Copyright

by

Nathan Robinson Van Wyck

2017

The Report Committee for Nathan Robinson Van Wyck
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

Where Do Meanings Come From?

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor:

Kathleen Higgins, Supervisor

Cory Juhl

Where Do Meanings Come From?

by

Nathan Robinson Van Wyck

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2017

Abstract

Where Do Meanings Come From?

Nathan Robinson Van Wyck, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: Kathleen Higgins

What is the relation between the bearer of meaning and the source of meaning, and what is it for something to bear meaning? This essay explores two sets of metaphors: on the first, the bearer of meaning is the source of the meaning, and meaning is something revealed, disclosed, or brought out from within the bearer; on the second, the bearer of meaning is distinct from the source of meaning, and meaning is something imposed, added, or placed onto the bearer from outside. Through readings of André Bazin, Denis Donoghue, Adam Phillips, Walter Pater, Stanley Cavell, Henry David Thoreau, William James, Charles Tomlinson, William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore, the conflict between the two sets of metaphors is seen to open up onto the question: What are the limits of sense, and are they to be acknowledged or overcome? The author invites us to think of the limits of sense as facts we need to acknowledge if we are to make sense. The essay ends with a discussion of how we might acknowledge limits of sense as limits of sense and of how we might acknowledge fact as fact.

Table of Contents

[T]he writer of *Walden* is as preoccupied as the writer of *Paradise Lost* with the creation of a world by a word. (A word has meaning against the context of a sentence. A sentence has meaning against the context of a language. A language has meaning against the context of a form of life. A form of life has meaning against the context of a world. A world has meaning against the context of a word.)[1]

-Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*

What would we really know the meaning of? The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body; — show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always it does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature; let me see every trifle bristling with the polarity that ranges it instantly on an eternal law; and the shop, the plough, and the ledger referred to the like cause by which light undulates and poets sing; — and the world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber-room, but has form and order.[2]

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar*

You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the woods that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns.[3]

-Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*

---

[1] Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden: An Expanded Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 112.

[2] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: The Library of America, 1983), 69.

[3] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers/Walden; Or, Life in the Woods/The Maine Woods/Cape Cod*, ed. Robert F. Sayre (New York: The Library of America, 1985), 505.

I know that some who think about film think that from a recognition of the powers of the camera to modify—from what I am calling the camera's inflectionality—it follows that the camera does not present us with reality. I have heard offered as proof enough of this obviousness the thrilling refrain, "Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar," as though something is obvious in these words, as though their point and beauty were something beyond the poise of their ambiguity. What are changed are exactly things as they are, perhaps as from one hand to another, or as from a strum to an ear. The changes upon a guitar are its progressions, its harmonic motions, changes upon itself, which, Stevens's words thus claim, still take as their object things as they are, which must therefore be such as to lend themselves to these changes, be changed by them, as by a serenade.[4]

-Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*

Let be be finale of seem.[5]

-Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"

All I know is reception.[6]

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience"

---

[4] Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 203–204.

[5] Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 50.

[6] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience" in *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: The Library of America, 1983), 491.

Where Do Meanings Come From?

I

André Bazin defines montage as "the creation of a *sense* or *meaning* not objectively contained in the [film] images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition."[7] V. F. Perkins provides a vivid illustration of what Bazin has in mind:

> In *The End of St Petersburg* (1927) Pudovkin cut back and forth between shots of Russian soldiers dying on the battlefield and shots of the stock exchange blackboard as share prices soared. 'It is impossible for the spectator not to see a causal connection,' said [Béla Balázs]. However, the spectator's conclusion – 'Capitalists thrive on war and profit from the miseries of the common man' – would not have been suggested by either set of shots on its own.[8]

On Bazin's account, montage is a favored resource of "those directors who put their faith in the image," where the image is defined as "everything that the representation on the screen *adds* to the object there represented."[9] These directors are contrasted with "those directors who put their faith in reality."[10]

Bazin is claiming that the juxtaposition of one shot with another *adds* to what is juxtaposed, and that what is added is a *sense* or *meaning*. When Lev Kuleshov juxtaposed a close-up of Ivan Mozhukhin's face with a shot of a bowl of soup, then juxtaposed the same close-up with a shot of a little girl in a coffin, and then juxtaposed that same close-up with a shot of a woman reclining on a chaise lounge, he reported that audiences read a different expression on the face each time. Describing this experiment, Bazin writes of Kuleshov's "giving on each occasion a precise meaning to the expression

---

[7] André Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" in *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 1*, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 25. Italics mine.
[8] V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 20.
[9] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 24. Italics mine.
[10] Ibid.

on a face."[11] We can see what *giving meaning* is supposed to come to when Bazin tells us that montage is a "means whereby to *impose [an] interpretation* of an event on the spectator"; Bazin is saying that montage gives meaning to Mozhukhin's expression by imposing an interpretation on it, i.e., that montage bestows meaning on an expression by forcing the audience to read it in a particular way.[12] That the bestowal of meaning is here characterized as an "imposition" registers a sense that it comes from outside, that, as Bazin puts it, "the meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator."[13] We may say that for Bazin, montage creates a separation between the source of meaning and the bearer of meaning; through montage, the world screened is forced to bear a meaning that comes from outside it.

Without denying that Kuleshov's experiment demonstrates the power of montage to assign significance to the events of film, Bazin is concerned to emphasize the limitations of Kuleshov's approach. Montage can only be used to force each of the three incompatible readings of Mozhukhin's expression because the expression lends itself to each of those three readings; "the ambiguity of [the expression] alone makes the three successively exclusive expressions possible."[14] To impose a definite interpretation on Mozhukhin's expression is to settle for one of the three mutually exclusive possibilities. Thus, the power of montage comes at a cost; in giving a definite meaning to Mozhukhin's expression, Kuleshov deprives it of its ambiguity. On Bazin's account, "montage by its very nature rules out ambiguity of expression."[15]

This is one reason Bazin gravitates towards "those [directors] who put their faith in reality," those for whom "the image is evaluated not according to what it *adds* to reality but what it *reveals* of it."[16] For Bazin, this faith in reality finds a natural expression in a preference for continuous shooting over montage, allowing scenes to

---

[11] Ibid., 36.
[12] Ibid., 26. Emphasis mine.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 36.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 24, 28. Italics mine.

unfold in long takes rather than "chopping the world up into little fragments."[17] Bazin

links this preference to a preference for deep focus over soft focus. When a director

shoots a close-up of a bowl of soup to be used in a montage sequence, it is natural to

focus the lens on the bowl and to leave the background out of focus, thereby isolating the

bowl in space.[18] With this use of soft focus in montage, the director can direct the

attention of the audience: "'Look at this,' the camera would say, 'and now at that.'"[19]

This is why Bazin sees soft focus as a favored resource of those directors who want to

force the audience to read the screened events a particular way, those who want to impose

an interpretation on the events. In the exploration of the camera's capacity to bring focus

to the entire field – to bring sharpness and clarity to all its regions so that it is visible in

all its details, to make reality wholly available to the audience – Bazin sees the

development of a genuine alternative to montage, one in which film devotes itself to

revealing reality.[20]

Thus, when Orson Welles and Jean Renoir abandon the cutting and editing of

montage for the use of long takes and deep focus, Bazin sees a revolution in the

audience's relation to film. Quoting at some length:

> To consider a different method of filming, the way Jean Renoir did as early as
> 1933 and Orson Welles did a little later, one had to have discovered that
> analytical cutting or classical editing was founded on the illusion of psychological
> realism. Although it is true that our eye changes its focus continually according to
> what interests or attracts it, this mental and psychological adjustment is done after
> the fact. The event exists continuously in its entirety, every part of it demands our
> undivided attention; we are the ones who decide to choose this or that aspect, to
> select this instead of that according to the bidding of our feelings or our thinking.
> Someone else, however, would perhaps make a different choice. In any case, we
> are *free* to create our own *mise en scène*: another "creation" or cutting is always
> possible that can radically modify the subjective aspect of reality. Now the

---

[17] Ibid., 38.

[18] Ibid., 33.

[19] Bazin, "William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing" in *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, ed. Bert Cardullo, trans. Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo (New York: Routledge, 2014), 9.

[20] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 35.

director who does the cutting for us also does the selecting that we would do in real life. We unconsciously accept his choices, because they conform to the seeming laws of ocular attraction; but they deprive us of a privilege that is well grounded in psychology and that we give up without realizing it: the freedom, at least the potential one, to modify at each instant our method of selection, of "editing."

The psychological, and in addition aesthetic, consequences of this are significant. The technique of analytical cutting tends to destroy in particular the ambiguity inherent in reality. It "subjectivizes" the event to an extreme, since each shot is the product of the director's bias…

Thanks to depth of field, at times augmented by action taking place simultaneously on several planes, the viewer is at least given the opportunity in the end to edit the scene himself, to select the aspects of it to which he will attend.[21]

"Depth of focus brings the spectator into a relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys with reality," Bazin writes elsewhere.[22] In the longer quote above, the relation we enjoy with reality is figured as one in which a film is constantly being directed; the "cutting," "selecting," and "editing" of a film serve as figures for our lived patterns of attention, attraction, and interest, patterns in which various aspects of the world eclipse and are eclipsed by one another. This means that if the director who uses deep focus manages to bring the spectator into a relation with film closer to that which we enjoy with reality, it is because the director cedes some of the power of direction, refraining from the cutting, selecting, and editing of classical montage so that the "cutting," "selecting," and "editing" that occurs outside of film might take its place. Here Bazin emphasizes that the power to direct is handed over to the spectator; it is the spectator who is given the chance "to edit the scene himself, to select the aspects of it to which he will attend."[23] Elsewhere, Bazin writes that when viewing films shot in deep focus, "It is from [the spectator's] attention and [the spectator's] will that the meaning of the image in part

[21] Bazin, "William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing," 7–8.
[22] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 35.
[23] Bazin, "William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing," 8.

derives."[24] On this way of describing the use of long takes and deep focus, we still find a separation between the source of meaning and the bearer of meaning akin to that which we found in Bazin's descriptions of montage; the world screened is still forced to bear a meaning that comes from outside it, but the source has shifted from director to spectator.

Is this the only way of describing what Bazin thought long takes and deep focus could achieve? One wanting to follow Bazin in emphasizing that reality reveals itself on film might give a different inflection to Bazin's observations about the spectator of these films. Rather than describing the spectator as choosing to see this or that aspect, as deciding to direct attention this way or that, we could describe the spectator as interested, attracted, drawn, struck, or seized by the world screened, the world screened directing the spectator's attention. This is hardly incompatible with saying that the film lends itself to divergent readings; we could say that the world screened directs the attention of different spectators differently, revealing and concealing different aspects of itself to each one. Were we to describe long takes and deep focus this way, we could say that long take and deep focus preserve a natural unity that montage tears asunder; when long takes and deep focus are employed, the world screened becomes the source of the meaning it bears, the world exhibiting that meaning rather than having meaning imposed on it from without, the world revealing that meaning rather than having meaning forced upon it.[25]

If our relation to films shot in long take and deep focus is to reenact our relation to reality, the events of film must lend themselves to being read in as many ways as the events of our lives can be read; but then Bazin wants to remind us that the ways the events of our lives can be read are the ways they lend themselves to being read. Were we so reminded we would be turned from interpretation towards that which makes interpretation possible, from meaning or significance towards that which conditions meaning or significance, from sense that can be made towards that which limits the sense that can be made, from reading towards what allows itself to be read. Bazin did not need

---

[24] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 36.
[25] Here we might consider Bazin's phrase "the unity of meaning of the dramatic event"; see "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 36.

to tell Kuleshov that one and the same facial expression can be read in three incompatible ways, but he did feel the need to tell Kuleshov that his experiment depended on Mozhukhin's face allowing for each of those readings. Making use of the capacity of the human face to bear meaning, Kuleshov allowed us to apprehend that it may mean this or it may mean that. What he thwarted was our apprehension of the human face in its sheer capacity to bear meaning. What he thwarted was the most important kind of apprehension there is.

