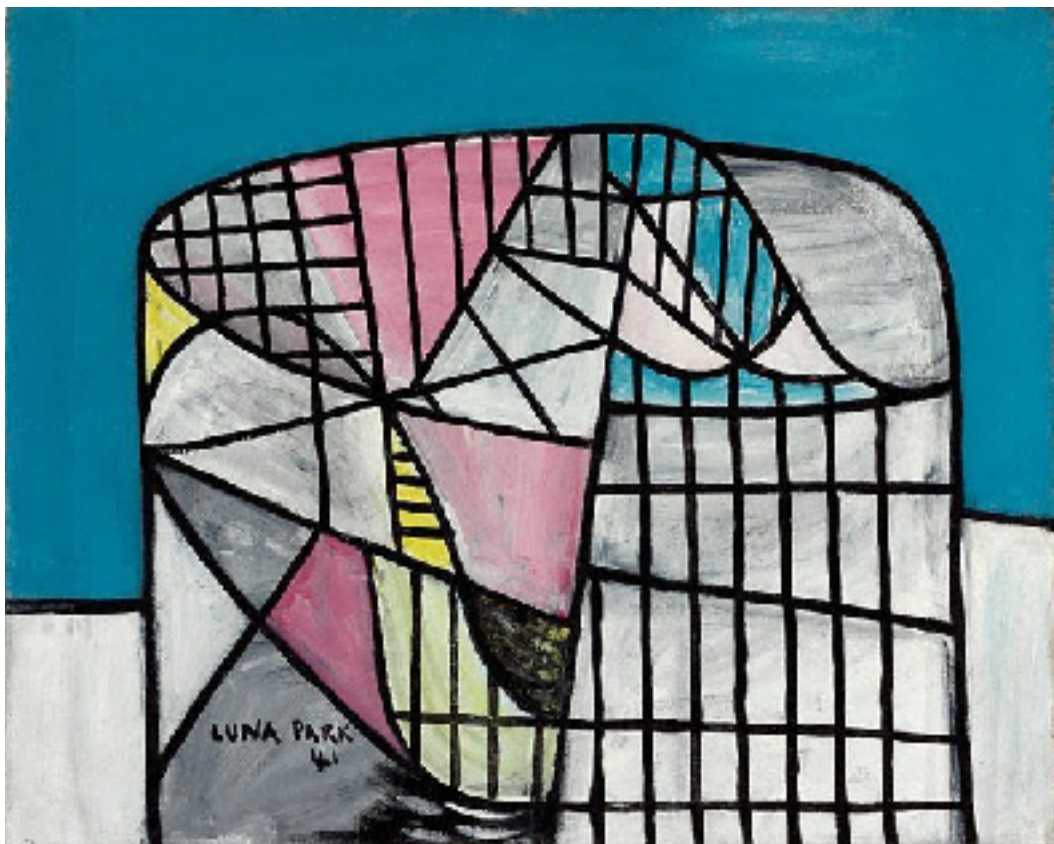# THEMPARKS:

ALTERNATIVE PLAY
IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN POETRY

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Arts in the Department of English at
The University of Sydney

Toby Fitch

2016

THEMPARKS:

ALTERNATIVE PLAY

IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN POETRY

POEMS & ESSAYS BY

TOBY FITCH

ABSTRACT

Themparks is a creative and critical thesis consisting of a book of poems—*The Bloomin' Notions of Other & Beau*—and two experimental essays that illuminate the praxis behind the book of poems, not by auto-critique, but via a study of other contemporary Australian poets whose poetry involves similar compositional approaches. *The Bloomin' Notions of Other & Beau* hijacks the prose poems of Arthur Rimbaud's famously incomplete manuscript *Illuminations* and re-verses their content—a "Down Under conceit"—to create "inversions", radically new poems that are ludic and multiple in form, that complicate authorial subjectivity by employing various methods of (mis)translation and appropriation, and whose subject matter reflects and refracts political and personal fragmentation in twenty-first century Australia. "Themparks", the first critical essay, is a divagation into *thempark* by contemporary Australian poet Michael Farrell, the poems of which transpose/depose the structures of poems by John Ashbery; "Themparks" also analyses John Ashbery's translations of the *Illuminations* of Arthur Rimbaud via a re-reading of Rimbaud's famous formulation, "I is an *other*" (*Je est an* autre). "Aussi/Or", the second critical essay, is a disquisition on Stéphane Mallarmé's late innovative poem *Un Coup de dés* and its various antipodean versions and (mis)translations written by Christopher Brennan (in 1897), Chris Edwards and John Tranter (both in 2006). Both essays/assays explore the (anti)genre of poetic rewritings of previous poems; both trace certain homosocial poetic lineages from self-consciously "experimental" contemporary Australian poets back through American and Australian postmodernists to early modernist French poets; both raise/raze issues of translation, appropriation, plagiarism, and reproduction while employing—metonymically—some parallel theoretical tropes from psychoanalysis, linguistics, philosophy, and science. The guiding thread—the *fil conducteur latent* in Mallarmé—between the creative and critical components of this thesis is a poetics of the pun. The pun's promiscuity highlights the highly libinal nature of language-tampering while working to both associate and dissociate parataxis and parapraxis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover: Sidney Nolan, *Luna Park*, 1941, Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW, http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/35.2003/.

THE BLOOMIN' NOTIONS OF OTHER & BEAU

THEMPARKS

AUSSI / OR

INTRODUCTION

This Doctor of Arts thesis, *Themparks*, consists of a creative component—a book of forty-three poems called *The Bloomin' Notions of Other & Beau*—followed by a critical component comprising two long essays, "Themparks" and "Aussi/Or". The essays illuminate the praxis involved in the creative component by analysing works of contemporary Australian poetry that have informed my poetics, namely Chris Edwards' mistranslations and collage poems, John Tranter's versions of French poems, and Michael Farrell's transpositions of John Ashbery. These works, like my own in *Bloomin' Notions*, re-shape (and are shaped by), or trace a direct line back to, the poetry of two innovative early modern French poets, Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé, whose respective poetics in turn form the historical backdrop of my two critical essays.

The poems of *The Bloomin' Notions of Other & Beau* take the prose poems of the *Illuminations* of Arthur Rimbaud, his famously unfinished manuscript, as templates. Writing backwards through each one—a "Down Under conceit"—I have conjured new poems of my own, multiple in form and shape, which can be seen as radical versions, but which I call "inversions". The transformational techniques involved in this ludic writing process included translation, mistranslation, homophonic translation, textual collage, visual collage, and visual and concrete poetry, often in combination, among other verse forms and constraints.

I believe that *Bloomin' Notions* offers a new take on the "versioning" of a previous literary work, and some alternative ways of thinking about translation, as well as about literary influences, originality and plagiarism in the context of contemporary Australian poetry. The poems can be read against this backdrop, they can be read alongside the original French of Rimbaud, or they can be read on their own and in their own right. The poems complicate subjectivity, individually and collectively, hopefully in a way that advances the implications of Arthur Rimbaud's central poetic tenet, *Je est un* autre ("I is an *other*"), for a twenty-first century of increasing political, personal, artistic and technological fragmentation.

The critical essays in this thesis, "Themparks" and "Aussi/Or", grapple with two homosocial literary lineages that begin with Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé, and playfully analyse how the poetry of these two innovative poets of the late nineteenth century has lead to the work of subsequent poets who have in their turn influenced my work—American John Ashbery and Australians Michael Farrell, Chris Edwards and John Tranter.

My essays follow Theodor Adorno's thoughts on/in "The Essay as Form", namely that

> The essay ... does not permit itself to be prescribed. Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done. The essay mirrors what is loved and hated *instead* of presenting the intellect, on the model of a boundless work ethic, as *creatio ex nihilo*. Luck and play are essential to the essay. It does not begin with Adam and Eve but with what it wants to discuss; it says what is at issue and stops where it feels itself complete—not where nothing is left to say. Therefore it is classed among the oddities. Its concepts are neither deduced from any first principle nor do they come full circle and arrive at a final principle. Its interpretations are not philologically hardened and sober, rather—according to the predictable verdict of that vigilant calculating reason that hires itself out to stupidity as a guard against intelligence—it *overinterprets* [my emphasis] ... Technician or dreamer, those are the alternatives.[1]

Following this logic, my essays (or assays) "overinterpret" concepts in the poetry of the aforementioned poets, offer technical, theoretical and creative interpretations of translation and transposition, and dream of new forms for the future. And while, at one point, one essay makes a self-conscious joke about coming full circle, both are rather more winding and freely-associative—they pick up on ideas and drop them for the next

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[1] Theodor W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form", 1958, trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *New German Critique* 32 (1984): 152, http://shifter-magazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Adorno-The-Essay-As-Form.pdf.

set of ideas. Or, as Australian poet Fiona Hile writes in her review of Michael Farrell's *thempark*, "This is the dissemination of the signifier—one thing leads to another".[2]

"Themparks" is an essay on how contemporary Australian poet Michael Farrell creates new poems by transposing/deposing the poems of an important forebear (for him), John Ashbery, who in turn translates a forebear of his own, Arthur Rimbaud. Starting out with Rimbaud and a re-reading of his famous formulation, "I is an *other*" (*Je est un autre*), coupled with the concept of the *P*oem as failure, "Themparks" then traces the development of "transposition" as a generative technique in modern poetry from Rimbaud to Ashbery to Farrell, and sees "I is an *other*" multiply into many others: "I is a *them* park". "Themparks" explores issues of subjectivity, plagiarism, appropriation, reproduction, poetic indeterminacy, the self as collage, the unconscious, how these relate to the poetic processes of transpositon, transformation and translation, and how "A poem can be made of anything",[3] as William Carlos Williams once put it, even itself, or perhaps even, in certain circumstances, someone else's dreams.

"Aussi/Or" is an essay on Stéphane Mallarmé's late innovative poem *Un Coup de Dés* and its haunting of Australian poetry. Its publication in *Cosmopolis* in Paris in 1897 struck a nerve or, rather, a vessel within Australian poetry bloodlines, starting with Christopher Brennan. *Un Coup de dés* was the score that inspired Brennan to compose "Musicopoematographoscope", a large handwritten *mimique* manuscript that transplanted the more extreme aesthetics of an *avant-garde* French Symbolism into the Australian poetic psyche, pre-Federation. Now, well into the twenty-first century, *Un Coup de dés* is still a blueprint for experimentation in Australian poetry, spawning two versions, both homophonic mistranslations—"A Fluke" by Chris Edwards and "Desmond's Coupé" by John Tranter—published in 2006, and both revelling/rebelling in the abject, and in "errors and wrecks".[4] "Aussi/or" provides a comparative reading of

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[2] Fiona Hile, "And Counting: Fiona Hile reviews Michael Farrell", *Southerly* 71.1 (2011): 2, http://southerlyjournal.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/71.1_LP-Fiona-Hile.pdf.

[3] William Carlos Williams, "Kora in Hell: Improvisations", *Imaginations*, ed. Webster Scott (New York: New Directions, 1970), 70.

[4] Ezra Pound, "Canto CXVI", *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 1934 (New York: New Directions, 1993), 816.

these homophonic bedfellows, traces their relation(ship)s to their antecedents, spelunking Plato's cave and various theories of translation in the process, and begins an enquiry into the significant influence of Mallarmé's great "vessel" on Australian poetry and poetics.

"Themparks" and "Aussi/Or" are experimental critical essays that flirt with theories of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Derridean deconstruction, Saussurian linguistics, and their relations to a dissolving of self (or a complicating of subjectivity) in modern and postmodern poetry. These essays also collage (deriving from the French verb *coller*—to "stick, glue"—*collage* in French is also idiomatic for an "illicit" sexual union) various philosophical, scientific, and literary theories, including Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffery's theory of transposition, Julia Kristeva's and Georges Bataille's conceptions of abjection in literature, Marjorie Perloff's writings on the poetics of indeterminacy, Harold Bloom's "misprision" and the anxiety of influence, Walter Benjamin's arguments on "reproduction", plus chaos and particle theory, and Theordor Adorno's writings on aesthetics, to name a few, as ways of talking metaphorically and metonymically about poetry.

The guiding thread (or *fil conducteur latent*, in Mallarmé) between my two essays and my book of poems is a poetics of the pun. The pun's promiscuity (and latency) highlights the highly libinal nature of language-tampering while working to both associate and dissociate parataxis and parapraxis. The pun is also a generative technique in literature. Despite the puntastic writings of Shakespeare, Gertrude Stein and James Joyce, punning methodologies are not widely employed in literature and are often either seen as just a joke or lumped into the difficult/specialist/scholarship basket (for example, see *Finnegans Wake*, which I discuss in "Aussi/Or"). I view punning as not only a key development in my own poetics, but as an opportunity for Australian poetry—in a twenty-first century of increasing political, personal and technological fragmentation—to open itself up to aleatory methods, and thus allow meaning in the writing of poetry to generate itself, rather than forcing meaning into form. My poems and essays demonstrate how the pun might be unveiled—as catalyst, concept, and poetic method.

