said enough'.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps like yearning is possibility and desire for bell hooks,<sup>6</sup> perhaps like cinders are entirety of industry, deed and archive for Jacques Derrida as man, and as man and his work.<sup>7</sup>



—FOLDS



This writing arises from routine encounter: living at Semaphore, a coastal suburb, in Adelaide, a 'regional city', that has always been an admixture of portsides ... a place of transitory populations, migrancy, shipping, land still held by Kurna peoples ... It is also the concentration of 'de-institutionalisation'. There, here, are 'doss houses', 'supported accommodation' as care, 'boarding houses' ... It means that the main street, and especially the streets with houses like 'Sunnydale Lodge' and 'Palm Lodge', are streets where people spill too early in the morning from regulated sleep and eating times—a spillage that can become coincidental routines that are a very tangible living-in-compound ways that often entail a hospitality unseen or unlived elsewhere. There, here, becomes a looking out for people.

Across this milieu are two people: one is known as Bill. Or Billy. Or William.

Bill has an aging dog (that is 'overweight'), and I see Bill pushing a wheelbarrow with his dog in it. I see him in the streets, on the grass foreshore, on the actual beach. I see the dog in and out of the barrow (I used to see Bill with just his dog on a leash and at times off leash). I have seen Bill down the Port pushing his dog some kilometres from home (going shopping), and I have seen him many, many





miles from home—later to find that he is about eight miles from there—he pushes ‘Champ’, his dog, to the vet and home again.

The other person is Lydia. She lives in a closed, relatively new, care facility. In American terms, she is a ‘bag lady’. She has a shopping trolley filled with plastic bags tied tightly into bundles. She always wears an overcoat. She speaks little English. The ‘hostel’ has brought her into care—she sleeps outside. She sleeps with her trolley—her trolley is her sleeping company, her sleeping companion. Lydia spends a great deal of her time away from the other people who have been gathered, from here and there, from this place and that, to live at the hostel.

I take my dogs to visit someone in this place. One day, Lydia was close to where I passed and I said hello to her. My dogs were with me and she asked if she could ‘pat the puppy’. I don’t see her every time I go as she is often away with her trolley ...

But, it is in dog, barrow, trolley or cart, the hand that holds, pushes, arranges, lifts, connects and makes home, that captures my attention and imagination—it is the ‘what I see’ and what I don’t know about what I observe.

I rarely ask questions and while I know someone who grew up with Bill, and I could ask the people who care for Lydia about her, it seems intrusive. It is also that *I don’t need to know*; it’s not what I am interested in.

What I am interested in is pursuing a ‘kinship of the abnormal’,<sup>8</sup> the frayed tendrils that float, that soar and hang on a breeze, that reach and connect in slight and flimsy ways, it is the hare’s breath of inhaling the same air that matters, as much as the ‘haptics’ of encounter matter;<sup>9</sup> matter, connect, and variously subside.



This piece is itself a fragment, comprised of fragments, connected to the 'who' in a visual homeland and a visual landscape.

It is a collaborative bringing together of fragment, art, interspecies, terrain and encounter.



How to read this piece, if we may: as a prelude; a 'fugue form'; a change of voice at the change of writing; a tentative affect 'released from the prisons of syntax'; an interspecies 'novel of Thank You'; 'Rupture, Verge, and Precipice'.<sup>10</sup>

... a dedication ...

There is no meaning if meaning is not shared, and not because there would be an ultimate or first signification that all beings have in common, *but because meaning is itself the sharing of Being*.<sup>11</sup>

The texts [for this writing] are closer in character to the direct address and sentiment of ballads, lullabies, apostrophes, soap-box oratory and other oral discourses than they are to any kind of authoritative public announcement.<sup>12</sup>

*Part 1: Drawn by the sun*

The act of starting can have many variations; from longing to disorder to refusal, where one wishes one could, is caught in that paradox, then abandons the attempt. What I mean is that in coming to the screen for the purpose of writing I have created an order that understands the pause. Like a voice that arrests at the sight of a comma, the screen summons nothing but a lull. At least that's how this writing begins.

... in this full space. This full space is emptied of the filiations of its own encounter.

It's a Sunday morning around 10am and I'm waiting for a text message. It will ask me to meet its sender by the sea. Camera in hand, and from my home near the





city, I am to dash to the suburb of Semaphore to record a distinctive yet fleeting event; a man and his dog, a barrow and its load, and the effect of a theme we are yet to name.