We get a sense of just how much Bazin took to be at stake in our response to the Kuleshov experiment when he writes, "The preoccupation of Rossellini when dealing with the face of the child in *Allemania Anno Zero* is the exact opposite of that of Kuleshov with the close-up of Mozhukhin. Rossellini is concerned to preserve its mystery."[26] What Rossellini preserved is what the Kuleshov experiment exploited. Entirely dependent on the mystery of the human face, the Kuleshov experiment gives us three ways of concealing that mystery. The Kuleshov experiment fails to acknowledge the condition of its own possibility. In each the three acts of concealment, the experiment destroys the fascination Stanley Cavell characterizes when, reflecting on Bazin's reflections on Kuleshov, he writes that a human face "may either dictate or absorb the reality with which I must surround it, or fascinate me exactly because it calls incompatible realities to itself which vie for my imagination."[27] What the Kuleshov experiment conceals is what Bazin calls "the ontological ambiguity of reality," what he elsewhere calls "the ontological ambivalence of reality."[28] V. F. Perkins relates this Bazinian concept to a passage from Siegfried Kracauer's *Theory of Film*:[29]

Natural objects… are surrounded with a fringe of meanings liable to touch off

---

[26] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," 37.
[27] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 158.
[28] Bazin, "De Sica: Metteur en Scène" in *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 2*, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 69, and *Orson Welles: A Critical View*, trans. Jonathan Rosenbaum (Los Angeles: Acrobat Books, 1979), 80.
[29] See Perkins, *Film as Film*, 32–33.

various moods, emotions, runs of inarticulate thoughts…

A film shot does not come into its own unless it incorporates raw material with its multiple meanings or what Lucien Sève calls "the anonymous state of reality"[30]

Those directors who put their faith in reality were those directors committed to revealing what the Kuleshov experiment concealed. Bazin did not call for the camera to give us an understanding of reality, but for the camera to give us reality, the reality that lends itself to the understanding, the reality that may lend itself to the understanding in more than one way, the reality that may lend itself to our understanding in ways that vie with one another. To give us this is to give us the bearer of meaning *as* bearer of meaning, rather than as meaning this or meaning that. Taking the title of a Wallace Stevens poem, we may say Bazin calls for the camera to give us "Not Ideas About the Thing But the Thing Itself."[31] He calls for this knowing that our Ideas about the Thing usually come between us and the Thing Itself, and that our Ideas about the Thing may even come between the eye of the camera and the Thing Itself. Thus Bazin writes:

The aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its power to lay bare the realities. It is not for me to separate off, in the complex fabric of the objective world, here a reflection on a damp sidewalk, there the gesture of a child. Only the impassive lens, stripping its object of all those ways of seeing it, those piled-up preconceptions, that spiritual dust and grime with which my eyes have covered it, is able to present it in all its virginal purity to my attention and consequently to my love. By the power of photography, the natural image of a world that we neither know nor can see, nature at last does more than imitate art: she imitates the artist.[32]

Taking some lines from another Stevens poem, we may say that the task of those directors who put their faith in reality is to make films that find ways of acknowledging:

---

[30] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 68–69.

[31] Wallace Stevens, "Not Ideas About the Thing But the Thing Itself" in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 451–452.

[32] Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" in *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 1*, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 15.

> Not the symbol but that for which the symbol stands,
> The vivid thing in the air that never changes,
> Though the air change.[33]

We might call this the acknowledgement of the world in its silence; for, as Cavell writes, "the world *is* silent to us; the silence is merely forever broken."[34]

II

We might set Bazin's contrast between those directors who put their faith in the image and those directors who put their faith in reality alongside a contrast between two ways of responding to what Adam Phillips calls a "dilemma that often turns up when modern people begin to discuss what modern people call creativity":

> Though it comes… in various forms, the dilemma itself can be simply stated: is creativity the imposition of something or the discovery of something? Is the creative act an assertion or a disclosure?… It is as though there are things that are always already there which we may or may not find; and there are things which we make, which we put there, and by doing so we add something to the world that wasn't previously there… Are we making additions to the world as we find it, or are we revealing more and more of what's already there?[35]

On the one hand, *imposition*, *making*, *addition*; on the other, *revelation*, *finding*, *disclosure*. Whereas Phillips writes of two varieties of creativity, Denis Donoghue writes of "two types of imagination, featuring two different attitudes to experience," each attitude towards experience having "implications for the relation between… the mind and the materials with which it engages."[36] To figure these two modes of imaginative

---

[33] Stevens, "Martial Cadenza" in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 217.

[34] Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 150–151.

[35] Adam Phillips, "On Not Making It Up: The Varieties of Creative Experience," *Side Effects* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1979), 79.

[36] Denis Donoghue, *Thieves of Fire* (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 27.

engagement with material, Donoghue takes up Adrian Stokes's distinction between the carver and the modeller, writing:

> [C]arving is concerned with the release of significance deemed already to exist, imprisoned in the stone, and modelling is a more plastic process by which the sculptor imposes his meaning upon the stone. In carving, the artist assumes that the block of stone contains within itself the form invented for it by nature; the artist's desire is merely to liberate that form, to disclose its hidden face, to reveal the truth on the stone by a light 'as if from inside it'. In modelling, on the other hand, the artist gives the stone his own truth, or what he insists is his own truth; the truth of the stone as a different truth is not acknowledged. The modeller 'imbues spatial objects with the animus and calculation of inner life', meaning his own inner life. He projects his feeling into the stone which he understands as dead until that moment: it comes to life as a manifestation of his life.[37]

We can hear the overtones of carver as midwife in Donoghue's claim that carvers want to release significance that already exists within the stone; we are being invited to think of the stone as pregnant with significance and of the carver as helping the stone deliver its significance.[38] This means that the carver's mode of engagement with the material is one of assisting the material; it means that meaning comes not from the carver, but from the material the carver is assisting; it means that the process by which meaning comes to light is labor, a process that takes place in the material the carver assists rather than in the carver; it means that the meaning is being born apart from the carver; it means that the carver helps to bring out what is there to be brought out; it means that the carver is not there to make something happen, but to create the conditions that will let something happen. Carving is creating the optimal conditions for material to bear its own

---

[37] Ibid. For the source of the distinction, see *The Quattro Cento* and *Stones of Rimini*, both collected in Adrian Stokes, *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes, Vol. 1: 1930–1937* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978).

[38] To illustrate the dilemma surrounding the two varieties of creativity, Phillips quotes G. A. Cohen's remark that utopian socialists "prescribe a new form *to* reality. Contrast midwives, who deliver the form that develops *within* reality." See Phillips, "On Not Making It Up," 81, and Cohen, *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 50.

meaning.[39]

        We might say that when Bazin wrote of directors who put their faith in reality he was writing of directors who were carvers of reality. He was writing of those directors who wanted the things of this world to bear their meaning on film, those who helped to bring out what was there to be brought out, those who strove the create the optimal conditions for things to deliver their meaning. Long take and deep focus were of value only insofar as they assisted in the labor of reality. The basic drift of Bazin's objection to Kuleshov is captured in Donoghue's characterization of the modeller; with a few substitutions we arrive at, "In [montage], on the other hand, the [director] gives the [human face] his own truth, or what he insists is his own truth; the truth of the [human face] as a different truth is not acknowledged." In another context, Donoghue provides an alternative characterization of the modeller: "In modelling, the material to be worked on, indeed the whole world, is deemed endlessly malleable, like clay in one's hands: it has no character, no rights, in itself."[40] To the modeller of film, what is filmed is malleable; one can do all sorts of things in the editing room to determine the significance of what is filmed. What is filmed is dead, given life only through the activity of the editors.[41] What is filmed has no character, no rights, in itself; there are no limits to what it may be made to mean.   Then there is the carver, who would have us ask not how to impose a meaning on what is filmed, but how what is filmed might be allowed to bear its own meaning on film. To the carver, the character of the events is to be found not in what they mean, but in their capacity to bear meaning. Given these contrasts, the carver and the modeller will have very different takes on what happens when what is filmed comes to bear an unexpected meaning in post-production. The carver will experience this as a further disclosure of the capacity of what is filmed to bear meaning, as an enrichment

---

[39] Here I borrow some of the language of Phillips, who writes: "Then there is the self as midwife, creating the optimal conditions for something other than the self to come to life; the artist as servant of a process." See "On Not Making It Up," 82.

[40] Donoghue, *Words Alone: The Poet T. S. Eliot* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 140.

[41] Wittgenstein writes, "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? – In use it *alive.* Is life breathed into it there? – Or is the *use* its life?" *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), §432, 108.

of our sense of the character of what is filmed, as a fresh revelation of the possibilities of what is filmed. The modeller will experience this as further confirmation of the omnipotence of editors and of the inherent senselessness of what is filmed.

Modellers have a sense of omnipotence over their material because they have a sense of the endless malleability of that material; the material is without meaning, and if it is to be given meaning, the modeller will have to supply it. Cavers submit themselves to their material because they have a sense of the integrity and completeness of that material; the material is bursting with meaning, sometimes multiple meanings that vie with one another, and it is from the material that all the meaning must be brought out. To the modeller, there is a separation between the source of meaning and the bearer of meaning as the clay is made to bear a meaning imposed on it by the modeller. To the carver, there is no separation between the source of meaning and the bearer of meaning, for the stone comes to bear a meaning that emerges from within it. To the modeller, bearing is associated with bearing down on and bearing up under – the modeller's shaping hands bearing down on the clay and the clay bearing up under the modeller's conception; meaning is imposed on the material as a burden the material is to carry – to bear. To the carver, bearing is associated with giving birth, yielding up, bringing forth, producing – the stone bearing what was conceived within it. So when Donoghue elaborates on R. P. Blackmur's distinction between sacramental and the erotic poets, it is clear that he is giving us another version of the distinction between carvers and modellers:

> A sacramental poet respects the object for itself but even more for the spirit which, however mysteriously, it contains… [S]uch a poet is always willing to 'let be', he is merely the spirit's celebrant. An erotic poet may respect the object in itself, but it is not characteristic of him to do so, and beyond the point of acknowledgment the only relevant spirit is his own and he is never willing to let be. When the erotic poet has done with the object, he may persist in his relation to it, but for his own sake: the object has helped him to define his power, and he is

tender toward it for that reason.[42]

Treating the things of the world as infinitely malleable clay to be pressed and molded, to be given definition by defining power over them, the modeller, the erotic poet, has an imagination Donoghue describes as Promethean. Thieving fire, the Promethean seizes the imaginative godhead, grabbing the mantle of divine creativity:

> [T]he Promethean imagination has always been defiant: it starts with an incorrigible sense of its own power, and seeks in nature only the means of its fulfilment. Whatever it fastens upon must relinquish itself, capitulate if necessary to the imagination; it is merely a means to an end. The end is the imagination's disclosure of its own power; the mind certifies itself. The Promethean imagination does not begin with any respect for 'the Other': specific objects of attention are valued only in default of other objects, and there is a sense in which all objects are interchangeable. Or, to put it more precisely, the imagination does not allow objects to assert themselves or to hold out for their right. They have no right, except to be useful. No object is ever allowed to mark an outer limit of the Promethean imagination: on the contrary, limits are observed only to be transcended.[43]

Whatever the Promethean imagination seizes upon is "merely a means to an end," "valued only in default of other objects," having "no right, except to be useful," the Promethean imagination doing away "with any respect for 'the Other'," "not allow[ing] objects to assert themselves." We may contrast these characterizations with the characterizations of carvers and sacramental poets, where we can hear overtones of material as an end in itself, as something to be valued for its own sake, as having rights to be respected, as making claims on us. Looking at the Promethean imagination, the carver sees a failure to acknowledge that the material sets limits to imaginative power. But in the Promethean imagination, there is no failure; limits are not to be acknowledged, but vanquished. In the Promethean imagination, whatever resists the creative imagination

---

[42] Donoghue, *William Butler Yeats* (New York: The Ecco Press, 1988), 24. Phillips remarks on the similarity between this distinction and the distinction between carvers and modellers in "On Not Making It Up," 80.

[43] Donoghue, *Thieves of Fire*, 27.

can be made to bend to it. To the Promethean imagination, the acknowledgment of limitation is surrender.

The Protheans – the erotic poets, the modellers – see material as disposable means, as there to be used. To them, the material is given meaning by their use of it. Their use of the material may change as they press the material into the service of new ends, and their future ends are unforeseeable. In this vision, there are no limits to the uses that may be made of the material, and so no limits to what the material may be made to mean. The material makes no claims on us, it has no rights to be respected; we impose the meaning on the material, and if it seems there are limits to such imposition, that just shows our lack of imagination, the narrowness of our existing repertoire, a current shortage of creative modes of refashioning. But this way of describing things seems quite foreign to the carver. We might imagine the carver – the midwife, the sacramental poet – coming across the following passage from Nietzsche:

> [W]hatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous "meaning" and "purpose" are necessarily obscured or even obliterated.[44]

Beginning with the thought that what can be reinterpreted must lend itself to reinterpretation, the carver might jot down:

> Whatever exists, having been brought into being, again and again yields up meaning, disclosing more of its own potential, revealing more of its own capacities, offers us the season's bounty; all events in the world are a bringing forth and a tending to, and all bringing forth and tending to involves the bearing of meaning, the bearer and the meaning claiming our care and attention as they grow and bring forth in turn.

---

[44] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1989), Second Essay, §12, 77.

Whereas the Nietzsche passage is about the taking of things, the carver's passage is about the givenness of things. Whereas the Nietzsche passage is about the ends towards which things are pressed into service, the carver's passage is about what is offered to us irrespective of our ends. Whereas the Nietzsche passage portrays the interpreters as the source of meaning other things are made to bear, the carver's passage portrays the bearers of meaning as the source of their own meaning. Whereas the Nietzsche passage portrays meaning as something that needs to be brought to bear on things, the carver's passage portrays meaning as something there to be brought out. For the carver, we are to become not masters of beings, but servants of beings; we are to allow ourselves to be instructed in the kind of care and attention beings need from us, that they may be helped in their labor as they give of themselves.

Phillips writes of the conflict between carvers and modellers, "The moral and aesthetic question becomes: do I value something because I can make it mine, or because I can't?"[45] To the modeller, the task is always to make things mine, to press them into the service of my ends, to find a use for them that best serves the self. To the carver, the task is always to acknowledge that things are never ours, that things are always in abundance of the narrow ends towards which the modellers press them, that things are given prior to any use we make of them; Thoreau writes, "a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone."[46] To the modeller, the world can be made an expression of will, becoming what the will makes of it. To the carver, the world is what is handed over to the will, that which precedes whatever we make of it; on behalf of the carver, Donoghue quotes Wittgenstein, "The world is independent of my will."[47] To the modeller, the resistance of things to human purposes is a problem. To the carver, the resistance of things to human purposes it the point; the poet Charles Tomlinson, one of Donoghue's representative carvers, writes of "the richness of a reality

---

[45] Phillips, "On Not Making It Up," 81.
[46] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 387.
[47] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (New York: Routledge, 2002), 108; quoted by Donoghue in *The Ordinary Universe: Soundings in Modern Literature* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 6.373, 21.

one can never completely fuse with, but which affords a resistance whereby the I can know itself."[48] To the modeller, the task is always to integrate things into a unified imaginative vision, acknowledging nothing that resists the vision, seizing on the aspects of things that serve the vision and disregarding the rest. To the carver, the task is always to acknowledge the integrity of things that stand there before us, to acknowledge the abundance of meaning that they can bear, to acknowledge that there is always something in excess of our imaginative vision of things, to acknowledge that something always resists assimilation to our ends.