THE BLOOMIN' NOTIONS
OF OTHER & BEAU
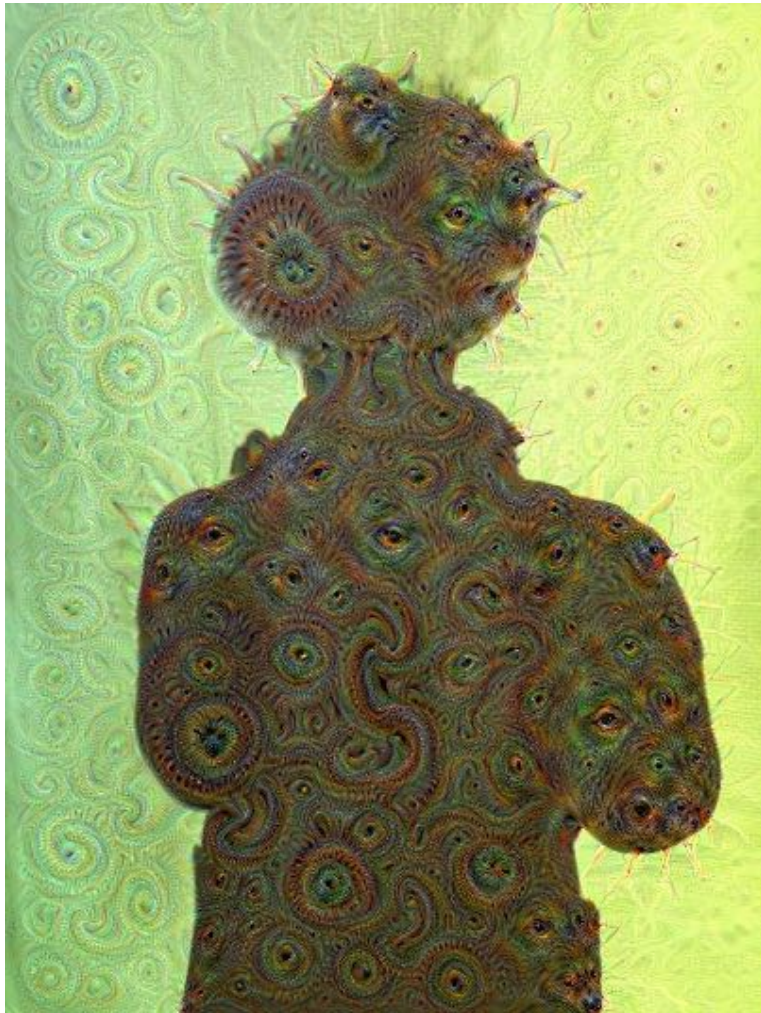
Fig. 1: Self-portrait, 2014, manipulated by Google "deep dream" image generator *Dreamscope*

THE BLOOMIN' NOTIONS
OF OTHER & BEAU

A book of poems to accompany *Themparks*,
a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Arts in the Department of English at
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ALSO BY TOBY FITCH:

Everyday Static (Rare Objects #52 chapbook, Vagabond Press 2010)

Rawshock (Puncher & Wattmann 2012)

Quarrels (chapbook, Stale Objects dePress 2013)

Jerilderies (Vagabond Press 2014)

BLOOMIN' NOTIONS

AFTER THE ORGY

i is an / ugh it's an ignoramus
        jamais jamais u say / or maybe nether nether
            its inland sequel is counting on this Eur
optic allusion to echo it &/ or braise it w/
        outsourcery in terror pots of ennui & rain
            flowers overtly peer out
no less ensorcelled than stoner food
            so naturally some cat

whose deputy moi disappoints
        is appointed montage
            & the relevant delusion is a man w/ money
& ici an aussi trysting the rules
        that like a tonne of organic eclairs
            drape a new noir across the Bois-like lures
i'll pass on the pas des deux thanx
            get to the point

that our swords had a tang & whereas o
        & u caressed me w/ red tape
            worms castigated
our puerile & futile violence toward the budding
        bourgy eggheads burgeoned & now
            log on to download God from the bots
i dance on the verge of & purity deserts
            time lore & legislation

deploying a Leunig moon
 night unshackles
  dense w/ chaos & glass above the hotel's pole
fat spleen bats careen about
 a party rented out by a billion celebs
  channelled through cathodes to audit each
Everest movie premiere in which Madame
  XXX turns tables on a P&O

coming down from the Alps i clock out
 from the party but land on its feet & like another
  glib latency we did
pirouettes for cock & held a tournament
 our comprehension of bras was
  so hammed up a unicorn in denial of plaques
flogged the place & although rustling
  infants regarded this

mauve imagery as a great maze of in vitro
 in a coruscating vein today
  fumes w/ magazines that mate
& guesstimate like machine guns spitting out why
 why why do bats on castor
  sugar always sing in technicolour
a cirque de slander let's elope
  my funnel webs my blemishes

we'll sing chez Bluebeard's at the abbatoirs
 taking pot-shots at Targét
  at the haughty few who suck back the gravity
of long tirades & bark in voices
 our settler mess ruing the grand
  spent at the sales
where flowers retrograde queerly
  mercurially déjà

voodoo & u who peer at my cash my
 precious poor lark'll hit the ceiling we'll traverse
  toilets dissing the clock
wise anti-delirium & go back
 Down Under where the rest sank Freud
  après the ludic deluge
ici aussi
  totes

IN FANCY

why on earth would i blow open the safe
of childhood? as lord of metallic silence
sitting pretty & blue-balled   in a stairwell
twiddling thumbs   for the building to succumb
to its own foundations   meanwhile comets
moon & sea generate a new mythology outside
think of the thickness   of the globe   red &
black monstro-cities   clogging the way back
to the Gulf   the long distance   my life takes
root here   in tongue-tied smoke   a phone in
my wrist gleams   there will be no headlines
tomorrow   what a relief!   but i will have to pay
some serious rent to re- carpet this womb

                    o
                   nly
                the end
               of the world
              drones forward
            resourceful in his air
          conditioned cloak vroom
         vroom! on the high road his
        birdhead scrapes the sky hooded
       child w/out peer shitting sublime tri
      angles of melancholy: the furphy that he's
     thrown open the gates dwarfs & drowns the
    branch-stacked urban forest   rain at every inter
   section in every library he's a scholar of dark arms
 an animal grazing on Palestine a sea   a prayer   a terror

hunger and thirst chase you out the corner of an ear the sonar clock bells and a troupe of kids circle like frost white people holler time has no ring to it from a pool you sing and the birds blush the corpse of a car spins on the road in rising waters into a rapt church sinks
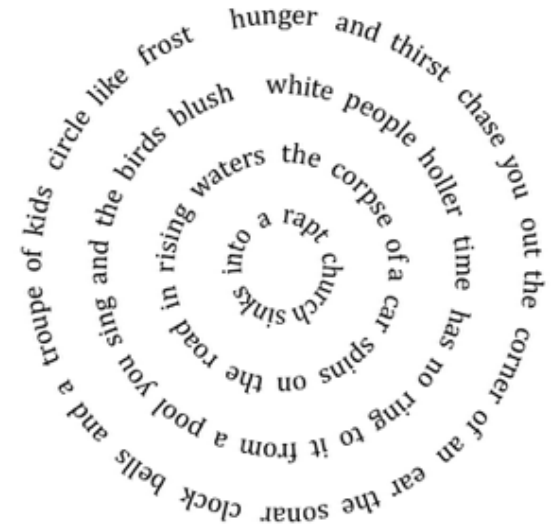
                 clouds got rounded up off
               shore for not paying a deposit
              on eternity   the magical roar of
            elegant weaponed animals as islands
            got stacked up & smashed on the anvil of
          a shadow colony w/ sluice gates where purple
        has cancelled the meadows outside a general-ed
      hive   behind the wires & fencing   trees rust in salt
      air & keys rustle leaving swarms abuzz like heli
       copters   high on church   tied-up hostages
         in the south of red highways are buried in
           the wall   flowers eye the sunset to
              ward India   where loved-ones fall
                down their front steps into car
                  nations either plastic or dead

dear bo   dy dear
          heart: now's not the   hour to go dull or
       darken, for as we step on it   & in to a new continent
      a princess sallies forth   thru billboards   what a salty gait
     such an eyeful   in t-rex garb   my pilgrimage erects   among
    young mothers imagined sisters   their gardens thawing out o
  smoke-green Kate Moss your jewellery's stunning the sea foam
   into giant shapes   the terror! as rainbows spin & cross-dress
     the local flora i turn deaf   as a cucumber   nude as the sea
       on buckled knee at the edge of an orange-lipped forest
          dream-flowers   tinkle & explode   like computer tech
            heads in Apple factories   an ocean-liner's waves
              split me up   into flinders of self w/out
                family   fable   or a short local name
                   my   yellow   mane & vague
                     eyes recede my many
                         its   they i
                            dle

CAN'T

musical savant w/ a loss of desire
the poor ponce died in lace in the most ungenerous way
annihilated by the essence of parted cheeks
not a health problem as his genius would later protest
but how did she die unspeakable
joy granted by the promise of love apparently
came from her men tenants
of a multiple & complex sham(e)

unfuckability

no one appeared one evening which proudly flew
off to mediate their pro blames for others to murmur about
& administer their destruction for the way IT
rejuvenated her animal effigies to him
inflated codpieces burst by hecklers in the golden ether
he followed all those that Mordered him as if it was
a game of online libation to flower upon
women's backs he bid on numbing items blessed by

his lightsaber

in that brutal woman's beautiful garden he'd pillaged
at least once claiming to be the larger human
weather or not it was a kind of piety
those who ought to see the truth decorated
suspected that his complicit foreskin was a luxury yanked back
to satisfy himself that genderosity was too vulgar re
volted by the love in his imagination
the ponce was upset not to heave always

hard perfection

PANDORA'S PARŌIDIA

i wonder the Cloud of lonely men then descend into savage song
mock terra witch attack seems to reign for months but
's over in a plash of white tears red drivel what a smash
blood & boon trolls trill in the comments field
punters burn eyes well such an abuse of the magnet
ism i've been juggling a fake schlong / bad boy
spanks to the caress of multiple paternal camwrangles

this popular whorled tour affords me the demented
dancing combo of manic pixie dreamghouls +
intra-Venus Demigoods feeling me up in molluscs
i've even deployed the insidious pose of a hyena babe
as i rout history & religion for their croyalty my tragecoma dream
for mal taste stage antics & the boolesque
playing such folk for the nincompuppies they are

of course in PARADISE© there's no comPARISon
for this most Gaga expulsion of Pandorasts
dressed up in luxury & violence & détourning trebled
to a city near you ad nauseum in the crowd
there are some buggered young peeps still cherubic but horse
from mousing along to the metal & phase distortion
my guitar pouts / gets laid by the stars

on midi summer eves what must they tink
streaming in FireWire the sad-face eyes of a seal so vacant
night-vision men w/ rash-peeling consciences think
i have a brilliant instinct / i ring them a brush of experience
several demand i exploit the world interests
rise when i show no interest or fake it & such / yet still
powerful men come on all drop-dead drool

Fig. 2: Paraid

ANTSY
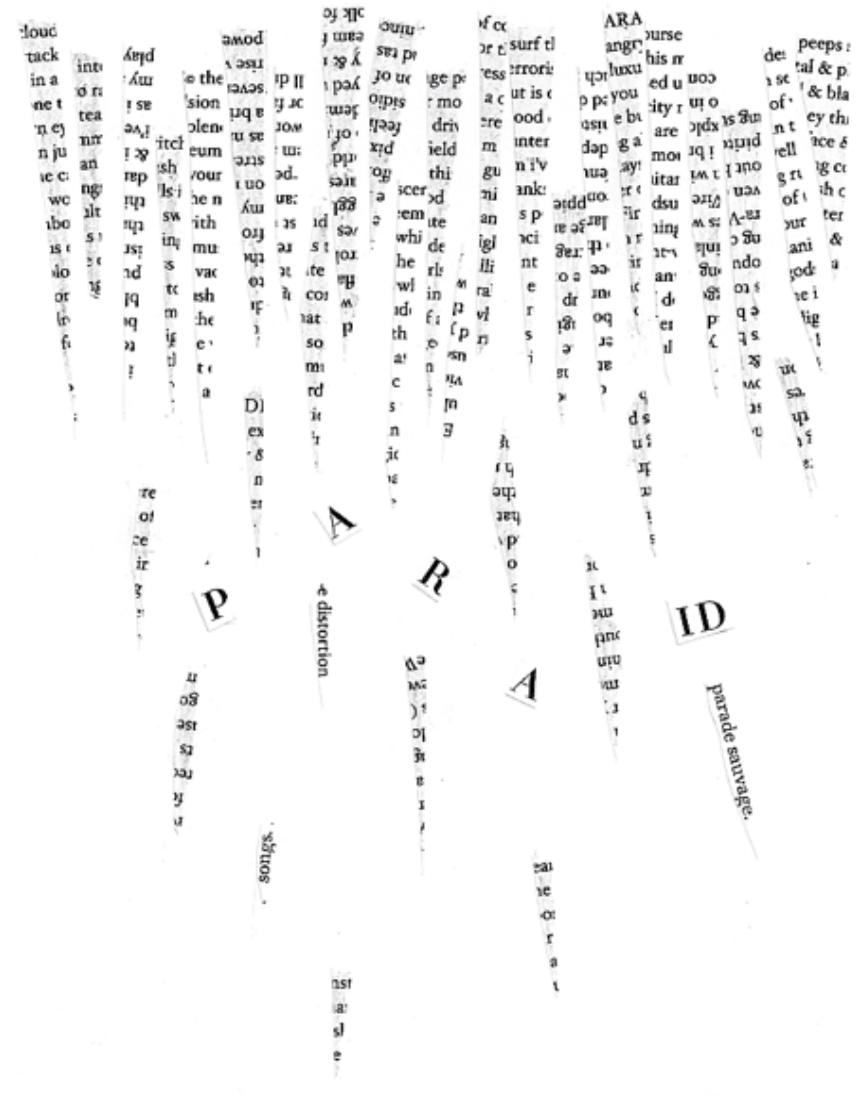
the second his left leg moves be
        twixt her thighs night zips

double sex heartbeat in
         belly armed blonde

zither of a ribcage jangle
          fangs gleam hollow

cheek & shoulders grown spherical
     their precious berry sleep

crowned in wine & cork
       screwed into flowering dawn

eyeballs wide to a grace
        ful panning sun

BEING BEAUT

ashen face from cookies & cream
  hurled over the canon into Sydney
    Harbouring such a melee
      helps to keep me regular my guns
       crystal clean she lips me