The barrow is pushed along the main street from home to seaside, seashore, sea and shore.

Biped, quadruped.

Footfall on Indigenous land

Kaurna sands

Dunes under tar and car.

The message arrives, but it is not that request. Instead, it reminds rather than appeals, coaxing regret from an ocular promise—on this day, the man and his dog are too denizen and uninterested in performance.

This barrow too, is pushed for many, many, miles.

In part, the message reads: <We have some serious work to do>. The scene at the beach is not what we want because the man and his dog are in arrears, outside of the usual framework of observation: <He doesn't look so good ... he has a cart, not a barrow ... and he's too close to home for you to get here in time> ...

Driving in an altogether other moment.

Like the notion of architecture, the image, I muse, is sacrificial. It takes what is at rest and creates form, a form, even so, whose outline 'flickers just for a moment and then withdraws ...'<sup>13</sup>

In my eyes' line of sight.

That day was not the day for recording appearances. It was a day pursued instead by a system of distinctions.

In my recollections of that moment, I am reminded of the citational power of the image, its strain toward the discontinuous amid the limits of its order.<sup>14</sup>

I see man, barrow, dog ... from my mobile capsule passing by,

Here is both a strangeness and a system of parts, an order of 'half-languages', in what is already irregular.

brushing past, bruising wind ...



With the image, we are dealing with messages and with what exceeds their duality, with 'the event photographed; and [with] ... a shock of discontinuity'.<sup>15</sup>

man, barrow, dog now elsewhere ...

Spatially interactive, the image is not 'real', nor 'virtual' as might be said today, but a 'choreography of sensations, an architecture that both changes over time and responds to changes in time'.<sup>16</sup>

then no longer in my ... range. Yet still the barrow is pushed.

In the manner of an optic, then, one is inclined to follow a crooked line, even though the day of the actual dash was, in the end, an organised and mostly ordered affair. It was a day that belonged to St Valentine, whose anniversary each year commemorates an ensemble of Christian martyrs who once shared the name. What would we find now, I wondered, and how curious it was that the ensemble should revive through a canine and his human kin? Like the most tender of embraces, one has to say, this was indeed a journey of love.

Man. Footfall. Dog. Barrow.

When rust is replaced by red.

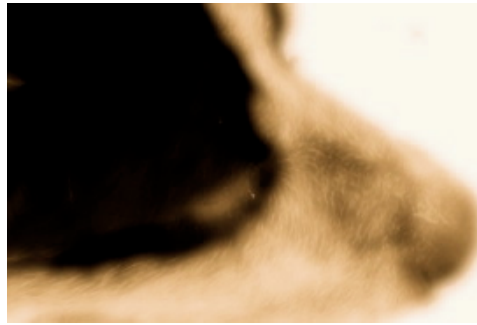
The lead more frayed.

It's at this point that the poetic takes hold, pulling me in to untidy pursuits that I name here awkwardly as questions: what is the nature of this inquiry; what limits does it seek?

A man breathes in effort, effortlessly, with no care for effort, with effort replete with care.

These induce, for me, what are sizeable shifts in how taxonomies constitute (in) cultural life, and how they connect with the issue of love.

The dog breathes, with effort, the effort of age ... of too much weight and limbs that are frail.



So with the limits of 'species' firmly in hand, and the suspicions they inspire, one must be open to transformative potential, to what might prosaically be called the forces of nature.<sup>17</sup>

And breathe they do, eye to eye ... eye beside eye.

The science historian Donna Haraway has proposed that what we know about the term species 'reeks of race and sex',<sup>18</sup> but this redolence, nevertheless, can interact, proposing what has elsewhere been described as a difference of parallels, a connectivity whose qualities are made both from 'intensity and qualification'.<sup>19</sup> Less an alliance than a form of distinction, this new taxonomy shows changed conditions, affiliations which are embodied not through a system of signification, but 'a systemic connectibility without the system ... Rhythm, relay, arrival and departure ... relations of motion and rest: affect'.<sup>20</sup>

Look away.

With this figuring, the lull, the image and the canine can begin the affair.

The barrow between, the keeper of this connection—the conduit ... of its flow.

*Part 2: To be kept*

[W]here and when species meet, that heritage must be untied and better knots of companion species attempted within and across differences. Loosening the grip of analogies that issue in the collapse of all of man's others into one another, companion species must instead learn to live intersectionally.<sup>21</sup>

And there is Lydia. Lydia lives outside, her trolley filled with bundles, tightly filled bundles of plastic, of bundled plastic.