What is disputed is not whether resistance is to be overcome, but whether the resistance to be overcome is internal or external, of whether recalcitrant things must give way to the will or of whether the recalcitrant will must give way to the fullness of things. It is a question of whether we are to develop the will to take things over or whether we are to allow ourselves to be overtaken. To the modeller, the integrity of imaginative vision is paramount; the modeller takes of the material only what can be integrated into that vision. To the carver, the integrity of things is paramount; things are to be accepted in their fullness, as lending themselves to conflicting imaginative visions. The modeller makes claims on material seen as making no claims on the modeller; this allows the modeller to maintain a unified stance towards the material. The carver is claimed by material rather than making claims on the material; this means that the carver may be claimed in conflicting ways by the material, ruling out the possibility of a unified stance towards the material. So Phillips asks, "Are writers people who, because they cannot bear the world, make it their own, in words; or are they people who so cherish the world that they want to show us the very different things it contains?"[49] One way leads towards the fashioning of a definite stance towards the world; the other way leads towards the acknowledgement and cultivation of our ambivalence towards the world. Wallace Stevens writes of a triumph of modelling with the lines:

---

[48] Charles Tomlinson, *American Essays: Making It New* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2001), 33.
[49] Phillips, "Appreciating Pater" in *Promises, Promises: Essays on Psychoanalysis and Literature* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 154.

> There it was, word for word
> The poem that took the place of a mountain.[50]

He writes of the failure of modelling with the lines:

> The words of things entangle and confuse
> The plum survives its poems.[51]

The carver acknowledges that the words of things entangle and confuse, that the plum may be seen to survive its poems.

<center>III</center>

Bearers of meaning make a riddle of sourcing – we ask, "Where do meanings come from?" We know the bearer – do we know the source? Or is the source someone else?

When Oscar Wilde writes, "Being natural is simply a pose, and the most irritating pose I know," he may be read as proposing that so-called carvers are simply posturing modellers.[52] Indeed, we may read Wilde's "The Decay of Lying" as proposing that Plato was canniest modeller of them all, the allegory of the cave an expression of the Promethean imagination at its finest, the very idea of a reality outside the cave the whopper to end all whoppers – there is no disclosure of meaning, only disclosing

---

[50] Stevens, "The Poem That Took the Place of the Mountain" in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 435; quoted by Donoghue in *The Ordinary Universe*, 21.

[51] Stevens, "The Comedian as the Letter C" in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 33; quoted by Donoghue in *The Ordinary Universe*, 130.

[52] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Collins, 2003), 20.

<center>16</center>

gestures.[53] Matthew Arnold wrote that the aim of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is.[54] Wilde riposted that the aim of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is not.[55] The task of the critic is to write the poem that takes the place of the mountain; where text was, there critic shall be. If the plum survives the critic's poem, that just shows the critic's misreading was insufficiently strong.[56] Wilde would like nothing more than to live in a world in which all reading is misreading. What good is an accurate reading when we already have the text? It is the misreading that creates. It is the misreading that adds to what there is. It is the misreading that gives us something new to talk about, ideally to be misread in turn. Those who aim to release what is already there, imprisoned in the stone, fail to ask how it got there. Wilde has us look for the modeller behind every carver.

Thus the appearance of modelling is a frequent source of consternation for carvers. Reviewing Donoghue's *Walter Pater: A Lover of Strange Souls*, Phillips makes such consternation a central theme. Opening the essay with the reception of of Pater's *The Renaissance*, Phillips writes:

> In a contemporary review of *The Renaissance* in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the critic Sidney Colvin wrote that 'the book is not one for any beginner to turn to in search of "'information'". 'Information' was in inverted commas not because there were no facts or respectable opinions in the book, but because Pater did not seem to believe in information, as it was customarily understood in criticism of the arts… 'In the matter of historical fact,' Denis Donoghue writes… 'Pater also took liberties, so many that it is a pity he did not derive more satisfaction from them.' But Pater was satisfied not by getting it wrong, but by not having to get it right. It was his style to affirm invention over accuracy and, indeed, satisfaction over argument.

---

[53] Wilde, "The Decay of Lying" in Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Collins, 2003), 1071–1092.

[54] Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" in *Selected Prose*, ed. P. J.Keating (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), 130.

[55] Wilde, "The Critic as Artist" in Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Collins, 2003), 1128.

[56] See the work of Harold Bloom, especially *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1981).

> …[Pater's] approach tended to be, in Donoghue's arch but apt phrase, 'free of empirical duty'. Matthew Arnold and Modern Science could give you the object as in itself it really was; could give you the best, the most reliable, salutary truths. What Pater gave you were his impressions and his style. And his style unashamedly competed for attention with what he was apparently writing about ('Pater's sentences,' Donoghue writes, 'ask to be read as if they wanted to be looked at, not merely to be understood'). The real interest for Pater was in what the art, and the life of the artist, could evoke in him; what he could use it to become.[57]

Transparent windows do not want to be looked at; they want to be looked through. To write sentences that ask to be read as if they want to be looked at is to write sentences that are not transparent windows, sentences that do not allow us to see through to what they are about. What Pater's sentences show us is that a sentence need not relate to what it is apparently about as a transparent window relates to what it allows us to see. This is not to say that Pater's sentences sentences are not windows; it is to say that some windows are stained glass. Stained glass windows do not want to be looked through; they want to be looked at. The task of the Paterian critic is to replace the window that opens up onto the mountain with the most intricate stained glass; where the view was, there patterns of light shall be. The stained glass of the cathedral does not afford us a view of the outside, but it is affected by the light that comes from outside.

When one places stained glass before a mountain, what comes through is not the mountain, but light. Taking over the view of the mountain, the stained glass is overtaken by light, and the light that comes through is only the light the stained glass allows to come through. When Phillips writes that Pater's "style unashamedly competed for attention with what he was apparently writing about," the word "apparently" is important. When Pater is apparently writing about the Renaissance, he is really writing about the ways he is being affected, and what Pater is affected by is the way the Renaissance affects him. Pater allows himself to be overwhelmed not by things but by his own

---

[57] Phillips, "Appreciating Pater," 148–149.

impressions. This is the gorgeous solipsism of his writing.[58] What moves his writing is the way he is moved – and how moved he is by the way he is moved. Hence Phillips writes:

> Pater's 'appreciations' show an obtrusive disregard for everything other than Pater's style. Irreverent towards conformities, his style consumes everything in its path. What he is interested in becomes an opportunity to perform more Pater. For anyone concerned, as Donoghue is, about the ethics of a style – the imperiousness of certain kinds of writing – Pater is a provocation.[59]

Moved to write about his being moved to write, Pater's style becomes Pater's subject. Pater is taking himself as object while maintaining the artifice that he is taking things as his object, writing about what his writing is doing to him under the guise of writing about the Renaissance. Pater's writing is a performance about his performing himself in

---

[58] The most exquisite example of this can be found in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*:

> At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflexion begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. Analysis goes a step further still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly re-forming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual, weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

See Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, ed. Adam Phillips (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 151–152.
[59] Phillips, "Appreciating Pater," 154.

writing. This is why Pater's writing shows "an obtrusive disregard for everything other than Pater's style," and why it "consumes everything in its path." This is also why "Pater did not seem to believe in information," and why he was "satisfied not by getting it wrong, but by not having to get it right," "his style [being] to affirm invention over accuracy." This is what consternates the carvers. So Phillips writes:

> Less to Donoghue's taste, in Pater's writing 'the object doesn't matter; what matters is the mind's experience of pleasure in lavishing attention upon it. The indulgence of Pater's determined disregard makes Donoghue droll with exasperation ('One of the limitations of Pater's essay on Vézelay is that he knew virtually nothing about the iconography of church architecture'). There is, it should be said, virtually nothing that Pater writes about that Donoghue knows virtually nothing about: indeed, judging by his corrections of Pater, he often knows more. What Donoghue refers to as Pater's commitment to 'those visionary artists who refuse to transcribe the data before them and insist upon the privilege of their own vision' should have been a problem for him, as it is for Donoghue. It is clear that Donoghue wants Pater to be more troubled by his preferences and affinities, more bothered by his taken liberties ('Pater does not bother with meanings that may be established by scholarship').[60]

The words of things entangle and confuse / The Renaissance survives *The Renaissance*. Wanting an acknowledgement of the self-sufficiency of the Renaissance, the carver says we must remember those meanings that may be established by scholarship, that iconography sets limits to the meaning the architecture of Vézelay can bear, that when one insists on the privilege of one's own vision in the presence of a work, one does not alter the data that is there to be transcribed.

Pater is not a carver in relation to the Renaissance; he is not writing a text that allows the Renaissance to bear its own meaning. In this, the carver may see a lack of respect, a failure to acknowledge the claims that history makes on us. Hence Donoghue, discussing Pater's *Imaginary Portraits*, is concerned to document some of the liberties Pater took in the matter of historical fact:

---

[60] Ibid., 157–158.

He has Watteau elected to the French Academy in 1712, not in the true 1717. He lets the narrator of "A Prince of Court Painters" read *Manon Lescaut* in October 1717, though the book wasn't published till 1731. By playing loose with easily verified facts, he released himself from their importunity and told his readers that he was doing so. He didn't consider that historical events deserved any particular respect by virtue of their merely having come to pass.[61]

In this distrust of those who take liberties in the matter of historical fact, of those who play fast and loose with the easily verifiable, of those who refuse to transcribe the data before them, of those who do not bother with that which may be established, of those who feel free of empirical duty, of those who treat the object as though it doesn't matter, Donoghue abides by the words of the poet Charles Tomlinson:

> Distrust
> that poet who must symbolize
>   your stair into
>   an analogue
> of what was never there.
>   Fact
>   has its proper plenitude
> that only time and tact
>   will show, renew.[62]

In Tomlinson's rhyming of fact and tact, we may remember that having tact is having the right touch, and think of the carver with the chisel to the stone. The right touch is the touch that leaves intact what is to be liberated from within the stone. What is to be liberated is itself stone; the sculpture is the work of stone that emerges from within the stone. The stone of fact carries its own proper plenitude within it; to reveal that proper plenitude one must approach the stone with the tact that leaves the work intact. When the work of stone is brought out, it, too, will have the solidity of fact. It, too, will have its own proper plenitude. William Carlos Williams, obstetrician and poet, wrote, "No ideas

---

[61] Donoghue, *Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 197.
[62] Tomlinson, "The Farmer's Wife: At Fostons Ash" in *New Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2009), 77; quoted by Donoghue in *The Ordinary Universe*, 23–24.

but in things."[63] He also wrote, "No ideas but in the facts."[64]

If Pater is not carving the Renaissance, what is he doing? Shall we say that he is modelling the Renaissance? How could he be? The Renaissance is not "endlessly malleable, like clay in one's hands"; it is hard as stone, with character – rights – in itself, and when that character is not acknowledged, when those rights are not respected, one is no longer engaging with the Renaissance. This is what limits to the Promethean imagination come to. It is not that one cannot write like Walter Pater, treating the object as though it does not matter; it is that when one treats the object as though it does not matter, one ceases to write about that object as an independent object. Insofar as Pater treats the historical facts of Renaissance as though they do not matter, he ceases to write about the Renaissance; he writes about his impressions of the Renaissance instead. As Stanley Cavell writes:

> If the ability to make logical inferences has a psychology, it will not be discoverable by a psychologist who cannot tell the difference between valid and invalid inferences; it will not be the subject of inference which is under discussion. A comparable problem arises in the psychology, and/or psychoanalysis, of art. A thinker who cannot grant the right autonomy to the object he or she is thinking about is not thinking about art.[65]

There is no imposition of meaning; there are only imposing gestures.[66] Being

---

63 William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, ed. Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions Book, 1995), 6, 9.

64 Williams, *Paterson*, 27.

65 Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 358.

66 Our parents conceive us; they do not put life into us. Before we were living we were not, but we were not dead. So it is with signs. Before minting, we do not have a coin. Before coining, we do not have a word. What bears the value of a dollar is not the metal, but the coin. What bears the meaning of a word is not the mark of ink or the sound, but the word. Coining a word is creating a word, creating a bearer of meaning. Prior to the coining, we do not have what will bear meaning. Words can have meaning brought out of them, but what we bring out of words was never put into the words; the alternative to having a word we can bring meaning out of is not having a word. Wittgenstein writes, "[N]aming is a preparation for description. Naming is so far not a move in the language-game – any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess. We may say: *nothing* has so far been done, when a thing has been named. It has not even *got* a name except in the language-game." *Philosophical Investigations*, §49, 21. We could make a similar point about the montage from Pudovkin's The *End of St. Petersburg*. What bears the

22

Promethean is simply a pose. If the architecture of Vézelay has iconographic significance, it will not be discoverable by a critic who cannot tell what iconographical traditions are being drawn upon. A thinker who cannot grant the right autonomy to the architecture of Vézelay is not thinking about its meaning. But one can say this without joining those early reviewers of Walter Pater who "seemed to agree, [Pater] wasn't doing something new, he was doing something badly."[67] It is not only failed carvers who do not carve. Pater did not give a new meaning to the Renaissance and he did not bring out the meaning of the Renaissance. Pater wrote *The Renaissance*, and *The Renaissance* is a text that bears meaning. Pater gave us stone to carve. A thinker who cannot grant the right autonomy to the Renaissance is not thinking about the Renaissance; but a thinker who cannot grant the right autonomy to *The Renaissance* is not thinking about *The Renaissance*.