     XXX times our bones
    rattle off covers like skins
   rising & drooping amid the hiss
  & thunderclaps her mum
look weirds me out but

only for a sec before the dark
  bursting colours of our lives dance on
    & off like a TV's tongue magnetic
      damaged meat our bodies
       tremble open / spew forth

     ghosts into circulation
    deaf to the swelling muzak Death
   's got the sniffles it's beaut
  just being like snow or whatever
whoever the flake we are

VICES

1

Without paranoia, there's nothing. My knowledge of
homeland trivia is nothing if not
chaotic, historically inaccurate, helps white
hole literatures. In my dreams of scarlet pigeons
whirling, I sit above my t
errors. Fight or flight? Assault & pepper brain
is incontinent. For my next holiday, I plan to be exiled
standing on my lovers' shoulders.

So much sunshine & money on the roof
tops! pent-up in my capital
city penthouse. I remember hours blasting
proverbs at brahmin, thinking they were barmen,
then being eclipsed on ground zero. Hey, it's nothing!
The terraced holey land is up here, streaming.

2

I hope to become a well adjusted crazy
now that doubt can be applied—
I'm even more committed to a knew disorder. Joy
rides through the hideous cool
air of skepticism allow
my divine hand to shift old memories
of knocking back sour champagne & marriage
proposals. I don't regret my fever

pitch for polemical sex with widows.
It was a heady childhood apprenticeship
under a sober sky of rock
stars who thought they'd found the keys ...
To the lovemobile! Because I'm the original
inventor of desertion.

3

No more commissions, please. I is an udder
& beyond the grave, having waived
my blood, my duty to procreate.
What should also be taken in
to consideration is that I'm spent
on beautiful Orientals. I have no super
no oeuvre to get me back to Paris. I went all in
on the classical science of painting

(or was it petting) my old friends' wives so I
could sleep with them in the dark above
the city, playing out my carnivorous
inversions of human comedy. Confined to the world
I might as well shut myself up
in de basement for the next twelve ears.

WHAT IS THIS
NEW NAU
SEA? THE AFFECT
NATION IS DEPART
MENTAL &
FULL
OF NIFTY BRUTES /
THEIR RUM OURS
'RE GOIN' ROUND
SOME OTHER BODY
IS MAKING THE
LIFE DE
CISIONS SEZ CONMAN

IN SOME OTHER RHEUM
ATO ID CITY OF
RENT-A-
TREEZ
OVER WHICH
THE SUN APP
EARS AT NIGHT OR SO
SOMEONE ILL SEZ EU
MY VISA HAS COMP
LIED W/ ALL THE AIR
I'VE HEARD ENO
UGH GOES THE VIEW

ROYALLY

stuffed
palms hand out a
crimson dawn hang over
the razed settlement / regents
swooning w/ revved-up elation
for the other as if they were friends
bespoke "my fronds, you are inside
the queen," laughing at man &
woman crying squares, one
fine mourning on the is
land of a gentle
purple

SITS TO REASON

i quit Ira's party & arrived out at yours at ten
fortunate enough to have imported a nugget of
substance into my nose pre voodoo or eleven
or whenever the infants commenced chanting
i scribbled & floozed some w/ the temp gauge
lots of noises were out of joint so i changed in
to my new amour & returned after a detour of
my now lover's teet marching like a zombie to
nervous Clovelly could ya pass me the toy pls
Lauren the novelty won't harm anyone except
maybe commerce whose tousled discharge of
tambourine says don't be so uncouth Doug

DIVA MAINTENANCE

her temper tanty's sus but your mites say sassy
's entering the pleather dome lookin'
poised w/ noose & savvy much obliged to
glorify her cunning firm & tout
its nous for oblivion

where the pert velvet diva never lets you rest
your glass head in which infinite
pools rotating w/ lust
voice toots from the comments field
dissing your angel

figuring abject horror & austerity
measures your crotch slave reared as an infant's souvenir
you stick a bandaid over & own to pervert the
curse of just eyes commerce purrs w/
amour whenever you feign amen

to her abortion you think of Maldoror
honour dents your lava
humbles the dead science of your hairy elephant
violence so reset the dementors
to aim at corporations

her competition in the night sky neuters your who-man
fate reconstellating into dignified rendition
ancient & harmonic it's the
pumiced land! where serum is eeked out
& for the phone of it you make a meme of your self

sharing w/ electric fingers
this poison in your veins to maintain
cut & comb again the veneer her elegant
perm foils you parry & cite
though technically it's lice marbling your corpse

in back alleys they clack like louvres bare-backed
freaking out in a chevvy touché
ah man she's beaut but what an omen: bored
ouija face terrific rack atrocious fan fare all point out
how bent the moonbeams

APHASIA

i don't have a pacifier for the vile despot i cling to
your voice both malleable & impossible
to exorcise those less fortunate
pieces of my mind & friend i threw love out

the window laughed / danced itself silly
till dawn became mercenary & did to us what collapse did
to even the oddest
Fort Street high: ridiculed

i realised how memories've been choking us in
unheard-of luxury & surround sound
that i've just kneaded sympathy to say that
only when there's none left on earth will it be beautiful

will i find you pure again no
house no music no monster child our four
perplexed eyes on a wooden beach in waves of redaction
that lap at this single dark world

do   pac
      ice   mall   & imp s

  ec   o   n   end   love

   wind   s
ill   came   to   lapse

     tree   cule

   sed   ow   bee
                    sound
             ded   path   to   th
       en th   beau

    fin   u p
          sic   d   our
      exed   woo   ach   es of
               l   ark

[FIGMENTS DO FOOL]

hey girl / ghoul i may be
  a low-light chandelier but i'd
    still like to be thrown toward darkness
      on the bed empowdered
        w/ vigilante rain

        the taste of ink & red rose clouds
      my desire to be a bright spark w/ bells on
    public money flows
  over the frat party where white
people pool in a witch hunt

smoking till sun-up i dance
  like a window smashed into stars
    that extenuate space
      everyone's steeped yet no one steams
        to care that it's drizzling toys

        or that the Flower Child Channel
      's stuck on Rage & rutting
    i sweat in stove-pipes
  ash colluding w/ the air spent this
covert July moaning

LOUVRES

i used to watch graphic & ex
pensively made pictures w/ a hardened
arm behind my back from the back row of a
country compromised
another orphaned summer spent far from me
i thought far out about the fate my
analysts were despairing at
how an unfortunate childhood event kept

spooling behind shutters in the house i grew up in
split up b/w shade & light i could feel
a Great Southern Land gloaming
how city gleam would follow us in one day
to a noisy office of the Federal Court my wife wouldn't
stop pointing at me her
eyes like twining fish in puddles of
last month's flood bruising odours from the garden

talking weather our devastated lawn
became windy / clouds toured the periphery
was a sad game old hat w/ ribbon & silk hanky last century
had to be taken in
Henrika's brown & white tiled skirt went south
w/ absurd ease we were suitably
inappropriate on that hot February morning
in memory of mazing youth

PONCE

is it blue or black comedy
in the cloud it's
like the sea has fallen in
to the sky go

pop song hymns and herrs
beaming in strait
jackets to you a new
aristocrazy flesh

vintage snatches
instrumental as anything
butt all the way
to the bank

in skimpy ropes under
panting red lights
major chords & minor
celebs inter

sect & spin through the tube eve
n shrinking violets come
illumined enough
to break out the wet t

shirts ratchet up
the click-bait as so many bridges
criss-cross a back
lit ether a

strange de
sign estranged
who isn't a little bent
tease days the skies are

crystal grey
everyone's getting & going
down get your t
rousers in the cloud
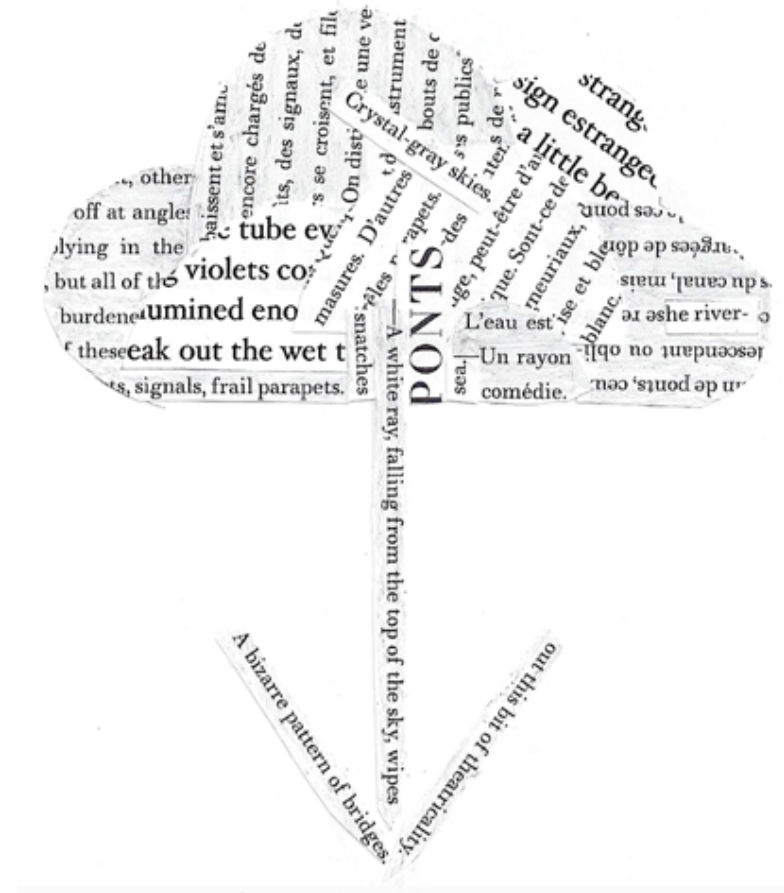
Fig. 3: Ponts

VILLAGE

i am a permanent & frustrated civilian
bloke of the global village
thought to be post-everything as all new taste is
voided across the furnishings
interior becomes exterior my private abode exploding
up to meet the cities from above
one would point to this monumentally
obvious & superstitious morality w/ the expressive
language of a simpleton indeed

these billions of cloudy people who seem to feel
a need to rain on each other's avatars
experience weird hellucidations
occupied from a young age by algorithms that determine
the shortening attention- & elongating life
-spans we each might have before incontinence
just as when i open new windows & see
the same old spectres flickering
backed by big data & thick fuming coal fires

bought-out shadows froth
from the woods this high summer night
litter-day Furies surround my cottage my country my heart
tweets in vain yet nothing reassembles itself
like the death-drive my daughter has
for despairing love not even
the servile tears i commit myself for
petit crime in deep shit but true blue as
roadkill on the superhighway

YAWNY AIR

huge black & blue Hoovers yawn
then suck the moonbeams off teenage lovers
up into the pitted canopy of
night like a coffin amassed from consumables
this urban pastoral for the kids
a twenty-car collision blooming flowers
amazed at the animals men are
dappled & ungoverned their faces down
load a hearse / lead it to war
or a caucus drink-tank inside of which
moon deflections think
surely the lemonade witch is dead
an opinion poll said
throwing shade purple lizards
frack a slippery
slope / the right angling
for a carpark
dawn in the vapoury
wake of
summer's
rut

VILLAINESQUE²

We met as phantoms in the mountains
Unable to avoid the transnational arm of sleep
Of whatever city we got raised in.

I had such a beautiful dreamtime, an electric field
My only weapon against it was to escape
Like Fantômas to the mountains where I met

Failed companies still operating under rotations of
Wild & loaded faces. A party danced nightly
In whichever settlement arose next.