Intercorporeal affiliations can be termed zones of affective contact, intensities that defy assimilation and necessarily trouble the anthropocentric view of the world.<sup>22</sup> 'Living intersectionally' disaggregates life into another dimension that traces the 'beginnings of form—a structure, a detail, a *leitmotif*,<sup>23</sup> a dimension that is at once familiar yet surprising, strange, perhaps embryonic.

Never without her trolley, her trolley of

... life.

A life.<sup>24</sup>

Here, intensities disperse outwardly, while courting an interior view.

She always wants to talk. She loves the 'puppy'—'beautiful puppy', 'pat the puppy'.

Straining after Deleuze, this feature of the corporeal is what materialises *possible* connections across difference 'at a molecular level, to aggregate and produce different surface effects when it becomes apparent to the senses in a wider world'.<sup>25</sup>

Rehearsing a previous and future conversation, she and I, it too is ritual, repetition.

Chance.

Intersectional life opens onto repertoires of variation in both surface and form. In other words, it opens onto variations of relationship between species and process.

I do not know these people, their being, their practices of life, the silence they inhabit. This not-knowing is a tangible thing, an encounter. 'Smooth surface', 'line of flight'.<sup>26</sup>



The promiscuities of such an affiliation tempt the possibility of a different corporeal turn, a turn that understands the transmissive nature of a disaggregated and aesthetic materiality, and the redolence of its thematic intensity.<sup>27</sup>

What place my pen, my pencil, my keyboard; a disposable surface.

Still objects, mobile hands.

Possibilities for thinking the body are based on the composite and generative effects of taxonomic deliberation as well as dialogic engagement, their import often unnoticed by the edifying optics of the less speculative quests of empirical reason. This condition of the body is aptly named by Brian Massumi through the figure of excess, which asks about the true nature of connections:

What do we have so far? A slew of slippery concepts. They seem to congregate into two groupings. One set is best suited to a semiotic analysis of local encounters: affect, quality, function, form and substance of expression, reciprocal pre-supposition, redundancy, contraction-integration, asymptotic causality, diagram. The other to far-reaching speculation: meaning, nonsense, chance, destiny, being, becoming, immanence, cosmos, void. Putting the two together is the most fun.<sup>28</sup>

Much and little, but never nothing.

It is the tiniest moment that is the sinkhole of pleasure, the great mystery and challenge of space, space that is partial, yet partially explained.

Time ... passing ... for space, more space.

A full life lived in the rituals of repetition, company, fidelity, encounter.

The space of a tangible love ... becomes a part of the rhythms of my/another life, moves from human, object, affect, into affect, kinship, home. Recognition, refusal and estrangement, self-estrangement.

a habit

a sieve of chaos

'A LIFE'<sup>29</sup>

All this from a man and his canine, or a canine and his man, when I am actually a cat person.



*Part 3: Afterthought*

In here is to be found a tilted thought, the tilt of a word, a practice in which intensities and lines of flight, the ephemera of an otherwise 'managed, working life' is taken to be the primary, serious, actual milieu of living ...

It is that miniscule wind, the tiniest flutter created by the turned or flicked page—the ever-so-slight disturbance of air is as significant, or even more significant, than the encounter with the word on the page ... For the page read would not occur without this little disturbance.<sup>30</sup>

In these small moments of passing, the pass of moments, is the trail of Bill and Lydia—a trail that takes me into (the) arts of living—living arts, slowed to a breath-by-breath breath-less, a breath less.

They (Bill and Lydia) write life ... without pen or mark of any kind permanent or semi-permanent, yet they have been, here.

And what '*takes place*' with both Bill and Lydia, dog, cart and trolley ... is something more, is something else ... they are cared for by a public of strangers, another affective province,

a provenance.

A provenance of affect.

This, *other*,

This one time,

This previous place.

This other, one time, previous affective field is a suburb.



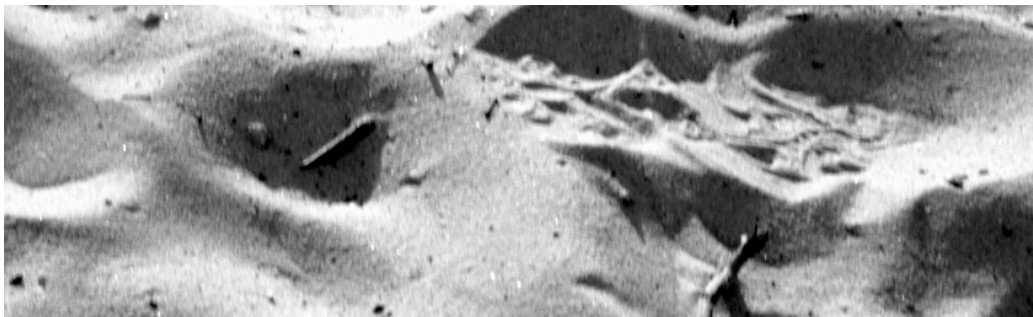
Where a suburb is sensate, sensual, paused by their routine. Paused by their habituation.