To grant autonomy to the object one is thinking about is to acknowledge that it makes claims on us, that it has rights to be respected. It is to acknowledge that these claims condition what can be thought about the object, that these rights assert themselves by setting limits to the sense that can be made of the object. The acknowledgment of the claims the object makes on us, the way the object asserts itself, is a condition of thinking about the object at all. The conditions of thinking about the object one way may be different from the conditions of thinking about the object another way, the object asserting itself differently in each case. Cavell writes, "I do not make the world that the thing gathers. I do not systematize the language in which the thing differs from all other things of the world. I testify to both, acknowledge my need of both."[68] The *conditions* of thinking about an object are what make *speaking-with* one another about that object

---

meaning *Capitalists thrive on war and profit from the miseries of the common man* is neither the shot of the soldiers nor the shot of the stock exchange blackboards, but rather the juxtaposition of the two. The juxtaposition is the source and the bearer of that meaning; we need not follow Bazin in saying that juxtaposition is the imposition of meaning on something else.

[67] Phillips, "Appreciating Pater," 148.

[68] Cavell, "The World as Things" in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 244.

possible, and the search for these condition is a critical task.[69] We need to acknowledge the claims that objects make on us, the ways objects assert themselves, if we to converse about those objects at all. The limits of sense are the facts we need to acknowledge if we are to make sense. These limits shift depending on the object we are speaking of and the way we are speaking of it; what we need to acknowledge shifts depending on whether we are speaking of a plum or a person, and of whether we are speaking of them as a scientist or as a moral being. Further, these limits may shift as things unfold; there may be shifts in what I need to acknowledge if I am to continue thinking about an object in the way I have been thinking about it, say if I am to continue studying the object as a scientist, or if I am to continue treating this person as a moral being. We do not *fix* these limits; our lives testify to them. The task of acknowledging these limits is a task because the limits continually need to be found and refound, found and refound as often as our form of life needs to be found and refound.[70] Wittgenstein writes, "The difficult thing here is not, to dig down to the ground; no, it is to recognize the ground that lies before us as the ground."[71] But what is our condition when we fail to recognize the ground that lies before us as the ground? What is our condition when we fail to recognize our condition?

<div align="center">IV</div>

In *The Senses of Walden*, Cavell provides an account of the transcendentalist inheritance of transcendental philosophy:

---

[69] Cavell writes about the etymology of "condition" as *talking together*; see "Emerson, Coleridge, Kant" in *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 39. In calling the task of acknowledgement a critical task, I mean bring out the relation between this task and that of Kantian critique. For Kant, "The conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are at the same time conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*." See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A158/B197, 283.

[70] Wittgenstein writes, "What has to be accepted, the given, is – so one could say – *forms of life*." See *Philosophical Investigations*, Part II, 192.

[71] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, ed. G. H. von Wright, Rush Rhees, and G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), Part VI, §31, 333.

The Transcendentalists, as Emerson in 1842 said, got their title from the philosophy of Kant…

[T]he undertaking of the *Critique of Pure Reason*… was… to answer, by transforming, the skeptical question about the existence of the external world, to show that things (as we know them) *are* as the senses represent them; that nature, the world opened to the senses, is objective. I am convinced that Thoreau had the Kantian idea right, that the objects of our knowledge require a transcendental (or we may say, grammatical or phenomenological) preparation; that we know just what meets the *a priori* conditions of our knowing anything *überhaupt.* These *a priori* conditions are necessities of human nature; and the search for them is something I think Thoreau's obsession with necessity is meant to declare. His difference from Kant on this point is that these *a priori* conditions are not themselves knowable *a priori,* but are to be discovered experimentally; historically, Hegel had said. *Walden* is also, accordingly, a response to skepticism, and not just in matters of knowledge. Epistemologically, its motive is the recovery of the object, in the form in which Kant left that problem and the German idealists and the Romantic poets picked it up, viz., a recovery of the thing-in-itself; in particular, of the relation between the subject of knowledge and its object. Morally, its motive is to answer, by transforming, the problem of the freedom of the will in the midst of a universe of natural laws, by which our conduct, like the rest of nature, is determined. *Walden,* in effect, provides a transcendental deduction for the concepts of the thing-in-itself and for determination.[72]

The task of acknowledging the limits of sense is a search for *a priori* conditions, a search that culminates in the experimental discovery of necessities of human nature, the historical recovery of the thing-in-itself. For Thoreau, this is a task of determination, a task wherein we find freedom. Thoreau calls for rethinking of necessity; Cavell writes:

We crave only reality; but since "We know not where we are" (XVIII, 16) and only "esteem truth remote" (II, 21) — that is, we cannot believe that it is under our feet — we despair of ourselves and let our despair dictate what we call reality: "When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessaries and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left" (I, 10). The way we live is not necessary, in this "comparatively free country." … It follows that this life has been chosen; that since we are living and pursuing it, we are choosing it. This

---

[72] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 94–95.

does not appear to those leading it to be the case; they think they haven't the means to live any other way. "One young man of my acquaintance, who has inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, *if he had the means*" (I, 99). But the truth appears to the writer, as if in a vision, a vision of true necessities, that the necessaries of life *are* the means of life, the ways it is lived; therefore to say we haven't the means for a different way, in particular for a way which is to discover what the true necessaries and means of life in fact are, is irrational. It expresses the opinion that our current necessities are our final ones. We have defined our lives in front. What at first seems like a deliberate choice turns out to be a choice all right (they honestly think there is no choice *left*), but not a deliberate one, not one weighed and found good, but one taken without pondering, or lightly; they have never preferred it. And yet this is nothing less than a choice of one's life.[73]

We suppose our way of life to be necessary when it is not necessary; surrounded by supposed necessities, Thoreau calls for the determination of true necessities. These necessities are means of life; they are *necessary* means. What makes these means necessary is our *need* of them; the necessities of life are what we need. When what we suppose is necessary is not necessary at all, we are confused about what we need; then we need to be reminded of what we really need, and so need the determination of true necessities. What we need is a new way of living, a way of living that is a way of determination, life becoming the determination of what we need, life becoming the search for true necessities, life becoming the discovery of the necessary means of life.

Wittgenstein calls for such determination when he calls for us to "[turn] our whole examination around," adding, "the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the fixed point of our real need."[74] Thoreau, too, is writing as one in need of a change of direction, as one who needs reorientation by means of his real need. He needs to determine his real need if he is to be oriented by means of it as one needs to determine the position of the sun if one is to be oriented by means of it. He needs to determine his real need because he is confused about his need; he needs to find true necessities because he is surrounded by supposed necessities that are not necessities at

---

[73] Ibid., 72–73. Cavell quotes from Thoreau, *Walden*, 586, 399, 329, 378.
[74] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §108, 40.

all. He needs orientation because we have become lost. This is why he needs to *search* for necessities, why he needs to *discover* them experimentally, why his *finding* of them has a *history* that can be recounted in *Walden*. Thoreau writes, "We know not where we are."[75] Since we do not know where we are, Emerson asks, "Where do we find ourselves?," and answers:

> In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none. We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one which go upward and out of sight.[76]

Not knowing where we are, we find ourselves in a world of which we do not know the limits, and believe that it has none. We awake and find ourselves on a stair, but we do not believe there is a ground below us. We do not see the ground that lies before us as the ground. What we suppose necessary is our way of living, and we live as ones lost, lost because we do not know what is necessary and believe nothing is; we thereby resign ourselves to the necessity of our lost condition. Our way of living is our way of laboring, and Thoreau sees us laboring desperately:

> I would fain say something… [concerning] you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition, especially your outward condition or circumstances in this world, in this town, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is, whether it cannot be improved as well as not. I have travelled a good deal in Concord; and everywhere, in shops, and offices, and fields, the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways… The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor. They have no friend Iolas to burn with a hot iron the root of the hydras head, but as soon as one head is crushed, two spring up.
>
> I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms,

[75] Thoreau, *Walden*, 586.
[76] Emerson, "Experience," 471.

houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born?… The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.

But men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man is soon ploughed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool's life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before…

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation…

When we consider what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessaries and means of life, it appears as if men had deliberately chosen the common mode of living because they preferred it to any other. Yet they honestly think there is no choice left.[77]

Those who are said to live in New England are resigned to desperation, supposing their desperate labors to be necessary, supposing there is no alternative to living as one employed in a series of projects limited by nothing but death. Thoreau calls this the reader's condition, and asks whether it needs to be; Thoreau's reader needs this question to be asked because the reader's condition is the condition of one who does not ask this question, one who does not ask whether the condition is necessary. Cavell writes, "Our labors—the *way* we labor—are not responses to true need, but hectic efforts to keep ourselves from the knowledge of what is needful, from the promise of freedom."[78] We need to be educated in what is needful; Cavell writes:

---

[77] Thoreau, *Walden*, 325–327, 329.
[78] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 78.

> The first step in attending to our education is to observe the strangeness of our lives, our estrangement from ourselves, the lack of necessity in what we profess to be necessary. The second step is to grasp the true necessity of human strangeness as such, the opportunity of outwardness.[79]

By raising the question of whether we need to live in this desperate condition, Thoreau makes our condition strange to us, estranging us from ourselves, showing us that we took our condition to be necessary without questioning its necessity, and so showing us our failure to acknowledge our condition as the condition of those who fail to acknowledge their condition. Then we need to learn that our real need is precisely this estrangement, that this estrangement is the condition of the possibility of outwardness.

Cavell writes of the opportunity of outwardness as the opportunity of "outsideness to the world, distance from it, the position of stranger"; he writes that we need outsideness, distance, because, "To allow the world to change, and to learn change from it, to permit it strangers, accepting its own strangeness, are conditions of knowing it now."[80] We can only know the world by acknowledging its separateness from us, by acknowledging its strangeness to us, by acknowledging that we are strangers to it; desperately avoiding this acknowledgement, we lose our concept of the world. This is why Cavell is convinced that the epistemological motive of *Walden* is the recovery of the object, the recovery of the thing-in-itself, Thoreau providing a transcendental deduction for the concept of the thing-in-itself by showing that human strangeness makes possible knowledge of the world *as* world. Cavell writes:

> This is the place, but not the time, to try to make clearer what I mean by saying that *Walden* provides a transcendental deduction of the category of the thing-in-itself. I do not want to leave this claim without some explicit justification because it seems on the surface at best a play, at worst a contradiction in Kantian terms: the concept of the thing-in-itself is the result, if not exactly the conclusion, of Kant's idea of a transcendental deduction of the categories; it stands for the fact that knowledge has *limits*, or conditions. The concept, so to speak, just says that it has no transcendental deduction, that its object is not an object of knowledge for

---

[79] Ibid., 55.
[80] Ibid., 55, 119.

us, so to ask for a deduction of it is, on Kant's program, senseless. But what is "a thing which is not an object of knowledge for us"? Everyone involved with Kant's thought recognizes a problem here, the implication that there are things just like the things we know (or features of the very things we know) which, not answering to our conditions for knowing anything, are unknowable by us. We oughtn't to be able to attach any meaning at all to such an implication. If something does not answer to our conditions of knowledge then it is not subject to what we understand as knowledge, and that means that it is not what we understand as an object. A thing which we cannot know is not a thing. Then why are we led to speak otherwise? What is the sense that something escapes the conditions of knowledge? It is, I think, the sense, or fact, that our primary relation to the world is not one of knowing it (understood as achieving certainty of it based upon the senses). This is the truth of skepticism. A Kantian "answer" to skepticism would be to accept its truth while denying the apparent implication that this is a *failure* of knowledge. This is the role the thing-in-itself ought, as it were, to have played. The idea of God is that of a relation in which the world as a whole stands; call it a relation of dependency, or of having something "beyond" it. The idea of the thing-in-itself is the idea of a relation in which we stand to the world as a whole; call it a relation of the world's externality (not each object's externality to every other — that is the idea of space; but the externality of all objects to us). When I said that Kant ought to have provided a deduction of the thing-in-itself, I meant that he had left unarticulated an essential feature (category) of objectivity itself, viz., that of *a world apart from me in which* objects are met. The externality of the world is articulated by Thoreau as its nextness to me.[81]

In his essay "The Avoidance of Love," Cavell characterizes what he calls the truth of skepticism as follows:

> [W]e think skepticism must mean that we cannot know the world exists, and hence that perhaps there isn't one (a conclusion some profess to admire and others to fear). Whereas what skepticism suggests is that since we cannot know the world exists, its presentness to us cannot be a function of knowing. The world is to be *accepted,* as the presentness of other minds is not to be known, but acknowledged.[82]

---

[81] Ibid., 106–107.

[82] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love" in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays, Updated Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 324.

Thoreau writes that he went to Walden Pond to be taught the necessaries of life.[83] He found that in our desperate labors we refuse to accept the world, refuse to acknowledge its presence, and that we avoid confrontation with this refusal by trying to escape our condition through hectic efforts. He found that our real need is to acknowledge our condition, and that the acknowledgement of our condition is the acknowledgement of our strangeness to ourselves, and that the acknowledgement of our strangeness to ourselves is the condition of accepting the world.