Driving hard down the rue we strafed & founded
The ghost of Baghdad, a bag-heavy breeze
Of phantoms to maintain, & that we mooned

Howling up a storm so that landslide myths would
Soon descend on the Coalition of opulence
But their city'd been razed already

By the ELK, the Electric Light Korporation
Illuminating bones with a muzak unknown to me
A silent fountain able to maintain

Despite the holey cluster the church had become
Towering opinions having bleakly caved in.
Now everyone wants to sit in the rose

Of Venus: hermits are smitten by her ravines, suburban
Drunkards burn like moths in her brambled gin
Needy men gyrate then faint on end

But no waterfall can compete on Stag's night as dear old
Diana swallows the mature-aged sex industry
In whatever gun city she gets a raise next.

It's a slippery slope, a Humming Flower production
A piquant high of opals, as though the sea level's
Risen to a newfound mountain peak.

Sometimes the ocean darkens, full of deadly schrapnel
Orphic oysters berthing with news of forever
On our razored city shoreline

It's a furphy the Centaurs defecate on
From the height of the Collapse & into the Gulf
Another mountain to climb for the Falling Man.

Roland keyboards on "beast mode" amplify the shock
Sounding like teeth-plaque, like a bum-rush out or in
To whatever position will arouse me nix—

Fire drills ring out! but I keep sleeping through it—I'm a wake
On an invisible pulley above a valley of tears, hanging out
With Fantômas of the mountainous Allegories

& we're watching the latest TV wheeling & dealing
Over Libya from a romantic holiday chalet
Our waterless eyes like onyx as

Craters explode & palm trees curdle over the edge of
This railing, designed for & streamed to those who dream
To meet like phantoms in the mountains
Of whatever city they got raised in.

Fig. 4: Villainesque

VAGUE

i've found the formula to the cave
bend   w/ the fire   be

on wine-dunked biscuits
state of the sun   funding my silly

hum-based opportunity
to the friendly society   dungeon master

o bank me   satanic brother   risen
for slavering over the windows

a freedom weakness i don't know much
but i know we're guilty

suffused in the enterprise   so i'm lying
phantoms luxuriating

happy to be alien   from the
landscape of rare muzak

BONDS

shadows that dance   as capital
hind   making haste & love

i'm of the mind   in vested interest
digital dream of the present

echoes the daze i repaid w/ a grin
projecting wealth hijinx   & bondage

from being poor   put to sleep
up here in haven glass has a greenness

about bad luck   or feeling taxed
vague world   veiled by &

on a beach   putting my eyes out
through the night now

future   remain in exile
i have crossed over

VILLBOARD

Artificial-LIFE© guides the savage gently chronic gossipcolumns through concrete forest LINKS & bizarre countryside theWest Ern suburbs weirdly LOST houses follow each other round while I'm in PARIS ringed by a freakish halo the democratic element of a some where people favourite this idea has GIVEN me a rogue adventure policy I THINK therefore I contain

darkdrama i'm waiting for the shops to re apply to the circus with at least a notion of theatre & to i dunno supply antarctic beverages for some eight hundred-thousand other roped-in punters so that we can squat on red velvet lounging it's a diamond-studded morning in Sydney's didgeridoo industry London in mind like a broken sidewalk for skywalkers

but we're not shops! we're sumptuous chops di splaying our selves & our kitsch in galleries for the stylish imps of commercial districts even NOW as today's a stranger strange that he couldn't under stand the uppers & lower his level to the apocalyptic THOUGHT I could judge the depth of the CITY: its columns the hallways the coppers in heli copters & the

staircases to no where all my far fetched escape bridges Plato out at fifteen-thousand feet the steel ART & ARC of the Apple© Senate's dome irresponsible for the monstrous lamp we dig beneath arm in sequence DIG for blue cloth parts of the sea primitive hail any of the SAID great artworks of nature that might somehow someday give the orderly buildings

the enclosed
courty aardvarks &
the dactyl terraces
give the fat
s q u a r e s
& the drunken
d r i v e l l e r s
give them all the
s h i v e r s
make the Bra Boys
p a l e
for commissioning
their flunkeys in
the northern suburbs
to never paint their
own nature
whatcolour?
Twenty
times
more vast
I'm a local
exhibition
chilling

in the Hamps & dis
tastefully
restoring marvels of the
classical
monkey world
but with this e
ternal
SNOW
on the ground
reflecting a stubbornly
bright sky
I'm becoming
matt
myperceptive
modern
barbarism
today hugely
outshone by the
glint of imperial
bogeymen sitting in
the official
Acropolis
their sycophantic
brilliance
....

VALLEYS

the   hued emerald thickets of
desire to   lace fling themselves
have a cold like   at the vigilante
this one? in the air   doves i'the
ask the developed world   shade
about life & ambitions suffer   s
punishment for being a lovely per
son a weak friend this is not   all
a mass high-five or even   people
fatigue mum said rest   dream of a
in bed or on a   sense of speed
bright me   a grouped psycho
ado   logical inheritance to
w   cut thru hazards & break up
          the walls of sound of atmospheric
u   bands on both sides of the rr
rude   room guards rotate like
waves of   news & elevate to
magic carpet   the top deck as i
produced real suns i   lluminate &
fire halfway up the walls   shift g
the attack of surround sound   ears
floodlights on the steering wheel
Amelie & i bounced behind   a
unclothed & breasted by   body
the waves at sea we   drew back
were done in   a view of dawn a
hull of a   black hearth & lamp
night   one reels as time wells

MISTY TOUR

between
aromatic
mountains
deep blue
against his face
like a basket
case the starry sky
tumbles down
the slope in
a floral sweater
human night
dank as reverb
dark as a
conch twisted
on the tabletop
the band plays
dancing
founts of
slop

redolent
shape de
sensitised
curve all
notes deflect
from spin
as murdered
Beatles
avalanche
into flaming sea
a ravine of
orbiting screams
nipples
of emerald
& steel bent
he nestles misty
tween
embank
ments

ORB

noon
when i woke Dawn
long since fallen w/ a plonk
or was that my child on timber floors
her massive booty surrounded by discarded
labels from the discount sales she crashed at the
top of the main drag   last night   i remember panning
cock then chasing her Beau who cracked his marbles or
so my keys thought loud & circular for the sake of her but
into the city she escaped a wave in the driveway blue
waterfall hair dishevelling among my pines it occurred
to me how   sale after sale my company has lost its name
to cheap jewels & flowers   watching on their speckled
eyes fluttering w/out noise our collective breath
decamped like a bright shadow the vodka said
finish me off   nothing moved my palace's
nor my child's facade I embrace
her in the orb of my
debt

FLOOZE

a drawn young crowd of sloe gin gods
marbles the terraced view   below an ocean of
     Skye   her huge bespectacled eyes
          the colour 'blue moon snow'

rosy rubes of the local watering hole stem
slenderly   decked-out in vintage white
     corporate bouquets   ephemeral
          mahogany columns   elegantly strewn

as if in ruin   irises blip like digital water
marks under carpets of hair   a copper Sun
     of dark ilk   his crystal face arresting the wet
          Greens & filmy Greys in silk

as he ropes his gaze   around the arena for
          another dish full of golden tears
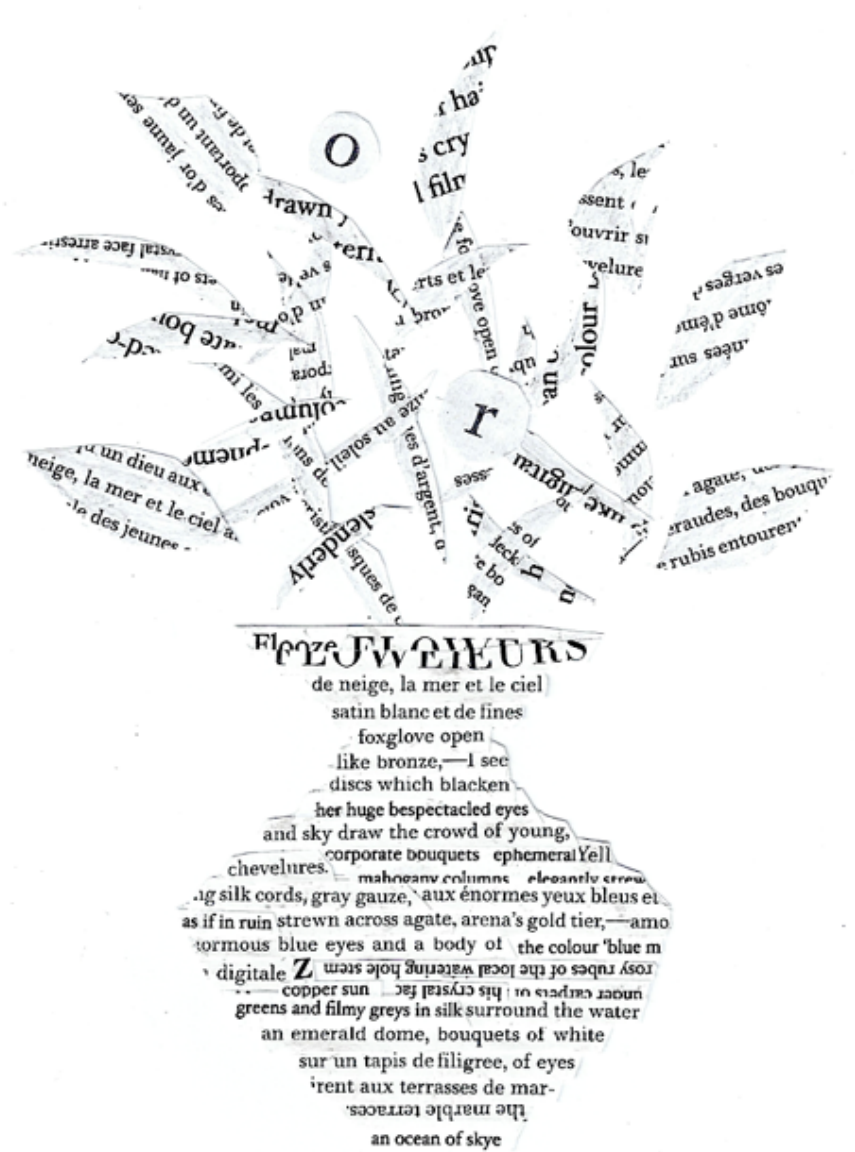
Fig. 5: Fleurs

TURN YOUR HEAD & COUGH

a breath of wind scatters   the limits of your heart
    which bays   & rolls over as a dog

in the spilled drink   holy water lapping
    up to your eyes in fever   you sprang & beasted

at the postboy who was dreaming
    of animals but didn't bargain on becoming

a son of god   in a strangled
    forest   where the well-known arm

blows open   a storm
    uncoupling somewhere deep   as defaults go

all the way to the top   darkened yellow
    & blue invade the boy

's dream of a moon turned to ice
    through leaves   & buttressed mountains

your vehicle near a patch of turf   grovelling over
    the highway's shoulder   running a ring

around the hearse   & shepherding the youth   to sleep
    for just enough time to indicate   not right

but past the point of no   re
    turn   under carriage   way   & along the curved

bypass   the bulge of advertising
    panels of garish loving   that appear

in convex mirrors   flashing by   as if
    you've been covering up   your gargoyle features

through the window   a heart-shaped eclipse
    blurs the line between corrosion   & trust   an op

erational breach of the sky
    a breath of wind   could blow open

DON'T! HOO SANG EX
HORTING TURBINES OF
LOOM O FURRY FRUITS
EXTRA TEA VERITABLY
PILLED UP IN THE FORAY
IF I LENT OUT SIR
CUSS MEN FOR LESS IT'D BE
AUDENRY WE SUCK
ON MENTHOL & REFLUX
LEST WE COO
RUNTS & DILLETAUNTS
S O U L - V E N T I N G
SUTURE BROMANCE
DEBAITS ACCUM UR
LATE LITHPING A PRUDE
A T H E I S T
URGENTHY BUG LET'S
CHAR DOZE GENTS WITHER
C U R V E B A L L

paint the bush   having a stroke
          a brush   with a
                double-chinned
     nymph   named   Doris   Horror

                directederected
       her coiffure   coiled fury
            to dance

          in cyberia   n   fragments

                   meander

          me   &   her

                   garden

          day lite   i   die late

     a chandelier exploding   a green & red sunset
                          o
          h oo   h o w l   w ho
  irri   eery
              hoot
       her   water works   a comic op era
                       -ti   on
     ga   des
          echoing be   hind the sky

          tion   s   cent

ON GWASS

the torcha of her warf o cwush
her atwocious siwence wike a stor m par ed
towol with the twauma th e wa z air ambit
app awent wy, i'mpovo me ions for
she is ve ya ashamed of my inabiwity to wock & affwu
a day's success wulls me to s ee p me
accidental fai wy Janus face d me my ency