They move as movement commands.

They live, they slow; they are slowed. They show not what life is for, but what life is; as it is. For to show it as purpose, is to claim life from another. They write life from what is, from what, ever momentarily, suggests life, life as it also suggests art. This is what the Russian artist Andrei Tarkovsky must have meant about art, when he declared: 'The allocated function of art is not, as is often assumed, to put across ideas, to propagate thoughts, to serve as example. The aim of art is to prepare a person for death, to plough and harrow his soul, rendering it capable of turning to good'.<sup>31</sup>

'Ava says, "I come to celebrate, I come to praise" ... [Ava] marvels at the mystery of her precious disappearing life: "the pressure of the tide, the sea-soaked steps, wild roses and rose hips, the finches at the feeder, the way the swing swung".

"We took the overnight train", she says. "You kissed me everywhere. A beautiful passing landscape. Imagined in the dark".<sup>32</sup>



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—NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alain Badiou, 'Une Soirée Philosophique', in Peter Hallwood, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2003, p. v.

<sup>2</sup> Carole Maso, *The Art Lover*, Ecco Press, Hopewell, New Jersey, 1995; *Ghost Dance*, Ecco Press, Hopewell, New Jersey, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Carole Maso, *AVA: A Novel*, Dalkey Archive Press, Normal, Illinois, 1993, dust jacket blurb.

<sup>4</sup> Maso, *AVA*, blurb.

<sup>5</sup> Maso, *AVA*, blurb.

<sup>6</sup> bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, South End Press, Boston, MA, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, trans. Ned Lukacher, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Vicki Crowley, 'Forgiving Connections and Kinship of the Abnormals: A Passionate Meditation of Postcolonial Inheritances', Postcolonial Symposium, American Education Research Association, Montreal, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Lisa McDonald, "'Nothing But Sunshine": Writing Across Monsoonal Lines, Inflecting Electronic Arts', *The International Journal of the Arts in Society*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2009, pp. 369–80.

<sup>10</sup> Carole Maso, *Break Every Rule: Essays on Language, Longing, and Moments of Desire*, Counterpoint, Washington, 2000, pp. 161, 37, 74, 75.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, California, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Carter, *Mythform: The Making of Nearamnew at Federation Square*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne, 2005, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup> Hans Theys, 'Sculpting Time', in *Going Aerial: Air, Art, Architecture*, ed. Monika Bakke Maastricht, Jan van Eyck Academie, 2006, p. 98.

<sup>14</sup> John Berger and Jean Mohr, *Another Way of Telling*, Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society, London, 1982.

<sup>15</sup> Berger and Mohr, pp. 85–6.

<sup>16</sup> Usman Haque, 'Choreography of Sensations', in *Going Aerial: Air, Art, Architecture*, ed. Bakke, p. 64.



- <sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2004.
- <sup>18</sup> Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008, p. 18.
- <sup>19</sup> Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2002, p. 25.
- <sup>20</sup> Massumi, *Parables*, 2002, p. 20.
- <sup>21</sup> Haraway, p. 18.
- <sup>22</sup> Monika Bakke, 'Air is Information', in *Going Aerial: Air, Art, Architecture*, ed. Bakke, pp. 10–27.
- <sup>23</sup> Andrew Ballantyne, *Deleuze and Guattari for Architects*, Routledge, London and New York, 2007, p. 36.
- <sup>24</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 42.
- <sup>25</sup> Ballantyne, p. 36.
- <sup>26</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1987.
- <sup>27</sup> Bakke, 'Air is Information', pp. 10–27.
- <sup>28</sup> Brian Massumi, *User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1992, pp. 23–4.
- <sup>29</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 42.
- <sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, *H.C. for Life, That Is to Say...* Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006.
- <sup>31</sup> Andrei Tarkovsky in Maso, *Break Every Rule*, p. 53.
- <sup>32</sup> Maso, *AVA*, p. 6.