<div align="center">V</div>

In *Pragmatism*, William James writes:

> No particular results then, so far, but only an attitude of orientation, is what the pragmatic method means. *The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.*[84]

James is calling for a reorientation away from supposed necessities; but what is the alternative to supposed necessities here? We are told: last things, fruits, consequences, facts. But are any of these real necessities? Is James addressing our real need? Or is it rather that, for James, all necessities are merely supposed, so that the alternative to supposing necessities is ridding ourselves of them altogether? Thoreau wrote of the necessities of life as means of living. James is not asking us to look away from supposed necessities and towards necessary means; he is telling us to look away from supposed necessities and towards ends, fruits, consequences. We are to look away from first things and towards last things. We are to look towards fruit; but what of that which bears fruit? We are to look towards consequences; but what of that which has consequence? We

---

[83] Thoreau, *Walden*, 332.
[84] William James, *Pragmatism* in *Writings 1902–1910: The Varieties of Religious Experience/Pragmatism/A Pluralistic Universe/The Meaning of Truth/Some Problems of Philosophy/Essays*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (New York: The Library of America, 1987), 510.

consider consequences when we are faced with a choice. But what choice do we have about our real need? Thoreau writes as one acknowledging that our condition is one of being lost. Is this the sound we get from James? Or is it rather that the pragmatic method tells us we are perfectly capable of figuring out where we want to go and getting there if we set our minds to it and use some elbow grease? James tells us we are to look towards facts. What are facts for the pragmatist? Last things? Fruits? Consequences?

Pragmatism is forward looking, calling us onwards and upwards. So before we say that pragmatism is an inheritor of transcendentalism, we might ask whether it makes any difference that Thoreau called us downward:[85]

> Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a *point d'appui*, below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.[86]

When James calls on us to look towards facts, is it because he craves only reality, be it life or death? Or is it rather that he wants us to focus on life, on our going about our business as we try to avoid death? Is the pragmatic method calling on us to seek out the cimeter and allow its sweet edge to divide us through heart and marrow so we will happily conclude our mortal careers? When Thoreau calls us to the *point d'appui*, he is calling us towards what was there before the freshet of shams and appearances had

---

[85] See Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 71.
[86] Thoreau, *Walden*, 400.

gathered, to what was there originally. He is calling us towards facts because facts *are* first things. When the pragmatic method calls on us to look away from first things and towards facts, what becomes of Thoreau's hard bottom with rocks in place? Is it our real need, or is it a supposed necessity? Cavell writes:

> The path to a point of support and origin is not immediately attractive, but the hope in it, and the hope that we can take it, is exactly that we are *living* another way, pursuing death, desperate wherever we are; so that if we could go all the way, go *through* Paris and London, *through* church and state, *through* poetry and philosophy and religion, we might despair of despair itself, rather than of life, and cast *that* off, and begin, and so reverse our direction.[87]

How are we to despair of despair? Do we reverse our direction by going onwards and upwards, or by going downward? Which direction are we currently looking toward? Which direction are we looking away from?

Is our relation to the world one of directing it or one of being directed by it? If the world is the bearer of meaning, where is the source to be found? Does the director of the deep focus film cede the power of direction to the audience or to the world screened? Do the audience members choose to see this or that aspect, deciding to direct their attention this way or that, or are they interested, attracted, drawn, struck, and seized by the world screened? James writes:

> Now however fixed these elements of reality may be, we still have a certain freedom in our dealings with them. Take our sensations. *That* they are is undoubtedly beyond our control; but *which* we attend to, note, and make emphatic in our conclusions depends on our own interests; and, according as we lay the emphasis here or there, quite different formulations of truth result. We read the same facts differently…
>
> What we say about reality thus depends on the perspective into which we throw it. The *that* of it is its own; but the *what* depends on the *which*; and the which depends on *us*. Both the sensational and the relational parts of reality are dumb: they say absolutely nothing about themselves. We it is who have to speak for

[87] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 71.

them… A sensation is rather like a client who has given his case to a lawyer and then has passively to listen in the courtroom to whatever account of his affairs, pleasant or unpleasant, the lawyer finds it most expedient to give.

Hence, even in the field of sensation, our minds exert a certain arbitrary choice. By our inclusions and omissions we trace the field's extent; by our emphasis we mark its foreground and its background; by our order we read it in this direction or in that. We receive in short the block of marble, but we carve the statue ourselves.

This applies to the 'eternal' parts of reality as well: we shuffle our perceptions of intrinsic relation and arrange them just as freely. We read them in one serial order or another, class them in this way or in that, treat one or the other as more fundamental, until our beliefs about them form those bodies of truth known as logics, geometries, or arithmetics, in each and all of which the form and order in which the whole is cast is flagrantly man-made.

Thus, to say nothing of the new *facts* which men add to the matter of reality by the acts of their own lives, they have already impressed their mental forms on that whole third of reality which I have called 'previous truths.'… It is therefore only the smallest and recentest fraction of the first two parts of reality that comes to us without the human touch, and that fraction has immediately to become humanized in the sense of being squared, assimilated, or in some way adapted, to the humanized mass already there…

When we talk of reality 'independent' of human thinking, then, it seems a thing very hard to find. It reduces to the notion of what is just entering into experience, and yet to be named, or else to some imagined aboriginal presence in experience, before any belief about the presence had arisen, before any human conception had been applied. It is what is absolutely dumb and evanescent, the merely ideal limit of our minds. We may glimpse it, but we never grasp it; what we grasp is always some substitute for it which previous human thinking has peptonized and cooked for our consumption. If so vulgar an expression were allowed us, we might say that wherever we find it, it has been already *faked*.[88]

When James tells us that we receive the block of marble but carve the statue ourselves, he is not speaking as a carver. Bazin would not need to tell James that one and the same set of facts can be read in three incompatible ways, but he might feel the need to tell James

---

[88] James, *Pragmatism*, 594–595.

that our ability to read the same facts differently depends on the facts lending themselves to those readings. James wants us to see that facts may mean this or they may mean that, but is he helping us apprehend facts in their capacity to bear meaning? When James tells us that reality is dumb, that it says absolutely nothing about itself, that it is we who have to speak for it, and that reality has to passively listen while we put it into whatever words we find it most expedient to put it into, he is telling us that reality makes no claims on us, that it has no rights to be respected; this Jamesian lawyer does not allow his client to assert herself. When James ends his account of our freedom in our dealings with the flagrantly man-made reality (our putting it in the service of our interests, our exerting certain arbitrary choices over it, our impressing ourselves on it, our squaring, assimilating, and adapting it, our applying our own conceptions to it, our cooking it for consumption) by telling us that wherever we find reality independent of human thinking it has already been *faked*, we may start to wonder whether he thinks there is any disclosure or only disclosing gestures. Where world was, there practice shall be. So which is it? There it was, use by use, the practices that took the place of reality? Or: The uses of things entangle and confuse, reality survives our practices? Where is the hard bottom and rocks in place, which we call *reality*? Is James looking towards it or away from it?

When one is a modeller, carving and modelling metaphors may seem more or less interchangeable, both shapes we impose on things, perhaps arbitrarily, or at any rate in ways that suit our purposes:

> What shall we call a *thing* anyhow? It seems quite arbitrary, for we carve out everything, just as we carve out constellations, to suit our human purposes… The permanently real things for you are your individual persons. To an anatomist, again, those persons are but organisms, and the real things are the organs. Not the organs, so much as their constituent cells, say the histologists; not the cells, but their molecules, say in turn the chemists.

> We break the flux of sensible reality into things, then, at our will. We create the

subjects of our true as well as of our false propositions.[89]

We are told that "the most ancient parts of truth… also once were plastic," and that "[a] new opinion counts as 'true' just in proportion as it gratifies the individual's desire to assimilate the novel in his experience to his beliefs in stock."[90] When James writes that there is "truth that we *find* merely," he adds that it is "only the dead heart of the living tree," having grown "stiff with years of veteran service and petrified in men's regard by sheer antiquity."[91] Whereas James tells us of soft wood becoming hard as rock, Thoreau tells us of the hard bottom and rocks getting covered over with the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance; these conflicting chronologies of the hard and the soft turn on the question of whether it is death that is hard or the source of life that is hard. James defends what he calls "[t]he humanist view of 'reality,' as something resisting yet malleable," but we get a hint of what this resistance comes to and how it is to be treated when he calls, "the *previous truths* of which every new inquiry takes account" "a much less obdurately resisting factor" that "often ends by giving way."[92]

On what James calls the humanist position, "we can learn the limits of plasticity only by trying, and… we ought to start as if it were wholly plastic, acting methodically on that assumption, and stopping only when we are decisively rebuked."[93] The word "decisively" is crucial. When we treat the world as if it were wholly plastic, as something that will give way if we just push hard enough, we do not treat any rebuke as decisive. When there's a will, there's a way; what resists the will today can be overcome tomorrow. To the Promethean imagination, we can always make our way in the world; we may be rebuked, but we will not be defeated. To the Promethean imagination, the acknowledgement of limitation is surrender – but why? What would be lost if the Promethean imagination were forced to surrender? What would have to be

---

[89] Ibid., 597–598.
[90] Ibid., 514.
[91] Ibid., 515.
[92] Ibid., 599–600, 594.
[93] Ibid., 593.

acknowledged? Thoreau says that the acknowledgement of limitation is he acknowledgement of true necessity, and the acknowledgement of true necessity is the acknowledgement of real need. We speak of necessity because we are dependent, vulnerable, and exposed before reality. We avoid speaking of necessity because we want to be gods without need. The modeller keeps telling us that our needs change, that they are not permanent; the carver keeps reminding us what when our needs change need remains, that while needs are not permanent need is. Nothing is more human than the Promethean imagination because nothing is more human than the desire to escape the human.[94] What humans find unbearable is their condition. That the modellers are thought life-affirming and the carvers life-denying shows that we have long since turned our way of life into the denial of life, turning our lives into a perpetual escape from life, a desperate succession of projects that allow us to avoid acknowledging our real need. Thoreau did not write in anticipation of the pragmatist event; he wrote in the wake of it.

VI

In a footnote to "Must We Mean What We Say?," Cavell writes:

> Wittgenstein's role in combatting the idea of privacy (whether of the meaning of what is said or what is done), and in emphasizing the *functions* and *contexts* of language, scarcely needs to be mentioned. It might be worth pointing out that these teachings are fundamental to American pragmatism; but then we must keep in mind how different their arguments sound, and admit that in philosophy it is the sound which makes all the difference.[95]

We might set out to find what definite difference is made by replacing a Thoreauvian

---

[94] Cavell writes, "[P]hilosophy concerns those necessities we cannot, being human, fail to know. Except that nothing is more human than to deny them." See "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy" in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays, Updated Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 96.

[95] Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?" in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays, Updated Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 36.

sound with a Jamesian sound. Here is James:

Take, for instance, yonder object on the wall. You and I consider it to be a 'clock,' altho no one of us has seen the hidden works that make it one. We let our notion pass for true without attempting to verify. If truths mean verification-process essentially, ought we then to call such unverified truths as this abortive? No, for they form the overwhelmingly large number of the truths we live by. Indirect as well as direct verifications pass muster… The verification of the assumption here means its leading to no frustration or contradiction. Verifi*ability* of wheels and weights and pendulum is as good as verification… [I]f everything runs on harmoniously, we are so sure that verification is possible that we omit it, and are usually justified by all that happens.

Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs 'pass,' so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass so long as nobody refuses them.[96]

Here is Thoreau:

As I was desirous to recover the long lost bottom of Walden Pond, I surveyed it carefully, before the ice broke up, early in '46, with compass and chain and sounding line. There have been many stories told about the bottom, or rather no bottom of this pond, which certainly had no foundation for themselves. It is remarkable how long men will believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it. I have visited two such Bottomless Ponds in one walk in this neighborhood. Many have believed that Walden reached quite through to the other side of the globe. Some who have lain flat on the ice for a long time, looking down through the illusive medium, perchance with watery eyes into the bargain, and driven to hasty conclusions by the fear of catching cold in their breasts, have seen vast holes "into which a load of hay might be driven," if there were anybody to drive it, the undoubted source of the Styx and entrance to the Infernal Regions from these parts. Others have gone down from the village with a "fifty-six" and a wagon-load of inch rope, but yet have failed to find any bottom; for while the "fifty-six" was resting by the way, they were paying out the rope in the vain attempt to fathom their truly immeasurable capacity for marvelousness. But I can assure my readers that Walden has a reasonably tight bottom at a not unreasonable, though at an unusual, depth. I fathomed it easily with a cod-line and a stone weighing about a pound and a half, and could tell accurately when the stone left the bottom, by having to pull so much harder

---

[96] James, *Pragmatism*, 576–577.

before the water got underneath to help me. The greatest depth was exactly one hundred and two feet; to which may be added the five feet which it has risen since, making one hundred and seven. This is a remarkable depth for so small an area; yet not one inch of it can be spared by the imagination. What if all ponds were shallow? Would it not react on the minds of men? I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless.[97]

Thoreau did not need to be reminded that our thoughts and beliefs 'pass' so long as nothing challenges them; he too found it remarkable how long men would believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it. When we let what passes muster on a given day tell us what reality is, reality does indeed look infinitely malleable, like clay in our hands. "While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless," and we continue to believe in the infinite when we fancy ourselves gods without need, fancying the world wholly plastic. Then we believe there is no hard bottom, no foundation, to sound. Then we believe that were we to wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, we would never come to a hard bottom and rocks in place which we could call *reality*, never finding a fixed *point d'appui* by means of which we are oriented, never landing on a place where we might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, a Realometer, for future ages already know the freshet of shams and appearances is infinitely deep, gathered over nothing but more of themselves.