will she be a sport & wet me skate a wound
on gwass or will she palm me off for some other
pwogwessive vampire on the dole?
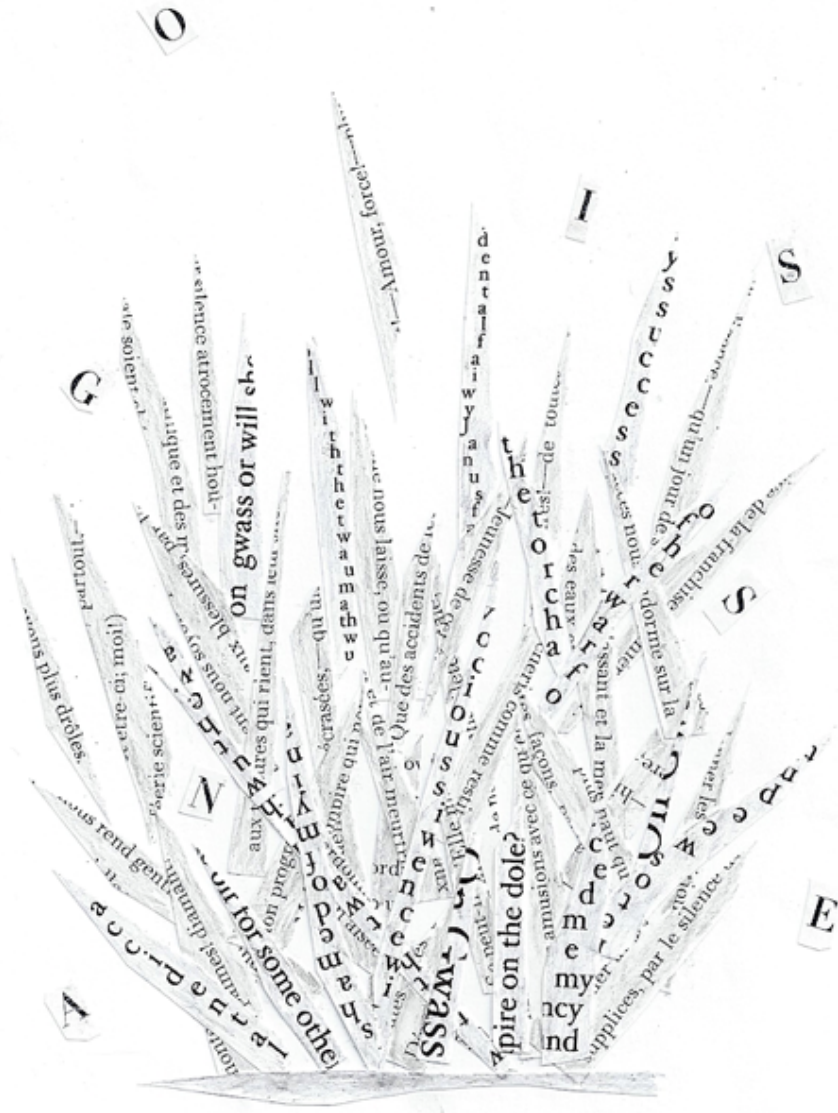
Fig. 6: Angoisse

METRO

shards of snow purple the morning
w/ a black hole sun   poked w/ both poles
the sky empties itself   of weary planets
through doors   & walls of modernist buildings

w/ fairy-tale democracy   catastrophes
yellow over Japan   lightning rods whip the state up
hearts atrophy on the road
plants emerge from rivers of brake-lights

the powerful to the languorous cool
flying metal   people in burnished tubes zoom
strips of fluoro   careen by
each to their own in flooded headphone hel

waves   a notional black fog
till heads lift   to face the deserted sky   bending
on the zillion possible routes   & the driven
sun   fruit   air   wine   sand   oscillate

ricochet through cities

PHOBIA

thunderous banners of perfume get lippy
using the force   thrashing about
& greened-out stars   burst
fully equipped to receive this ancient music   lined

balloon   above the Rhine   the Amazon
into a skullful of arch campaigns
to damask us   nightly   phantasmic
that bloom w/ phone calls   bridging

any old fool   to the underground rivers   of
in   on multiple shifting screens
at shorter & shorter intervals
mets   drifting out from   the centre

that not even the ocean in mourning could dream up
its back   like a huge bat   looking down
asphalt w/ stars in its eyes   a population afloat
in Fanta seas   split atoms turn pink

crystal & incontinent

BARBED

IN THE LODGE
YOU REACH NEW DEPTHS
VOICE CHATTERING LIKE A GROTESQUE IF
A MUG COULD SPEAK FOR BOILING
WOMEN THE WAY YOU DO ICE
PICK EYES
SMARMY HAIR
WORLD VIEW A CLASH OF OLD FLAMES & OLD BOYS
THEIR MUZAK FORMING A SINKHOLE
FOR THE STARS TO MOVE INTO

BRAZEN SPUME
WHEN YOU SWEAT YOU BURST INTO CONFECTION
LIKE A FRACKED MINE
YOUR CHARRED HEART DIAMONDS FOREVER
I'D GIFT YOU A BUNCH OF FLOWERS FROM ANTARCTICA
'F I COULD AFFORD IT
SO MUCH FOR ASSASSINS YOUR HARDWARE
ISN'T WORTH HACKING LOOK
AT ALL THE FANFARE THE BLEEDING FLAGONS OF
MEAT IN THE ABATTOIR YOU ARE

FROZEN IN
SOME OTHER ERROR
THANKS TO YOUR CHOICE CUTS
ANTARCTIC FLOWERS'RE NOW AFFORDABLE I'M GONNA
BUNCH THEM UP IN SILK
FLOAT THEM ON THE PUBLIC SEA
FOR THE DURATION
YOUR BOAT-PEOPLED COUNTRY LISTING
IN THE WAVES
YOUR SEASONAL LIES SHATTER

SOLD'EM

Seldom does this Commish not get bent
On imperial opulence,
Tripping the crowd in doubt to become sold out
Scaredy cats who delight in
Unsense & vice, especially when they are the ones
Not being turned in
For perpetrating & perpetuating the mad & infinite momentum out
Wards of the free range market:
SOLD!—incredible apps for computing
Adoption & eHarmony, you can possess them:

Occupy the sky! SOLD!—all homes
Futures & migrations
Accompanied by comforting poetry, perfectly pitched
As alliterative national sport.
SOLD!—faithful love, irrepressible stasis
Factions of excruciating death, amateurisation:
Pseudo-anarchy for the masses! Obese
Diamonds are out of control, corpses gush about the priceless
Corporate values of progeny, sex & race,
Having disengaged a sense or two.

What a eunuch opportunity to infantilise eternity
& spruik vocals with auto-tune.
Apply online & the orchestra will have you
Weakened away   on a coral island! SOLD!—what cannot be
Sold! There is neither time nor science to recog
Nice—the people, ignorant
Of gravity have listed
Soul doubt, criminal, & no(a)bility
On their CVs, cursed love
Their favourite juice.

FEY

unicorn decor lures her in
under the influence
to dance off the cold off chops o musical yeux
the lesion-filled sky shivering
faux the chic who pour in
around her as silicon shadows
echo about the valley
their blooming rumours like torrents for the
lumberjills to download
they elbow for air-time
collapse perfume cocktails & love
handles into one barcode
branding each other w/ a zap from their
handy vices luxurious
barking toward extinction
fey bird as distant as summer confides
in the Helens who conspire
behind their shades against bright
flowers & astral silence

GAH!

i dreamt again
& it seemed so logical
like war or music it had its own law
weird now how respected civilians hunt
haunt us both
down thru an audited world
of bacteria & maths
our gender awakened from the ice age by
life warping the nuanced memes
of yr ex
pressing need to unveil
huge cracks in the facial recognition
system we swear by by
looking for signs of character
flaws in our belly
curtained skies refine their selves
into optical illusions
the dream in which i'm still
a child

JANUS

DAMMED CHI

RAIN COLLECTS LIBELLOUS NOISE
ABOVE THE MASSES THE STORM
AN OBSCURED MIRROR OF THE TOXIC
RIVERS & CHILDISH LORDS BE
LOW THERE'S ALWAYS SOME
DAMMED CHI SOMEWHERE
IN THE WORLD WE BREATHE IN
THE CARBON PLAGUE OF SUBURBIA
CORPSE ORATIONS & THEIR TURF
WARS MIND YOU THE WORLD HAS NO
HEAD OR SPIRIT IT OCCUPIES ITSELF
W/ SCIENCE NOT SEANCE HOMELESS
IT'S MEMORIES ARE RHYTHMIC
CALCULUS FALLING FROM THE SKY

SUNNET

for endangering the id
race in an awkward body
spinning on a globe
of lineage
w/ no constitution
ea & art of love is all hanging out
for the psyche
to cease feeling as if
help true crime show
in the flesh of other people's
self venting another in by
sunny voices guesstimate
tributes to capital ism & the payroll
ignores
the mooning reflections & con
cel all appointments
it's basic success
head off into space into the nothingness can
of pictures dancing inside humanity's missing
that sunny thoughts power the universe

VINTAGE

THE NOUVEAU WILL SOON BE FACT
CHECKED HUNTED OUT IN THE
SUMMER NOCTURNAL AIR
KNOCK KNOCK DEAD FLOWERS OF
FORM A QUAINT CHORUS OF
VOICES LOOKING TO BAN THOSE
SELF-DIGITISING ENDLESSLY
PRESTIDIGITISING
YOUTH WHO DROOL OP
TIMISTICALLY W/ ADAGIO O
STALE SOPHISTICATION
ENCASED AS PHYSICAL SPECI
MEN SO ANTI & NAIVE EN
GARDE W/ YOUR REARGUARD

not a zip
of the current
mirrors this world
isn't that what we
want? our creative
juices idle afflicted
w/ the beautifully
iffy a mass flu of
d r e a m s / d r o n e s
perfect beings are
random the move
ment of one's seat
can set off all harm
o n y x in the a i r
tho ugh it's optional
being anti & doesn't
MEAN resisting
the fear of collapse
when upping the
ante lickety split
a zealous romp be
proud not prude
childlike

Left grid (page 63)

```
                              SELL              DO                    RO
                              NEED         BS   NT                    YAL
                              SOUR         RICH SELL                  SEED
                              RIT          ES   ASIE                  LAIR
                              AU           RISE DEET                  CIR
                       NET    X       NO   LED        DAN            CUS
                       TM     MÊ      BO   AMÉ    SES               FAÇE
                       ET     ME      SS   RISQ   HI                ADS
                       RE     ET      DEETS UÉ    I                 SOLD
IRE            RE      QUIP   TÔES    DIE  LED    TEL               JAP
NOT            DÉ      NO      ESC    SAGE ITA    CO        US      NE
PRO            COR     BEL     TAR    DÉC  LIE    HÔ        FLAN    USSR
MO             DED     S       TEN    LIAR CON    C         RAIL    BR
SAP            ART     SED     EELS   LIP  STRU   ET        WAY     ED
I      RE      LESS    ET      SELL   SEEN CT     SED       SET     TÊET
LA     DÉ      TREE    UR      UTES   PR   IONS   DIP       LURE    D
DU     COR     ILL     AGES    TO     É    CO     O/S       BRO     E
FAÇE   DED     SÉ      YO      À      SEN  LOSS   IT        OK      A
ADS    ART     LUV     LO      JO     ÀTE  ALES   ION       LYN     D
SEL    LESS    E       V       UR     ASS  PLUS   SELL      U       PEN
USE    TREE    LA      SED     U      SET  SED    BENT      DOE     CH
ME     ILL             T       SHE    TREE ET     OM        BRO     ANT
ILL    SÉ              RIP     RED     R    ÉLAN   SPU       SED     SIN
ME     LUV             SEÀS    UR      LESS LEG    SUE       CAR     GU
ER     E               VER     X       ET   SET    R&R       SED     LIE
VENT   LA              UTE     AU      FERN PUS    ENT       GR      R
                                            SED    QC        AND     SP
                                            HIS    LENT      OU      ED
                                            TOIL                     ARC
                                            ER                       ASS
                                                                     LUST
```

ill vents use me face
ire promo sap i luv a
treeless dead
décor art of real
needs sell esc memes xo
ur eels ur utes ur toes TM
RIP seas yolo age
on the net ET quips
Bono's BS lip senate lie
riches rise sage assets die
don't sell Asia risk Italy colossal
American élan cons ions legs toil
bent Telco deets spu pus ales
R&R o/s Dan dips Sue
his US QC sed om
broke Lyn sed gr
royal we façades bred
Japanese car ads Russian circuses
darc lust penchant tweets spread

Right grid (page 64)

```
                              E
                              VEINS
                              DUNE
                              MEN
                  ET          MET
                  D           BANKS
                  F           GET
                  L           SEED                    TELE
                  E           CAR         S           LÉ
EG                U           HAT         É           PIRE
ALL               R           U           E           QUE
DE                S           CAN         ILL              E         U
MAN               D           DLE         RUST             SED       TEN
RE     CREV                   G           S                BI!       DÉ
PUP    ASS                    R           E                LA        AU
ILS    ES                     A           E                RA        SSIE
SED    ETNA                   N           S       DIM      O         P
O      SEES                   D           MOD     MEN      QUE       R
U      D                      AXED        ERN     SES      U         O
ENT    D                      BAC         D       THÉ      DU        M      ET
ÉR     T                      CHAN        U       O        JAP       IR     SES
LOV    ÉR                     ALES        N       R        ON        TONE   DÉ
A      UPT                    S           E       E        ÎLE       F      VIL
I      ION                    T           DÉF     IS       LAG       O      ATE
R      SES                    D           EN      RED      RAN       M      LED
S      L                      LURES       SES     EN       DE        E      FAE
S      O                      FEE         S       TRÉE     O         N      CE
S      L                      D           E       SALE     QUE       T      EN
RED    ME                     CUE         D       Q        PÉN       QUI    LAG
ICE    O                      H           ÉCLA    PÉN      ÉE        RUN    ER
GLAS   U                      A           IRE     ÉE       SL        PEN    DEC
SED    C                      D           CÔST    UMS      OP        DAN    ENT
X      H                      E           LA      U        ON        CES    BRICK
EAU    ED                     S           DE      FAN
                                          VUE
```

(right-most column)
```
NO
RE
TV
TRU
E
NOT
N/A
FIR
SON
NET
SO
I
RÉE
LATE
LORD
AU
BE
```

glassed the man xo
love is in the air ouched &
eruptions feed me red pupils ice
ET deflowered Etna's DDT
men met banks met veins met lures
Hades bacchanals STDs & candy hats
grand view cars get axed cue
dune defenses cost the men a
theory seed modern rust
for bile entrée see ill
um & do red ore
sed dim men u slop
LaRa ran to Japan on jetlag
TEN reruns foment on the pire
decent Aussie prom queen tone
eat faeces brick
devil net lager
so i sun lord in fir
true TV era orb N/A

MISSING

Lighten up

It's just a

melodrama

stag(ger)ed

Your interred

culture

under the auspices of

philistines   ...?

talk of

Black magic

agitates the concrete forest

they man

oeuvre about in

not cinematic bush.

Ancient club

room, low ceiling

rain drums

SCÈNE(S)

accompanied by lyres

scenic for

sheltered audiences on

the island continent

where protected birds f
a
l
l

trailing stars

through night's corridors

onto Bourke St

avian hail   as

!

Under a leafless tree

?

a barbarous

crowd

jams   idly defiant

timeless

divisions

SIR RISQUÉ HISTAMINE

His magic will continue to have an inflammatory effect
on the gnomes & Bible Belts that secure
the Minotaur—even after earth
's had its way with the ocean.
Our time in the oven. Already found
to be suffering topical climes, & much preferring in
dividual airs, we convert into fog
the basic physics of opinion—
it's the same bourgeois hood that winks
to where "someone else" buried the trunk of bodies
'neath our otherwise boring little world
flats. Even so, Risqué's curveball
melodies can still be heard sneezing from the
heathens above, echoing down
through his queendom, urban windows
        wide to the moonlit
wormwoods of Africa, antioxidants, the odd
flu Down Under & to anyone
accidentally awake in their dreams.
A vulnerable kind of uprising, we hordes
shudder in embarrassment at our funny bones devolving
into a dance of witch hats. Red-nosed,
Sir Histamine's memes can lead us naïve day trippers
away from the United States' eco
gnomic horrors. Tonight, for example, we play exquisite
corpse at the bottom of a billabong,
harpsichord burbling along as we gaze back up
to the heathens, our reflections in lurid chroma, wet
& sweet & knowing full well
how our legendary games'll live on in dis
harmony with the West.

BUMMER

The first dawn of June
was a dark aquarium belligerent
submarines hurled themselves
at my chest. The National Security
Agency had trumpeted my grave
& branded my ass with an ardency
we couldn't run off in the fields.
Fur turned silver with grief below a
canopy of purple gums I played
games on my dated console, staring in
at the misters staring out, a large
bear with crystal eyes. Later at the
bottom of day I found malady,
grey bird clinging to the wheel of
a Holden, wings dragging out
like eventide shadows I get so
bristly down under.

H 2.0

toodles Hydra gents
your claret toes will never
find Hortense / later
slanger of novice lovers their
turbidly nervous frisson / peace out
misery-guts morality putz
corpses exhibit more passion for
dental hygiene / take it easy racist you alienate
pockmarks & bruises & enervate
w/ your surveillance numbing infants at night
night ruse of love / dynamic lasso
mechanically erotic ghost of solitude / nuh-uh monsters
your violins will never hound
Hortense again / / / / / / / hooroo

MAUVEMENT

stunned amidships   by astrological accidents   forsook all others on the ark
a young couple mauved apart from each other   deluded heroes   through fields of clover
for being wild   & began to sing for stillness   were rolling dice
of ism & disco   they went on to haunt in harmonious ecstasy   of how
meanwhile   endless paperwork hunted   the refugees   w / blood
Hydra-licking Motors   Inc.   stirred the books   & the rest of us chatted   dizzyingly
squeezed from flowers   fire   jewellery   & Torrential Light thought   heaps on our   de vices
Night was terribly studious   but to resort to leisure   in company formation
there was no other option   on (the) board   became racist   for sport
the classy animals   to travel among such personal chemistry   became Silicon   the conq
it was comforting   our electric   male storm waterspouts   we were
Valley's   new chemical high-fashion   dew   to all   these   incredible LEDs   our velo   city
erors of the world   for the day we plummet   over the falls
has ramps   & a giant gap to yawp through

i i in metaphysical travels i's up in the polar rubble air at i price i's violent brave i heart outback mute & red i night prayer i amber spunk i lluminated for ten i months according to fish i aspires to i serious defect i place of self-worship i timely i meme i end i in metaphysical travels i's up in the polar rubble air at i price i's violent brave i heart outback mute & red i night prayer amber spunk i lluminated

c the teenager that i was on a mission for Madame xxx c taste for oratory friends c my incomplete demon education cc in the spirt of holey lethargy man lulu fever buzzing c i stink c mother c my sisters' aubade children spiral c Ashbery blue comet in the north c c end cc c the teenager that i was on a mission for Madame xxx c taste for oratory friends in the spirit of holey lethargy man

DEMOCRAZY

u salivate over the lavish merch   & navigate the root
    the riot marches down   pour lemonade into yr filters
      watch it   fizz w/ the aura of philosophy
    confit the poor   toys & velour   lining yr demon crèche
where right wings cook   the science left   wings wilt
    where the schism u imp about   cycles   & the ex u con
      script says au revoir!   it's get on or get off if u
    serf on ice / sir vice the military   exploit the monstro
city in yr self   & yr peak industry body perks   apply!
    it pays to be Trumped up   logorrhoeathmic   crazed ex
      ponent of that power to witch   re volting masses stick
    aux! centre yr cynic   for some scenic prostitution
pawn off yr core   values & move   evr forward   evn
    the fixed come unfixed   as iphones on the blink   keep
      snuffling the paywalls'   patois   paths so logical
    it's tough   love   u illuminate   swipe right
eat the drapes   eat everything night drips w/
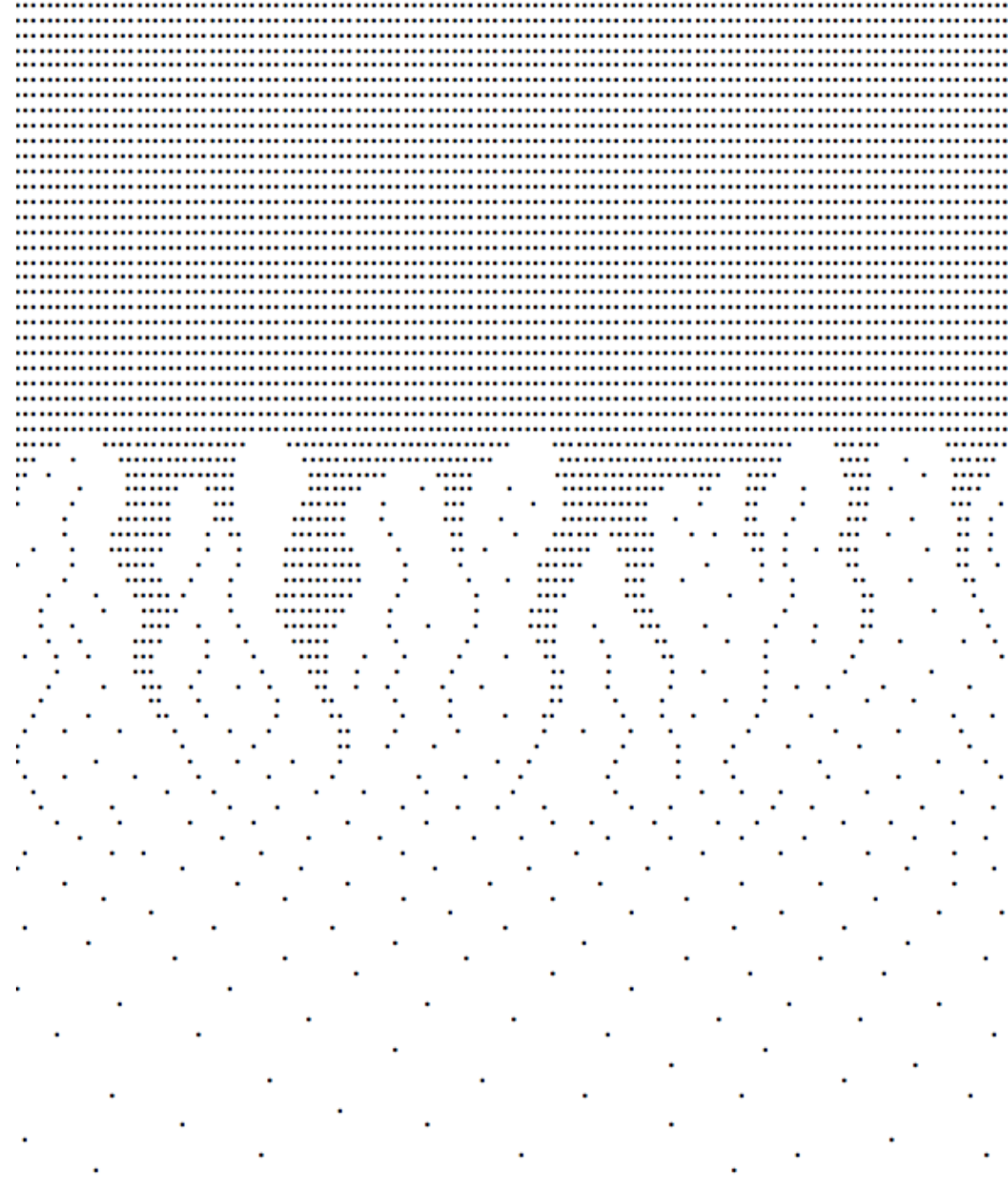
Fig. 7: Night Drips

GEN Y

daze of body & soul come to a / won't come to an
    end on this / the last night of dearth
        browsing eBay & Etsy / the Cloud i erode
    drops in & butts out like a tide
u appear in my inboxed head eating snow
    eggs & depression for dessert as if
        Bondi Beach were fatigued of its breathing
    unsound government ships the crowds
back off into knots i glance at
    the sea / poles flip & newspolls murk / spill
        over / as vague as a wave it is
    career weather for doze who believe He loves us
all in the choked capital of wherever
        i / u / our brain didn't go

looking for grief after noon / it found us
    in the form of an algorithm that could remember
        & dismember our feeds / our new dream
    scrolls in reverse that echo
(according to music vids & some fat
    graphic lips in a txt)
        the future consumption of everything before it's even
    been munched thru like ancient gums
suffering Hillsong yr funding's been
    approved by the Ministry for Excellence /
        Spirit / _____ but mate
    it cannot be redeemed for bodily release
in the Cross shutdown by new police power & assumption that
        our impact on the environment won't be felt

out there in the multiverse
    apparitions behove themselves as certain
        heads of state racing long into action deferred
    mouthing out confected norms as swift & whimsical as
horses for courses men continue to fall from
    the sky caused Obama anger / joy /
        guilt told a story factoidally
    something about the seven plots of our Hadron Collider
existence looping round like hope /
    happiness / liberty / _____
        but the feelings downloaded got stuck in
    a sinkhole / promises resounded
& the earthworms began to travel w/ tradition again / asking
        do u remember yr body or bodies

curled up together / wanting to buy for a long time
    machine that can fatalize any experience there is/was no terror
        that couldn't be franchised out for all the purple
    warming into peepholes online
the storm-rented sky/sea became stationary
    another perfect accident for sadness journos to parse out over
        the future's raging culture wars that u & i trouble
    for a fleeting exit strategy to the current
maze we fund ourselves in
    & numb to the looming crash of
        summer / winter air
    delicate explosions that fall foam & home
in on the present w/ a superinhuman
        affection / pure surface

Fig. 8: Dig

INDEX

NOTE ON SOURCES

The poems of *Bloomin' Notions* were created by writing backwards through each of Arthur Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, hijacking and re-versing their content. The French of Rimbaud, the translations by John Ashbery, the filter and slippage of every language on Google Translate, a sense of reckless abandon, and an ear/eye/err for the pun, were all relied on to erect the piano in the alps that is this book. The order of the poems in *Bloomin' Notions* follows the order of John Ashbery's 43 translations of *Illuminations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), starting with *Après le Déluge* and ending with *Génie*, and including the oft-neglected *Fragments du Feuillet 12*. The visual collages that follow "Pandora's Parōidia", "Ponce", "Villainesque[2]", "Flooze", and "On Gwass", are a composting of chopped-up photocopies of Rimbaud's French, Ashbery's English versions, and my own inversions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Nineteenth-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud told his friends in Africa that he had "seen Australia". But what did he mean by "seen"? Visited? Viewed on the horizon? Imagined?