Is the sound*ability* of Walden Pond as good as its sounding? Is there a gain in allowing Walden to be heard when it still passes muster to say we could allow it to be heard? James continues:

Another great reason – besides economy of time – for waiving complete verification in the usual business of life is that all things exist in kinds and not singly. Our world is found once for all to have that peculiarity. So that when we have once directly verified our ideas about one specimen of a kind, we consider

<hr>

[97] Thoreau, *Walden*, 549–551.

ourselves free to apply them to other specimens without verification. A mind that habitually discerns the kind of thing before it, and acts by the law of the kind immediately, without pausing to verify, will be a 'true' mind in ninety-nine out of a hundred emergencies, proved so by its conduct fitting everything it meets, and getting no refutation.[98]

Thoreau goes on:

> I love to weigh, to settle, to gravitate toward that which most strongly and rightfully attracts me; …not suppose a case, but take the case that is; to travel the only path I can, and that on which no power can resist me. It affords me no satisfaction to commence to spring an arch before I have got a solid foundation. Let us not play at kittlybenders. There is a solid bottom everywhere. We read that the traveler asked the boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom. The boy replied that it had. But presently the traveler's horse sank in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, "I thought you said that this bog had a hard bottom." "So it has," answered the latter, "but you have not got half way to it yet." So it is with the bogs and quicksands of society; but he is an old boy that knows it. Only what is thought said or done at a certain rare coincidence is good. I would not be one of those who will foolishly drive a nail into mere lath and plastering; such a deed would keep me awake nights. Give me a hammer, and let me feel for the furring. Do not depend on the putty. Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction… Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work.[99]

For Thoreau, "There is solid bottom everywhere," but we rarely take the time to sound it. Instead, we cover over the hard bottom and rocks with the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, and shams; we find the bogs and quicksands of society all around us. We need to work and wedge our feet downward to reach the solid bottom, and it is a long way down. Gravitating downward, we will eventually reach first things, things that have gravity. We will know we have reached them because they will be hard as rock, not muddy clay in our hands. Thoreau tells us, "Be it life or death, we crave only reality." But do we satisfy this craving when we pursue the usual business of life, letting our notions pass for true without attempting to

---

[98] James, *Pragmatism*, 577.
[99] Thoreau, *Walden*, 584–585.

verify, getting by in ninety-nine out of a hundred emergencies, waiving complete verification for the sake of economy of time, everything running harmoniously as we are not met with refutation or contradiction, our conduct fitting everything it meets or at least not being met with too much frustration, our words passing muster and our bank-notes yet to be refused? Or does the bog deepen?

How did we lose the sound of Walden? Was Thoreau understood and refuted before it was decided he did not pass muster in philosophy? Have we come to terms with our transcendentalist past? If not yet, when? Here is a sample of some of the ways James distinguishes pragmatists from their philosophical opponents:

> A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad *a priori* reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power. That means the empiricist temper regnant, and the rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretence of finality in truth.[100]

> The pragmatist clings to facts and concreteness, observes truth at its work in particular cases, and generalizes. Truth, for him, becomes a class-name for all sorts of definite working-values in experience. For the rationalist it remains a pure abstraction, to the bare name of which we must defer. When the pragmatist undertakes to show in detail just *why* we must defer, the rationalist is unable to recognize the concretes from which his own abstraction is taken.[101]

> The world to which your philosophy-professor introduces you is simple, clean and noble. The contradictions of real life are absent from it. Its architecture is classic. Principles of reason trace its outlines, logical necessities cement its parts. Purity and dignity are what it most expresses. It is a kind of marble temple shining on a hill.

> In point of fact it is far less an account of this actual world than a clear addition built upon it, a classic sanctuary in which the rationalist fancy may take refuge

---

[100] James, *Pragmatism*, 508–509.
[101] Ibid., 516.

from the intolerably confused and gothic character which mere facts present. It is no *explanation* of our concrete universe, it is another thing altogether, a substitute for it, a remedy, a way of escape.[102]

Where is Thoreau in these descriptions? Is Thoreau against concreteness, against open air and possibilities of nature, in favor of dogma and artificiality? If not, is he on board with the pragmatist project? Or shall we say that Thoreau's ecstasy in the fact that the hard bottom can be sounded shows that he still has many of the inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers, the bad *a priori* reasons, the fixed principles, the closed systems, the pretended absolute and origins? Shall we say that Thoreau is turned away from fact? Does it pass muster to say the author of *Walden* writes of reality as a pure abstraction, a bare name to which we must defer? Shall we demand that Thoreau show us in detail just *why* we must defer when the bottom is sounded? Or shall we say that Thoreau does not recognize the concretes from which his own abstraction is taken? Is Thoreau attempting to *explain* our concrete universe, substituting another world for it, giving us a way of escape? Who is trying to escape our condition here? Who is seeking refuge from the human? Who is coming to terms with our real need? Wittgenstein followed one of his own remarks with the reply, "So I am trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism," following that with the comment, "Here I am being thwarted by a kind of *Weltanschauung*."[103] When we say Thoreau is trying to say something that sounds like pragmatism, Thoreau must know how Wittgenstein feels.

Thoreau has something to say about a world in which the bank-notes we keep circulating become our primary contact with reality, something about the world blocked by such a world, something about the world to be recovered from such a world:

> Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy

---

102 Ibid., 495–496.

103 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), §422, 54.

tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence,—that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which still is built on purely illusory foundations. Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser by experience, that is, by failure. I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that *is* which *appears* to be.[104]

There is a world of difference between respecting only what is inevitable and continuing to circulate whatever is still passable. Thoreau called for deliberation and for determination, for weight and for gravity, for the task of settling ourselves downward. What James calls the humanist position is the reverse of what Thoreau would call humanization. Cavell writes:

> The work of humanization is still to be done. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought to be bottomless. So long as we will not take our beliefs all the way to genuine knowledge, to conviction, but keep letting ourselves be driven to more or less hasty conclusions, we will keep misplacing the infinite, and so grasp neither heaven nor earth. There is a solid bottom everywhere. But how are we going to weigh toward it, arrive at confident conclusions from which we can reverse direction, spring an arch, choose our lives, and go about our business?
>
> Despair is not bottomless, merely endless; a hopelessness, or fear, of reaching bottom. It takes illusions for its object, from which, in turn, like all ill-educated experience, it is confirmed in what it already knew. So its conclusions too are somewhat hasty, its convictions do not truly convict us.[105]

Wittgenstein writes, "We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to

---

[104] Thoreau, *Walden*, 398–399.
[105] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 76.

walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!"[106] When

Thoreau writes, "Let us not play at kittlybenders. There is a solid bottom everywhere," he

is telling us not to run over the thin bending ice at the top of the pond when the solid

bottom is all around us. When we want to walk, we need friction; we need reality to get a

grip on us, and so we need the hard bottom at our feet. Cavell writes, "The human

imagination is released by fact. Alone, left to its own devices, it will not recover reality, it

will not form an edge," the sweet edge that divides us through heart and marrow, at last

letting reality in.[107] Left to its own devices, the human imagination becomes Promethean,

in flight of the cimeter that would give us reality. For James too there is violence, but not

towards that which blocks our access to reality, not towards that which must be cut

through if reality is to be recovered:

> In our cognitive as well as in our active life we are creative. We *add*, both to the
> subject and to the predicate part of reality. The world stands really malleable,
> waiting to receive its final touches at our hands. Like the kingdom of heaven, it
> suffers human violence willingly. Man *engenders* truths upon it.[108]

It is time to stop doing violence to the world and assuming the world wills it. It is time

for man to stop engendering truths upon it. To quote Cavell:

> With his "jealousy," Othello's violence studies the human life of knowledge
> under the consequence of skepticism. This violence in human knowing is, I
> gather, what comes out of Heidegger's perception that philosophy has, from the
> beginning, but, if I understand, with increasing velocity in the age of technology,
> conceived knowledge under the aegis of dominion, of the concept of a concept as
> a matter, say, of grasping a thing. In Kant this concept of the concept is pictured
> as that of synthesizing things, putting together appearances, yoking them, to yield
> objects of knowledge: Knowledge itself is explicitly, as opposed to the reception
> of sensuous intuitions, an active thing – Kant says spontaneous; intuitions alone
> occur to us passively. (In a motto, there is no intellectual intuition; or, there is no
> world without the suffering, the sensuous reception, of intuitions together with the

---

[106] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §107, 40.
[107] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 75.
[108] James, *Pragmatism*, 599.

active emplacement of concepts upon them.) I have claimed elsewhere that Emerson contests Kant on this fundamental ground of the *Critique of Pure Reason.* Or if Kant is himself ambivalent about this matter, then Emerson may be seen to contest the ambivalence, putting his weight on the side of receptiveness, of, say, intelligible intuition. What this means for Emerson, however, is not to be taken at face, or Kantian, value – as my linking of what Emerson sees in intuition with what he expects from tuition should indicate. I add that the suggestion of a masculine/feminine contest over the nature of knowing, over, say, the economy as between activity and passivity in knowing, is not to be missed here, however difficult it will be to develop usefully. It shows up, or fails to show up sufficiently, in the habitual citing of the biblical use of the term "knowing." The term is always, so far as I recall, used (and always in the past tense?) to name the man's access to the woman, not hers to him.[109]

Thoreau writes, "That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way."[110] There is something in the world that has not yet been profaned, something still sacred and auroral, and we must arrive at the world earlier and earlier if we are to find it. Then we might find what Stevens wrote of: Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself. For as Cavell writes:

> Stevens counteracts the suggestion that we may therefore never see the world as it is in the short poem… "Not Ideas about the Thing but the Thing Itself," which concludes, "It was like / A new knowledge of reality." The approach to reality, to a world, as Kant put the idea, outside of me (to which skepticism scandalously denies the human mind access) is here understood by Stevens as requiring that we come to it early and earlier. Each of the opening two (of the six three-line) stanzas of the poem invokes the idea of new or renewed knowledge of reality by way of an anticipation, something coming early, coming before. I quote these two stanzas:
>
> At the earliest ending of winter,
> In March, a scrawny cry from outside
> Seemed like a sound in his mind.

---

[109] Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare, Updated Edition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 9–10.
[110] Thoreau, *Walden*, 393.

He knew that he heard it,
A bird's cry, at daylight or before,
In the early March wind.[111]

Is the motive for metaphor ontological or pragmatic?[112]

VII

After quoting Tomlinson on the tact needed to show and renew the proper
plenitude of fact, Donoghue (whose book on carvers, *The Ordinary Universe*, is subtitled
Soundings in Modern Literature) writes, "This is Tomlinson's reverence, acknowledging
that we receive more than we give, and that we make up the difference—if we do—by
tact, in wonder and local recognition."[113] We may say that this local recognition is
acknowledgement; what Tomlinson acknowledges is that, receiving more than we give,
we are tasked with acknowledging all that we are given. Donoghue quotes from
Tomlinson:

That which we were,
Confronted by all that we are not,
Grasps in subservience its replenishment.[114]

and:

To love
is to see,
to let be
this disparateness

---

[111] Cavell, "Anecdote of a Season" in *The Cinema of Robert Gardner*, ed. Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor (New York: Berg, 2007), 220–221. The two stanzas quoted are from Stevens, "Not Ideas About the Thing But the Thing Itself," 451.

[112] Stevens, "The Motive for Metaphor" in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 257.

[113] Donoghue, *The Ordinary Universe*, 24.

[114] Tomlinson, "The Atlantic" in *New Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2009), 21; quoted by Donoghue in *The Ordinary Universe*, 24.

and to live within
the unrestricted boundary between.[115]

In Tomlinson's poetry, Donoghue sees a revelation of the resources of "the language of fact and being," the language that heightens our sense of the all-that-we-are-not that confronts us; Donoghue mentions the importance to Tomlinson of such phrases as "the mystery of fact."[116]

We may be reminded of Bazin's contrasting the Kuleshov experiment with Rossellini's desire to preserve the mystery of the human face. Daniel Morgan has written about Bazin's aesthetics as centrally concerned with the acknowledgment of the reality exhibited by film.[117] Bazin's reflections on Rossellini play a major role in Morgan's essays, and those reflections center on the relations between fact, meaning, the imagination, stones, and clay. Describing Rossellini's *Paisà*, Bazin writes:

> A baby cries besides its dead parents. There is a fact. How did the Germans discover that the parents were guilty? How is it that the child is still alive? That is not the film's concern, and yet a whole train of connected events led to this particular outcome. In any case, the film maker does not ordinarily show us everything. That is impossible – but the things he selects and the things he leaves out tend to form a logical pattern by way of which the mind passes easily from cause to effect. The technique of Rossellini undoubtedly maintains an intelligible succession of events, but these do not mesh like a chain with the sprockets of a wheel. The mind has to leap from one event to the other as one leaps from stone to stone in crossing a river. It may happen that one's foot hesitates between two rocks, or that one misses one's footing and slips. The mind does likewise. Actually it is not of the essence of a stone to allow people to cross rivers without wetting their feet any more than the divisions of a melon exist to allow the head of the family to divide it equally. Facts are facts, our imagination makes use of them, but they do not exist inherently for this purpose. In the usual shooting script (according to a process resembling the classical novel form) the fact comes under the scrutiny of the camera, is divided up, analyzed, and put together again, undoubtedly without entirely losing its factual nature; but the latter, presumably,

[115] Tomlinson, "Face and Image" in *New Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2009), 111; quoted by Donoghue in *The Ordinary Universe*, 31.