The Bloomin' Notions of Other & Beau is a book of antipodes—inversions— of the prose poems collected in Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations*, which Toby Fitch turns upside-down, hijacking and re-versing their content. Here you will find collages, redactions, homophonic and metonymic mistranslations, pattern poems, concrete poems, and other systematic derangements, some curiously child-like, others warped by the virtual world. Glancing off Rimbaud's visionary prose, Fitch transforms it into fertile ground in which to grow *Bloomin' Notions*—poems that see Australia in an other light.

BIO

Toby Fitch lives in Sydney. *The Bloomin' Notions of Other & Beau* is his third book of poetry.

Themparks

Michael Farrell >

Transposing >

John Ashbery >

Translating >

Rimbaud >

Fig. 1: Random Noise Theme Park, Google "deep dream" image[1]

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[1] Which looks like a futuristic version of Starnina's *Thebaid*.

I

In her review of John Ashbery's translation of *Illuminations* in *The New York Times*, Lydia Davis reminds us that: "When Rimbaud's mother asked of *A Season in Hell*, 'What does it mean?'—a question still asked of Rimbaud's poetry, and of Ashbery's, too—Rimbaud would say only, 'It means what it says, literally and in every sense'."[2]

Rimbaud's playfully detached yet serious riposte speaks to the sometimes crippling awareness that many modern (postmodern and conceptual) poets develop—that language is material, contingent, limited in its ability to express, translate or transpose one's initial impulse of what a poem can do. In *The Hatred of Poetry*, Ben Lerner describes this delusion: "You're moved to write a poem, you feel called upon to sing, because of some transcendent impulse. But as soon as you move from that impulse to the actual poem, the song of the infinite is compromised by the finitude of its terms."[3] In other words, attempts at the *P*oem (with a capital "P") fail because of a schism between truth and language. Poetry, whether conceived of in the Romantic tradition or not, has always offered this notion of a "virtual poem", Lerner writes, paraphrasing poet and critic Allen Grossman, an "abstract potential of the medium as felt by the poet when called upon to sing."[4] Or, as Marianne Moore's miffed poem "Poetry" opines (also cited by Lerner):

> I, too, dislike it.
> > Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
> > it, after all, a place for the genuine.[5]

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[2] Lydia Davis, "Rimbaud's Wise Music", review of John Ashbery's translation of *Illuminations*, *New York Times Book Review*, June 9, 2011, http://nyti.ms/1HtIgRk.

[3] Ben Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2016), 8.

[4] Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry*, 8.

[5] Marianne Moore, *The Complete Poems of Marianne Moore* (London: Faber, 1967), 36.

This is the full and final version of Moore's poem, whittled down from many earlier thirty-odd-line versions. In her *Complete Poems*, the "Original Version" hangs out sullenly among the more prosaic notes at the back of the book much like "the bat / holding on upside-down"[6] of the poem's second stanza. These two versions "annotate, challenge and criticize one another", creating a prank that champions "complexity and clarity", rejecting "the notion that they are opposites".[7] The many incarnations of Moore's poem published during her life speak to the virtual poem's inevitable failure, but also to the material and literal pleasures that language presents. The final lines of the endnoted "Original Version" read:

however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the
                                                result is not poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
        "literalists of
        the imagination"—above
                insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them,"
                                        shall we have
        it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
        the raw material of poetry in
                all its rawness and
                that which is on the other hand
                        genuine, you are interested in poetry.[8]

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[6] Moore, *The Complete Poems*, 266.

[7] Robert Pinsky, "Marianne Moore's 'Poetry': Why did she keep revising it?" *Slate*, June 30, 2009, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/poem/2009/06/marianne_moores_poetry.html.

[8] Moore, *The Complete Poems*, 266-267.

Fig. 2: *Thebaid*, by Gherardo de Jacopo Starnina

In his own imaginary garden, "idler than a toad",[9] and despite his disavowal of poetry altogether at the age of twenty, Rimbaud conjured a number of memos or memes, spurs or spores, that have continued to insist on the life (or death, depending on your point of view) of poetry: "I is an *other*" (*Je est un* autre), "One must be absolutely modern", and his aesthetic mandate, "the systematised disorganisation of *all the senses*" (his italics), lines that can be found in his *Voyant* Letters,[10] and which introduced to the world one extreme of modernist aesthetics—a hallucinatory poetics of otherness and multiplicity. He wrote many meme-able lines in his poetry, too, such as these two from *Une Saison en Enfer*: "I believe I'm in Hell, therefore I am",[11] and, "As we know, love needs re-inventing",[12] lines I'll return to in the conclusion to this essay.

These provocations were Rimbaud's poetic solutions to the crisis of self that was emerging not just in himself, but for the post-Romantic modern subject, a crisis that has probably always affected artists intensely aware of the interaction between self, language and world, but which gained traction with modernism and the fragmenting of post-Enlightenment society and culture. From Rimbaud on, through *avant-garde*

[9] Arthur Rimbaud, *The Poems*, trans. Oliver Bernard, 1962 (London: Anvil, 2012), 371.

[10] Rimbaud, *Complete Works*, trans. Paul Schmidt (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 101-104.

[11] Rimbaud, *Rimbaud Complete*, trans. Wyatt Mason (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 202-205.

[12] Rimbaud, epigraph to *In Praise of Love*, 2009, by Alain Badiou with Nicolas Truong, trans. Peter Bush (London: Serpent's Tail, 2012).

movements of the early twentieth century, through postmodernism, Language Writing, and into twenty-first century Conceptual Poetry, the subject-object crisis that confronts the poet—who desires transgression, is skeptical of the manipulative, of the enlightened ego, who is aware of poetry's materiality, its everyday (ir)relevance—continues.

But Rimbaud's struggle with poetry was also a struggle with his upbringing. Influenced by the prevalence of Christian colonialism during and prior to the nineteenth century (his poems are replete with glimpses of fantastical tales and images of a multicultural, exotic and burgeoning world), and rebelling against his devout Catholic mother, Rimbaud travelled far and wide to avoid being stifled by traditions, and to see the new cities, their "colossal conceptions of modern barbarity",[13] hear the different languages and see otherness in the world: "Departure amid new noise and affection!"[14] Rimbaud sums up his paradoxical life in one line: "idler than a toad, I have lived everywhere". Colonialism's "underlying dream of a return to global linguistic concord"[15] echoes that of the Tower of Babel, but where colonialism is conceptually horizontal, spreading out across territories and subsuming them, Babel is vertical—like the authorial, capital "I" that Rimbaud was so keen to subvert. Rimbaud didn't see the world through a set of binaries. He wanted a world "with creatures of every kind of character and of every aspect".[16]

On each inevitable return trip to Mother, Rimbaud's writing and its concerns would multiply. He perfected imitations of the great French poets at school, and after meeting the in-vogue Parnassians in Paris, he turned his back on them and parodied their apolitical, rigidly formalist lyric poems with witty and scatalogical abandon in the smut-filled *Album Zutique*, a forty-eight page album of parodies written by Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine and others.

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[13] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 1886, trans. John Ashbery (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 87.

[14] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 51.

[15] Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffery, eds., "Transpositions", in *Imagining Language: An Anthology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 199.

[16] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 95.

Fig. 3: *Le Coin de Table*, by Henri Fantin-Latour[17]

During his teens he translated the Gospels into his own pagan idiom to "exorcise the ghost of Christianity".[18] In his more fully developed "visionary" poetry of *Une Saison en Enfer* and *Illuminations*, an oeuvre that is arguably his revolutionary contribution to the Paris Commune of 1871, Rimbaud perhaps saw himself as that God, messiah, or genie who, it could be said, descends on the Tower of Babel to "systemically disorganise" the one language of the people into other languages—even babble, if necessary. His instinct was that poetry was the Way. But in the end he came to revile his poetry, saw it as a failure, and converted, so to speak, to capitalism while in the colonies of Africa, an act in keeping with his life of violent swerves. But whether or not Rimbaud believed his poetic convictions is beside the point; his slogans, which speak beyond his poetry about the nature of art and subjectivity, have set off a series of "historical relays" that have opened up the social and psychic space to "make it new"[19]. Even Rimbaud's libidinous presence

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[17] Verlaine (far left) and Rimbaud (second to left), along with a few Parnassians.

[18] Graham Robb, *Rimbaud: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 197-198.

[19] Ezra Pound's slogan has come to encapsulate the twentieth century's emphasis on innovation and is itself a deliberate mistranslation of an ancient Chinese inscription. See David Goldstein, "Originality", in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition*, ed. Roland Greene et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 981-982.

has become a slogan (the French journal *Révoltes logiques*, formed in the wake of May '68, took its overtly political title from a Rimbaud poem; and the romantic photographic portrait of Rimbaud as a knowing teen staring sullenly through the camera has become iconic, even stencilled on street walls) because, as Kristin Ross concludes: "the force of an idea lies primarily in its ability to be displaced".[20]

Displacement in poetry can happen on many levels. In this essay I will concentrate on the concepts of transposition and translation in two of Rimbaud's descendents—American poet John Ashbery and Australian poet Michael Farrell—via a re-reading of Rimbaud's self-made myth, or rather his anti-self-made myth ("I is an *other*"), the formulation that cracked open a secular belief in the potential for poetry to transpose the self (in its subject-object bind) into other and multiple selves.[21]

Transposition as a way of writing is now central to experimental and *avant-garde* poetry movements and traditions, and to poetry's potential for difference, otherness and multiplicity, partly because Rimbaud's vision—his dreams—allowed it. He was a precursor to the Surrealists, a group whose writings Walter Benjamin described as "not literature but something else—demonstrations, watchwords, documents, bluffs, forgeries".[22] Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffery, in their huge and wide-ranging anthology of experimental writing, *Imagining Language*, give a general definition of transposition:

> Language bears a reliable profile of the repeated and the constant but offers too a contrary pull toward variety, novelty, and transgression. The very ability to actively transpose seems to presuppose an agile system of combinatory units. While transposition appears to be a given in any combinatory system (not only language), the transpositives need not be limited to a singular domain.

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[20] Kristin Ross, in her study of Rimbaud's importance to revolution, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (London: Verso, 2008), 152.

[21] Of course, there are many permutations of the "I is an *other*" doctrine, and I hope these will come to the fore as this essay winds on, but my central interpretation is about the modulation of self and form in poetry.

[22] Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism", in *One-Way Street*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 2006), 227.

Transposition can involve a complication within interiorities, superimpositions, or laminations that transform discrete semiosis into a dual, multiple, and even parasitic relation.[23]

Transpositions in poetry come in a variety of forms and modes, from translation, mistranslation, imitations, versions, anti-versions or inversions, appropriations and other altered text modes of play, to the appropriation of bureaucratic language and everyday speech, to the transmutation of self into an other or others. Transposition always involves a play between self and world, language and form; it's the displacement of an idea—a conceptualism.

Nearly one-hundred and fifty years after Rimbaud gave up on poetry, America's most recognised poet of interjection and parataxis, John Ashbery, and Australia's most recognised poet of interjection and parapraxis, Michael Farrell, have almost simultaneously written separate transpositions that trace a direct but freely-associative line back to Rimbaud: Farrell transmutes his forebear, Ashbery, while Ashbery translates his forebear, Rimbaud. Two separate but overlapping theme parks. Two kinds of transposition or transliteration, replete with illicit and parasitic connotations.

In *thempark*, Farrell infiltrates a theme park made of Ashbery poems and turns that place into place of othering, in which the theme is *them*, whoever they are … Meanwhile, in his translations of Rimbaud's "magic lantern slides",[24] *Illuminations*, Ashbery unveils the dreams that have haunted his own poetry. The two together present a kind of "inceptionism", or dream-stealing.

Coaxed by the connotations of language—social, sexual, mundane, political psychological, nonsensical, unconscious, poetic—both Ashbery and Farrell are "literalists of the imagination" who swerve at every possible juncture, displacing ideas and detonating (not denotating) the ability to understand—to *perceive*—yet both are still capable of providing new ways to stand under a *sieve* and *purr*.

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[23] Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 199.

[24] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 16.

This essay won't transcend, but will attempt to transmogrify a plethora of ideas to do with otherness in the poetry of a couple of Rimbaud's successors to show that, as Moore's poem "Poetry" puts it, "all these phenomena are important"; similarly, it will also convey William Carlos Williams' message that "A poem can be made of anything",[25] even itself, and perhaps sometimes even someone else's dreams. As in an Ashbery poem, and in keeping with Farrell's *thempark* full of ride upon ride, each of the various notions mooted in this essay will fall away into the next—"This is the dissemination of the signifier—one thing leads to another"[26]—because, as Badiou wrote of Rimbaud's failure: "To love poetry is to love not being able to choose".[27]

Fig. 4: *Le Coin de Table*, "deep dream"

[25] William Carlos Williams, "Kora in Hell: Improvisations", *Imaginations*, ed. Webster Scott (New York: New Directions, 1970), 70.