[116] Donoghue, *The Ordinary Universe*, 41, 29.

[117] See Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 443–481; and "Bazin's Modernism," *Paragraph* 36.1 (2013): 10–30.

is enveloped in abstraction, as the clay of a brick is enveloped by the wall which is not as yet present but which will multiply its parallelipeds. For Rossellini, facts take on a meaning, but not like a tool whose function has predetermined its form. The facts follow one another, and the mind is forced to observe their resemblance; and thus, by recalling one another, they end by meaning something which was inherent in each and which is, so to speak, the moral of the story – a moral the mind cannot fail to grasp since it was drawn from reality itself.[118]

Rossellini has found a way to acknowledge reality in its capacity to bear meaning prior to its meaning this or that. The stones in the river allow us to get from here to there, but they are not made for that purpose. In *Paisà*, Bazin sees an acknowledgement of facts as facts, as given to us before our imagination makes use of them. This acknowledgement takes the form of a refusal to shape the material, a refusal to treat it like clay to be molded into a brick and thereby placed in the service of the wall we are building. To refuse such shaping is not to refuse intelligibility, but to show us the bases of intelligibility in the facts themselves. The stones in the river are not there to allow us to cross the river without wetting our feet, but they do lend themselves to that purpose. That the stones lend themselves to that purpose depends on the relation of each stone to each other, as one fact may bring out the meaning of another fact. Hence Bazin defines a fact as, "A fragment of concrete reality in itself multiple and full of ambiguity, whose meaning emerges only after the fact, thanks to other imposed facts between which the mind establishes certain relationships."[119] In Rossellini's acknowledgement of fact *as* fact, Bazin sees an acknowledgement of what he elsewhere calls the ontological ambiguity of reality or the ontological ambivalence of reality, the acknowledgement of the mystery of reality. When Bazin praises Rossellini for "[choosing] these "facts" carefully while at the same time respecting their factual integrity," respecting integrity is acknowledging them in their capacity to bear meaning, in their proper plenitude. [120] With Tomlinson, Bazin wants to acknowledge the mystery of fact.

---

[118] Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism (Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation)" in *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 2*, ed. and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 35–36.
[119] Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," p. 37.
[120] Ibid.

This acknowledgement can take other forms. Whereas we find Donoghue describing Pater as writing sentences that "ask to be read as if they wanted to be looked at, not merely to be understood," we find him describing William Carlos Williams as writing in a "language [that] is designed to be seen through; the object is deemed to be more important than the words."[121] The object is deemed to be more important than the words because it is the object that lends itself to being worded in the ways it is worded, the object that conditions what can be said about it. This is how Tomlinson reads one of Williams's most famous poems, XXII from *Spring and All*:[122]

> so much depends
> upon
> a red wheel
> barrow
> glazed with rain
> water
> beside the white
> chickens[123]

Tomlinson writes:

> What depends on the red wheelbarrow for Williams is the fact that its presence can be rendered over into words, that the perception can be slowed down and meditated on by regulating, line by line, the gradual appearance of these words. The imagination 'accurately accompanies' the wheelbarrow, or whatever facets of reality attract Williams, by not permitting too ready and emotional a fusion with them.[124]

Williams shows us how much depends upon the red wheelbarrow when, regulating the gradual appearance of the words, line by line, he separates wheel from barrow and rain

---

[121] Donoghue, *The Ordinary Universe*, 193.
[122] See Tomlinson, *American Essays*, 32–3.
[123] Williams, "XXII" in *Spring and All* in *Imaginations: Kora in Hell/Spring and All/The Descent of Winter/The Great American Novel/A Novelette & Other Prose*, ed. Webster Schott (New York: New Directions, 1970), 138.
[124] Tomlinson, *American Essays*, 33.

from water, that we may see whitechickens for the first time.[125] By acknowledging the independence of the wheelbarrow and allowing each of its facets to attract him in turn, Williams is brought to a new apprehension of the beings beside it. There is a freshness here; whitechickens differ from white chickens as rainwater differs from rain water. This perception of whitechickens restores freshness to rainwater, renewing our sense that it calls for a single word. We recover our sense of the distance that separates rainwater from such things as bottled water, drinking water, and fountain water, where a single word would be all wrong; we may in turn remember that our apprehension of what is under water is not an apprehension of what is underwater. Not just anything Williams could have written looking at the red wheelbarrow would have been a poem about the red wheelbarrow glazed with rainwater beside the white chickens; not just any combination of words would have granted these things the right autonomy for the words to be a wording of these things. Only certain combinations of words allow these things to assert themselves. Williams's poem does allow these things to assert themselves, and to assert themselves vividly; the freshness of the poem resides in the startling and unexpected way with which these things assert themselves. That these things can assert themselves in this startling and unexpected way has nothing to do with Williams; Williams could have written a *different* poem about the red wheelbarrow and Williams could have written a poem *not* about the red wheelbarrow, but Williams's being able to do either of those things depends on just certain combinations of words *being* poems about the red wheelbarrow. So much depends upon the red wheelbarrow because it is the red wheelbarrow that lends itself to being worded in a way that brings out the strangeness this poem brings out, the strangeness that makes us reach for a name.

       This feeling for the strangeness of things may find expression in one's attitude towards history. Writing of Williams's love of history and of his historical prose,

---

[125] By separating the compound word wheelbarrow between lines three and four, and then separating the compound word rainwater between lines five and six, Williams sets us up for a compound word beginning white- at the end of line seven, and line eight fills this word out as whitechickens. Here we see the art of regulating the gradual appearance of words line by line; the form of Williams's poem between lines three and six sets up the conditions for a new act of naming in the break between lines seven and eight.

Donoghue writes:

> If [Williams] saw a blackbird, he had no interest in the thirteen ways in which Stevens saw it: one way was enough, given reasonable lucidity… [Williams's] own mind worked best by pointing to things. This is what gives *In the American Grain* its remarkable animation. These things were done, Williams is constantly saying… Conrad speaks, in a letter, of the silence of fact: Williams understood that silence, and listened to it; he wrote thousands of words, but he never thought them more important than fact.[126]

One way of seeing the blackbird was enough for Williams, because it is the blackbird that allows for our thirteen ways of seeing it. His mind worked best by pointing to things because he wanted us to appreciate things *as* things, not as things under this or that aspect. One may acknowledge the silence of fact by acknowledging that the words of things entangle and confuse. Then one may aspire to make language more like pointing things out within that silence, writing as one constantly saying, "These things were done." This may take the form of writing in a language that is designed to be seen through; one is to look in the direction of the pointing, not at the hand that points. Donoghue quotes some of Williams's historical prose from "The American Background":

> It was Jefferson who, when President, would walk to his office in the mud, out of principle, and walk home again ignoring the mud, as against the others who would ride. And at the same time it was Jefferson who, recognising the imperious necessity for other loveliness to lay beside his own, such as it was, would inquire whether or not it might be possible, in securing a gardener, to get one who could at the same time play the flute.[127]

and comments:

> The relation between this prose and the historical fact upon which it is based is at

---

[126] Donoghue, *The Ordinary Universe*, 182. See Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: The Library of America, 1997), 74–76.

[127] Williams, "The American Background," *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1954), 139.

once close and devout. The sentences do not draw attention to themselves; they point to the density of what is there, in fact and event. Williams contributes to the fact only a sense of its meaning. The prose is imbued with this sense, but we feel it continuously along the line, it does not stop at any point to arrange the picture in its favour.[128]

By giving us only a sense of what these facts mean, Williams gives us a sense that there is meaning there to be brought out; but then rather than bringing the meaning out and turning the facts into a mere illustration of something about Jefferson, he leaves us with the density of fact and an intimation of meaning. This bears some comparison to what Bazin celebrated in Rossellini: in direct opposition to Kuleshov, Rossellini was concerned to preserve the mystery of the human face. Williams is showing us a way one might preserve the mystery of fact.

Why write of allowing things to assert themselves when we could write of people making assertions about them instead? For one thing, the way an object asserts itself is outside of our hands; we can acknowledge the way the object asserts itself or we can fail to acknowledge the way the object asserts itself, but we have no control over what awaits our acknowledgement. For another, we have come to associate assertion with imposition, as when Phillips, in his initial statement of the dilemma surrounding what modern people call creativity, asks, "Is the creative act an assertion or a disclosure?" Perhaps this reveals something of how we presently go about making assertions, as though we feel our assertions have become insistent. Then we may want to make our assertions otherwise. The *OED* lists the etymology of the word "assert" as follows:

> Latin *assert-* participial stem of *as-serĕre* (*< ad* to + *serĕre* to join, put) to put one's hand on the head of a slave, either to set him free or claim him for servitude, *hence*, to set free, protect, defend; to appropriate, claim; to affirm, declare, state.[129]

---

[128] Donoghue, *The Ordinary Universe*, 189.
[129] "assert, v.," OED Online, Oxford University Press, accessed November 26, 2017, http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/Entry/11821.

We call the making of an assertion the making of a claim, and so treat the act of asserting as the act of claiming. This way of speaking about assertion mobilizes all of the modelling metaphors; to assert something is to claim it, and so to lay claim to it, and so to take possession of it, and so to define ourselves as master of it, and so to force it to submit to our purposes, and so to put it in the service of our ends, and so to deny it its rights, and so to make it bear whatever we see fit to place on it, and so to turn bearing into enduring. When we orient towards asserting as claiming, the alternative meaning – asserting as setting free – seems utterly strange to us. Were we to orient towards asserting as setting free, we would set in motion the carving metaphors, the metaphors of release and liberation and bringing out of captivity and emergence from where things are presently trapped. Since we do not already orient towards asserting this way, the carver accepts that we treat the act of asserting as the act of claiming and changes the direction of assertion; the carver reminds us that things make claims on us, that they have rights, and so that we are not their masters and they are not their possessions, and so that they are not merely means to our ends, and so that they are not to be held captive by our language. What the carver hates most is our grasping acquisitiveness. So the carver calls on us to let things assert themselves.

Reading Heidegger in English translation, the sentence, "The primary significance of 'assertion' is '*pointing out*'" does not ring true.[130] When someone points at a blackbird, the blackbird stands apart from the one pointing, and we look at the blackbird rather than at the hand that points. This pointing gesture is not a clutching gesture; we do not think of pointing as a making-mine. We may imagine the one pointing at the blackbird saying, "Look!" No assertion is being made by the one pointing, but the blackbird is allowed to assert itself in their presence. Williams wanted a language that would be like pointing, a language that would allow the things spoken of or written about to assert themselves. To want this is to want a language in which freeing things takes the place of claiming things. To want this is to want to change our metaphors for the

---

[130] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2001), §33, 196.

experience of truth, and to want this because metaphor discloses the world. Here Heidegger gives voice to the carvers:

> *The essence of truth is freedom…*
>
> Freedom… reveals itself as letting beings be…
>
> …To let be—that is, to let beings be as the beings which they are—means to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself. Western thinking in its beginning conceived this open region as *ta alēthea,* the unconcealed. If we translate *alētheia* as "unconcealment" rather than "truth," this translation is not merely more literal; it contains the directive to rethink the ordinary concept of truth in the sense of the correctness of statements and to think it back to that still uncomprehended disclosedness and disclosure of beings. To engage oneself with the disclosedness of beings is not to lose oneself in them; rather, such engagement withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are, and in order that presentative correspondence might take its standard from them… Considered in regard to the essence of truth, the essence of freedom manifests itself as exposure to the disclosedness of beings.[131]

To return to Cavell, when one does not grant the right autonomy to the blackbird one is not thinking about the blackbird. To grant that autonomy is to withdraw in the face of the blackbird in order that the blackbird might reveal itself. This withdrawal lets the blackbird be, that we may be exposed to its disclosedness. The blackbird makes claims on us, and those claims condition what we can say about it. There are facts that must be acknowledged if we are to talk about the blackbird. Thus, "presentative correspondence might take its standard from [beings in their disclosedness]." We correspond with the world when we acknowledge what it asserts of itself.

When Donoghue writes about Marianne Moore, he gives us a number of descriptions we might use to characterize what Heidegger calls "letting beings be":

---

[131] Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth" in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. John Sallis (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), §3–4, 123, 125–126.

[Moore] does not endorse a predatory grasp of reality. Instead, she is the first to concede to a thing its own independent right; an acknowledgement rather than a concession…

'The Pangolin' is a celebration of difference, of the benign force which makes a thing what it is and keeps it in that state. The first stanzas disengage the pangolin from any human use, invasion of its privacy: observation guarantees this… Once the pangolin is safe in its own nature, the poet can afford to let the mind roam a little.

…The ethic of Miss Moore's verse implies that if we treat objects as objects, rather than as functions of ourselves, and if we send the mind to explore them in their own terms, the encounter of subject and object is likely to be rewarding. If the spaces of life are occupied by generous perception, there is less room for nasty things; belligerence, bravado, cruelty, condescension…[132]

We might say that letting beings be means "explor[ing] them in their own terms." To treat objects in their own terms is to treat them as texts that set the terms in which they are to be read. This involves a certain kind of responsiveness, a willingness to submit oneself to the terms of the text, so that the text can teach you how it is to be read. By allowing the text to teach you how it is to be read, one comes to apprehend that "difference, [that] benign force which makes [the text] what it is and keeps it in that state." One thereby develops a feeling for the privacy of the text, for the way the text forms its own world, a world one can enter for a time, but which remains the world of the text. This is a mode of reading that leaves the text "safe in its own nature." To speak of texts here is to speak of anything that allows itself to be read. We may allow ourselves to be read; we may also try to avoid being read. What allows itself to be read does so by making claims on us, by asserting itself; we speak of what the text says, and in reading the text we need to acknowledge what the text says. To treat objects as capable of being read is to treat objects as texts, and to treat objects as texts is to treat them as making claims on us that we need to acknowledge if we are to read them. Marianne Moore acknowledges the claims the pangolin makes on her as she explores the pangolin in its own terms:

---

[132] Donoghue, *The Ordinary Universe*, 44, 47, 49–50.

Another armored animal—scale
    lapping scale with spruce-cone regu-
    larity until they
form the uninterrupted central
    tail-row. This near artichoke
      with head and legs and grit-equipped giz-
    zard, the night miniature artist-
      engineer, is Leonardo's
        indubitable son? Im-
    pressive animal
   and toiler, of whom we seldom hear.
      Armor seems extra. But for him,
  the closing ear-
    ridge—or bare
    ear, lacking even this small
    eminence—and similarly safe

contracting nose and eye apertures
    impenetrably closable,
    are not;—a true ant-eat-
er, not cockroach-eater, who endures
    exhausting solitary
      trips through unfamiliar ground at night,
    returning before sunrise; stepping
      in the moonlight, on the moonlight
        peculiarly, that the out-
    side edges of his
  hands may bear the weight and save the claws
      for digging. Serpentined about
  the tree, he draws
    away from
    danger unpugnaciously,
    with no sound but a harmless hiss;[133]

These are the opening stanzas in which Donoghue describes Moore as "disengag[ing] the pangolin from any human use." She begins not by symbolizing the pangolin into an analogue of what was never there, but by allowing the animal to assert itself: armored,

---

[133] Marianne Moore, "The Pangolin" in *New Collected Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 141.

scale lapping scale with spruce-cone regularity until they form the uninterrupted tail-row. Moore does not call the animal a spruce-cone, making the sprue-cone to take the place of the pangolin; she uses "spruce-cone" to characterize the regularity of scale lapping scale, and in that role the word is both accurate and precise. It is only after Moore has allowed this creature to vividly assert itself that she allows herself to call it a near artichoke with head and legs and grit-equipped gizzard; even then she uses "near" as a hedge-word, and having already shown us the spruce-cone regularity of scale lapping scale she has earned the right to say "near artichoke." Moore makes her biggest imaginative leap in these two stanzas with, "the night-miniature artist-engineer, is Leonardo's indubitable son?" This question mark is essential; she is not telling us that the pangolin is a miniature Leonardo, but rather putting a question to the pangolin, a question that the pangolin may answer negatively.

Passages like this lead Tomlinson to write, "In an age when major poets… have treated nature with an imperiousness that… recalls their symbolist forebears, Miss Moore is ready to accord to objects and to animals a life of their own."[134] This is another way we might characterize what it is to let beings be: it is to accord to them a life of their own. To accord them this life is to acknowledge the ways they resist us, not being too quick to let our imagination take over, which means not suppressing the imagination but knowing where to place the question marks. Tomlinson writes:

> 'Particular features and discriminations' stand at the heart of any Moore poem. Yet what of the imaginative flight that goes from the particular to the achieved work of art? How do fact and imagination, at its broadest stretch, learn, in Williams's phrase, to 'lie / down together in the same bed', for, though related, they are obviously not synonymous. The poems of wild life are instructive here. They insist often on a primary descriptive accuracy as the ground base for ultimate vision.[135]

Fact and imagination, descriptive accuracy and ultimate vision. What Moore is showing

---

[134] Tomlinson, *American Essays*, 38.
[135] Ibid., 40.

us is how the roughness of the rough ground provides the friction for the imagination to take flight. "The Pangolin" preserves that roughness; we see her imagination engaging with the pangolin, but we are no more given the impression that the pangolin exists for her imagination than we are given the impression that the stones in the river exists so that we can walk across it. This roughness is also preserved in what Tomlinson calls "the dance of broken things – the fragments of omnivorous reading and looking" he finds in other Moore poems, which may include, "a phrase from a review of Santayana's poems... in the *New Republic*, a memory of a Persian miniature, cymbal music, a quotation on waterfalls."[136] What Tomlinson calls Moore's "scrupulousness over sources and quotations" led to her writing a poem that "transpired from a foray into a leaflet, *The World's Most Accurate Clocks*, put out by the Bell Telephone Company."[137] Writing of poetic material in her poem "Poetry," Moore writes, "nor is it valid / to discriminate against 'business documents and / school-books'; all these phenomena are important," taking the phrase "business documents and school-books" from Tolstoy's diary.[138]

What are we to make of this love of quotation, this desire to share the fragments of omnivorous reading and looking? Culling together some remarks from Donoghue:

> Miss Moore's poems are full of quotations because she has come upon many things which have only to be exhibited to be appreciated, and appreciation is poetic. One thing, placed beside another, if both are judiciously chosen, sets a new relation in train. The main duty is to get the words right...
>
> The basic pattern of the verse, then, is the observation, followed by an elucidation sufficient to make the observation shine; text and gloss...
>
> So the question to ask about a poem by Marianne Moore is not: what are all these details doing here?; but rather, what, given these details, is the principle of their relation?[139]

---

[136] Ibid. 48.

[137] Ibid., 40, 47.

[138] Marianne Moore, "Poetry" in *New Collected Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 27; see page 297 for a note on Moore's sources for "Poetry," and Tolstoy's quotation, "Or else poetry is everything with the exception of business documents and school books."

[139] Donoghue, *The Ordinary Universe*, 45, 49,

This love of quotation may be the desire to let things assert themselves, to let them exhibit their own meaning, to leave the rough ground intact, to retain the friction that allowed the writer to walk. Returning to Williams, we might say that mentioning things and quoting them brings us closer to the ideal of a language of pointing, a language that can be looked through, a language that lets the reader see the source. Between the quotes, one may strive to create the optimal conditions for the material to bear its own meaning. The task of the carver quoting becomes that of placing one thing beside another to set a new relation in train, a relation that will bring something out of the things related, a relation that will help the things related do their work.

<div align="center">V</div>

Now we find ourselves with a text from Emerson:

> I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition. Nature does not like to be observed, and likes that we should be her fools and playmates. We may have the sphere for our cricket-ball, but not a berry for our philosophy…
>
> Dream delivers us to dream, and there is no end to illusion. Life is a train of moods like a string of beads, and as we pass through them they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus…
>
> The secret of the illusoriness is in the necessity of a succession of moods or objects. Gladly we would anchor, but the anchorage is quicksand. This onward trick of nature is too strong for us: *Pero si muove*. When at night I look at the moon and stars, I seem stationary, and they to hurry. Our love of the real draws us to permanence, but health of body consists in circulation, and sanity of mind in variety or facility of association. We need change of objects.[140]

and with a gloss from Cavell:

---

[140] Emerson, "Experience," 473, 476.

I construe Emerson's implicit argument in the passage cited as follows. The succession of moods is not tractable by the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity Kant proposes for experience. *This* onward trick of nature is too much for us; the given bases of the self are quicksand. The fact that we are taken over by this succession, this onwardness, means that you can think of it as at once a succession of moods (inner matters) and a succession of objects (outer matters). This very evanescence of the world proves its existence to me; it *is* what vanishes from me. I guess this is not realism exactly; but it is not solipsism either.[141]

---

[141] Cavell, *The Senses of Walden*, 127.

Bibliography

Arnold, Matthew. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." In *Selected Prose*, edited by P. J. Keating, 130–156. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

Bazin, André. "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism (Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation)." In *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 2*, edited and translated by Hugh Gray, 16–40. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

—. "De Sica: Metteur en Scène." In *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 2*, edited and translated by Hugh Gray, 61–78. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

—. "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema." In *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 1*, edited and translated by Hugh Gray, 23–40. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

—. "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." In *What Is Cinema?: Vol. 1*, edited and translated by Hugh Gray, 9–16. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

—. "William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing." In *Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews from the Forties and Fifties*, edited by Bert Cardullo, translated by Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo, 1–22. New York: Routledge, 2014.

—. *Orson Welles: A Critical View*, translated by Jonathan Rosenbaum. Los Angeles: Acrobat Books, 1979.

Bloom, Harold. *A Map of Misreading*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

—. *Kabbalah and Criticism*. New York: Continuum, 1981.

—. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Cavell, Stanley. "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy." In *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, 73–96. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

—. "Anecdote of a Season." In *The Cinema of Robert Gardner*, edited by Ilisa Barbash and Lucien Taylor, 219–21. New York: Berg, 2007.

—. "Emerson, Coleridge, Kant." In *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*, 27–49. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.

—. "Must We Mean What We Say?" In *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, 1–43. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

—. "The Avoidance of Love." In *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, 267–353. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

—. "The World as Things." In *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*, 236–280. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

—. *Disowning Knowledge: In Seven Plays of Shakespeare, Updated Edition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

—. *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981.

—. *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

—. *The Senses of Walden: An Expanded Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

—. *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film, Enlarged Edition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Cohen, G. A. *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Donoghue, Denis. *The Ordinary Universe: Soundings in Modern Literature*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968.

—. *Thieves of Fire*. London: Faber and Faber, 1973.

—. *Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.

—. *William Butler Yeats*. New York: The Ecco Press, 1988.

—. *Words Alone: The Poet T. S. Eliot*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Experience." In *Essays and Lectures*, edited by Joel Porte, 469–492. New York: The Library of America, 1983.

—. "The American Scholar." In *Essays and Lectures*, edited by Joel Porte, 51–71. New York: The Library of America, 1983.

Heidegger, Martin. "On the Essence of Truth." Translated by John Sallis. In *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, 111–138. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

—. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 2001.

James, William. *Pragmatism*. In *Writings 1902–1910: The Varieties of Religious Experience/Pragmatism/A Pluralistic Universe/The Meaning of Truth/Some Problems of Philosophy/Essays*, translated by Bruce Kuklick, 479–624. New York: The Library of America, 1987.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Moore, Marianne. "Poetry." In *New Collected Poems*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.

—. "The Pangolin." In *New Collected Poems*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.

Morgan, Daniel. "Bazin's Modernism." *Paragraph* 36.1 (2013): 10–30.

—. "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics." *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 443–481.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. In *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, 13–163. New York: Vintage, 1989.

OED Online. "assert, v." Oxford University Press. Accessed November 26, 2017. http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/Entry/11821.

Pater, Walter. *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. Edited by Adam Phillips. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Perkins, V. F. *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1993.

Phillips, Adam. "Appreciating Pater." In *Promises, Promises: Essays on Psychoanalysis and Literature*, 148–160. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

—. "On Not Making It Up: The Varieties of Creative Experience." *Side Effects*, 75–100. New York: Harper Perennial, 1979.

Stevens, Wallace. "Martial Cadenza." In *Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, 217. New York: The Library of America, 1997.

—. "Not Ideas About the Thing But the Thing Itself." In *Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, 451–452. New York: The Library of America, 1997.

—. "The Comedian as the Letter C." In *Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, 22–37. New York: The Library of America, 1997.

—. "The Emperor of Ice-Cream." In *Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, 50. New York: The Library of America, 1997.

—. "The Motive for Metaphor." In *Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, 257. New York: The Library of America, 1997.

—. "The Poem That Took the Place of the Mountain." In *Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, 435. New York: The Library of America, 1997.

—. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." In *Collected Poetry and Prose*, edited Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson, 74–76. New York: The Library of America, 1997.

Stokes, Adrian. *Stones of Rimini*. In *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes, Vol. 1*: 1930–1937, 181–301. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

—. *The Quattro Cento*. In *The Critical Writings of Adrian Stokes, Vol. 1*: 1930–1937, 29–180. London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*. In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers/Walden; Or, Life in the Woods/The Maine Woods/Cape Cod*, edited by Robert F. Sayre, 321–587. New York: The Library of America, 1985.

Tomlinson, Charles. "Face and Image." In *New Collected Poems*, 111–112. Manchester: Carcanet, 2009.

—. "The Atlantic." In *New Collected Poems*, 21. Manchester: Carcanet, 2009.

—. "The Farmer's Wife: At Fostons Ash." In *New Collected Poems*, 76–78. Manchester: Carcanet, 2009.

—. *American Essays: Making It New*. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2001.

Wilde, Oscar. "The Critic as Artist." In *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 1108–1155. London: Collins, 2003.

—. "The Decay of Lying." In *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 1071–1092. London: Collins, 2003.

—. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, 17–159. London: Collins, 2003.

Williams, William Carlos. "The American Background." In *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams*, 134–161. New York: New Directions, 1954.

—. "XXII." In *Spring and All* in *Imaginations: Kora in Hell/Spring and All/The Descent of Winter/The Great American Novel/A Novelette & Other Prose*, edited by Webster Schott. New York: New Directions, 1970.

—. *Paterson*. Edited Christopher MacGowan. New York: New Directions Book, 1995.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright. Translated Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1969.

—. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated G. E. M. Anscombe. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.

—. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. Edited by G. H. von Wright, Rush Rhees, and G. E. M. Anscombe. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994.

—. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. New York: Routledge, 2002.