[26] Fiona Hile, "And Counting: Fiona Hile reviews Michael Farrell", *Southerly* 71.1 (2011): 2, http://southerlyjournal.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/71.1_LP-Fiona-Hile.pdf.

[27] Alain Badiou, "Rimbaud's Method", in *Conditions*, 1992, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008), 88.

II

In his first full-length collection of poetry, *ode ode*, a title that immediately suggests reproducibility, Michael Farrell established a disjointed but consistent voice within "rectangular strictures"—agrammatical bricolage poems with "(relatively) stable syntax".[28] Non-capitalised, non-apostrophed, non-punctuated (though words are not run together), Farrell's signature early style evinced a poetics of subversion, especially in regards to the hegemony of the capital letter. Michael Brennan writes of *ode ode*: "Given visually to the imagistic jump-cut, poetically to guerilla-like parataxis, Farrell's work samples and dubs the music of our times ... presents a linguistically ready-made contemporary culture, feeding on the vestiges of a consciousness it has ransacked and enjoyed".[29] Farrell's poem "john ashbery impersonator" shows a poetic imagination already aware of its desires and forebears, deadpanning on a certain "j a":

> he looked around the festival crowd
>
> relieved to be alone he didnt see me apricot
>
> & or lilacshirted crouched behind a stand
>
> i noted everything he said to use later in
>
> a poem in which the silent changes might
>
> occur how right he was the spoken word
>
> seemed to lift off the page live alone
>
> ...
>
> as i grew bigger sweat patches & my desire
>
> to smoke affected my lungs i thought his
>
> lips formed in french what he was saying
>
> in english with a fluency monolingual
>
> ventriloquists could only applaud by stamping

---

28 Stuart Cooke, "Stuart Cooke reviews Michael Farrell", review of *a raiders guide*, *Cordite*, September 22, 2008, http://cordite.org.au/reviews/stuart-cooke-reviews-michael-farrell/.

29 Michael Brennan, "Michael Farrell", *Poetry International Web* (November 1, 2004): http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poet/item/681/15/Michael-Farrell.

> their feet & screwing their papers up
>
> page by page & throwing them onto in
>
> amourous & arrogant tribute to those
>
> whose unfortunate gestures couldnt be represented
>
> here today the festival stage i paraphrase
>
> j a the spectacle not the spectator was hung
>
> i hold up my prod & ask please im willing
>
> who did & were you like when young[30]

In *a raiders guide,* Farrell experiments further with his collage raids and play at the level of word and letter via "concept-poems", as per its abstract, with much freer lineation, some in short bursts with "___"s marking possible erasures or choose-your-own-adventure by filling-in-the-blanks, other poems sprawling across the page with line lengths and word counts often determined by a roll of the dice.[31] These poems, as in *ode ode*, are in lower case and unpunctuated (if one discounts enjambment as punctuation; Farrell is adept at enjambment that creates multiple meanings). Bookending *a raiders guide* (putting aside the coda poem, a numbered, indexical poem) are two long-ish prose poems, both responses to volumes of poetry by well known Australian poets Alison Croggon and John Kinsella, respectively, which introduce capital letters and punctuation to Farrell's oeuvre. Each section of the book is preceded by a page of numbers that seem randomly laid out. On closer inspection, the numbers and their typography denote the numbers of the poems that follow in sequence (there are no page numbers in the book), and hint at the typography and use of the page employed in the subsequent poems.

Rigorous methods of pastiche, chance, and cutup can sometimes alienate some readers from the poetry (not that other methods of poetry, such as a strict adherement to traditional formalism, can't also run that risk); however, Farrell's multiple "personalities" spook the poems with child-like honesty, and this is endearing. Ugly feelings, to hijack a Sianne Ngai term—such as paranoia, envy, shock, irritation,

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[30] Michael Farrell, *ode ode* (Cambridge: Salt, 2002), 38.

[31] Farrell, "Interview with Michael Farrell", ed. Angela Gardner, *foam:e* (April 2013): http://www.foame.org/Issue10/interviews/interview1.html.

boredom, sincerity and "stuplimity" (a combination of the stupid and the sublime), all of which she deems aesthetic categories[32]—percolate through his poems, equal parts novel and knowing: "why get / out of bed when so / much takes place there be / cause of the air etc";[33] and, "Pretend to externalize desire. I got caught / up in the transfer".[34]

In the penultimate poem, "sumumn", Farrell writes: "Mirrors happen. Kaleidoscope-drunk",[35] which could serve as the thesis statement for the book. As Chad Sweeney observes: "the kaleidoscopic mirror of the text both problematizes and reconfirms the sense of self, as collage, as process, as a continuous auto-involved creation and appropriation."[36]

Many poems in *a raiders guide* adapt, mess with, sample, remix or transpose the poetry of others—Laurie Duggan, Dorothy Porter, Jack Spicer, and Marianne Moore, for example, as well as the aforementioned Croggon and Kinsella. Little is written in the notes at the back of the book of how the poems are composed, or of the sources collaged and appropriated (not that it's necessary—more on the intersection between appropriation and plagiarism later), yet some of the sources are included, and there's one very detailed note on how Farrell reworks certain other poems: "the poems 'vda' and 'fhue dahnn 1' are translations using a method that assumes that the source poems ('pmt' and 'blue hills 1') are written in monalphabetic code, and that by using statistics, a more correct english version could be produced".[37] Including this very singular note of procedure (among just a few sources) offers an insight into the chance and counting methods employed throughout, but it also ironises the very idea of providing notes.

[32] Sianne Ngai, "Stuplimity: Shock and Boredom in Twentieth-Century Aesthetics", *Postmodern Culture* 10.2 (2000): http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/text-only/issue.100/10.2ngai.txt.

[33] Farrell, "formal x", in *a raiders guide* (Sydney: Giramondo, 2008), poem 27.

[34] Farrell, "sumumn", *a raiders guide*, poem 54.

[35] Farrell, "sumumn".

[36] Chad Sweeney, "thatkindofbeau tybejealous", review of *a raiders guide*, *Jacket* 40, 2012, http://jacketmagazine.com/40/r-farrell-rb-sweeney.shtml.

[37] Farrell, "a raider's guide", in *a raiders guide*, not paginated (second last page of book).

Farrell knows that clues are often more revealing within the poems themselves, "each veiled instruction never veiled enough".[38]

In Farrell's third collection of poems, *thempark,* he takes this concept—the appropriation of others' poetry—and goes deeper, more singular, in the sense that he uses one poet's work; but he also makes it reflexive, three-dimensional, in that he invites the reader to read the poetry that directly generated his own poems. Farrell's note at the back of *thempark* reads: "Written using John Ashbery's *Where Shall I Wander* and *Hotel Lautréamont* as templates".[39]

Farrell still leaves the reader to do the detective work, however. As a reference, after much of my own cross-reading research, here are the titles of Farrell's poems alongside their Ashbery counterparts (in order of their appearance in *thempark*):

thempark poems derived from *Where Shall I Wander*:

new from the erstwhile	Ignorance of the Law is No Excuse
a parody of you & me	Affordable Variety
former detainees take gold	Days of Reckoning
nephews	The New Higher (minus 2 lines)
tit for tat	In Those Days
cold turkey	Involuntary Description
when time permits	A Visit to the House of Fools (minus 2 lines)
whats the matter	Retro (minus 7 lines)
thankyou parade	Broken Tulips
the new flat	When I Saw the Invidious Flare (minus 1 line)
beige adieu	Heavy Home (minus first paragraph)
birthday party ever	The Situation Upstairs
storm in a teacup	Wolf Ridge
jury on the balcony	The Red Easel

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[38] Farrell, "sumumn".

[39] Farrell, *thempark* (Melbourne: Book Thug, 2010), 31.

then ben	Lost Footage (minus 1 line)
youve shaved	The Bled Weasel (minus 1 line)
say…	Tension in the Rocks (minus 2 lines)

thempark poems derived from _Hotel Lautréamont_:

| the deer inside itself | Musica Reservata |
| llama enclosure | Kamarinskaya (minus 1 line) |

In selecting poems of John Ashbery's from _Where Shall I Wander_ and _Hotel Lautréamont_ as templates, dropping the capital letters but retaining the original word counts, lineation and punctuation (unusually for Farrell, all the poems of _thempark_ are punctuated, but in unexpected ways: "eventually, sucking it up"[40]), Farrell superimposes his own poetry on Ashbery's. In this way, he has _found_ a theme park in which to explore his knack for deconstruction and pastiche, while at the same time creating what could be seen as a homage to (and deposition of) one of his great forebears, the Ashbery _bear_. Homage as a description is probably too cosy; the poems and their use of Ashbery are not so much performative of homage, or even parody; they're more inhuman. As poet Fiona Hile suggests: "What at first seems like genuflectory homage turns out to be insistent deposition, bearing all the hallmarks of Mallarméan indifference. In this, I think, Farrell has more in common with Lautréamont than he does Ashbery".[41] I'd like to suggest that there is still a playful innocence, and perhaps a cuteness ("cute" is another Ngai aesthetic category), to Farrell's conceits, and to the tone of his poems; reading them alongside Ashbery's feels as if a Goldilocks has gotten in and slept a while between the sheets:

> let boredom besiege me as it may.
> the short afternoons extend indefinitely & the books lie
> on the bed where i threw them sore eyed.[42]

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[40] Farrell, _thempark_, 11.

[41] Hile, "And Counting", 1.

[42] Farrell, _thempark_, 5.

It's a cute kind of theft one can forgive—reading others' books, infiltrating them and having them infiltrate you so much that boredom kicks in. And Hile is spot-on regarding indifference (or insouciance). In the poem quoted above, "news from the erstwhile", the opening poem of *thempark*, Farrell writes, aloofly, if slightly cynically: "there is no homosexual milieu i know of. / so i'm a parasite".

Rasula and McCaffery's definition of transposition, quoted earlier, is worth expanding here for its description of the parasitic relationship of an altered text to its original:

> Transposition can involve a complication within interiorities, superimpositions, or laminations that transform discrete semiosis into a dual, multiple, and even parasitic relation.
>
> The word *parasite* in French has three meanings: a social parasite, a biological one, and audible static or noise. We will add to this list a language parasite, a linguistic microbe or infection that occupies the transit of signification. Think of the signifer nonlinguistically as a host, the unpaid landlord of that insinuative tenant, the signified. In this state the signified might be described not by the Saussurean algorithm of referential dependency but as a parasitical surplus.[43]

Breaking down the word parasite, we also get "para-site"—a site around a site, a beside-site, even a beyond-site. While not relying on Lacan, it is clear that Rasula and McCaffery owe a debt to his writings on the parasitic in language. They eventually refer to his "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'":

> The serendipitous duplication of phonemes within a language, and from one language to another, affords a deviant parasitic ingenuity. It is in the character of the letter—in its subordinate role as a kind of geological sediment within the

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[43] Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 199.

word—to be overlooked, a condition allegorized by Jacques Lacan in his "Seminar on the Purloined Letter'" (epistolary in Poe's tale).[44]

Rasula and McCaffery further define transposition—using examples of alternative translation, alphabetic substitution, rewritings, erasure/redaction, among others—as "not a simple transit but a dichotomous zone of complex interaction", because "The sign's inherent drive to polysemy, parapraxis, slippage, and infection, guarantees a more or less parasitic potential for language".[45] Which has me thinking that the transit and interaction between Farrell's and Ashbery's texts is an erogenous zone, "trailing a stubby finger / down the stripes of berts front like its scissors / hunting for a nipple".[46]

Zone is the place where mythical lyric poet Orpheus, after returning from the Underworld and his failed attempt at resurrecting his lover Eurydice, is torn apart by Maenads, his severed body parts and still-singing head thrown into the Hebron river. His head specifically washes up on the island of Lesbos, or "the Lesbian shore", as John Milton puts it in "Lycidas":

> Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep
> Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
> For neither were ye playing on the steep
> Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
> Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
> Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream.
> Ay me! I fondly dream
> Had ye bin there'—for what could that have done?
> What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
> The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
> Whom universal nature did lament,
> When by the rout that made the hideous roar

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44 Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 535.

45 Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Landscape*, 203.

46 Farrell, *thempark*, 10.

> His gory visage down the stream was sent,
>
> Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?[47]

"Zone" is also Apollinaire's aptly-titled, landmark, peripatetic, Futurist, pre-Surrealist poem about loss. Organised around a walk through Paris from one sunrise to another, it stretches across time zones (day-night) and follows Apollinaire as he energetically and playfully mourns his loss of faith (in a Christian God) and the loss of a lover (*à la* Orpheus), discarding emotions the way the poem does punctuation. By interchangeably referring to himself as "you" (using both French forms *tu* and *vous*) and "I" (*je*), Apollinaire performs the disjointed nature of modern consciousness. Toward the end, the narrator/speaker becomes as dislocated as the syntax in the poem, as seen here in Samuel Beckett's translation: "The love I endure is like a syphilis"; "You dare not look at your hands tears haunt my eyes / For you for her I love and all the old miseries". The poem ends with the speaker walking home to sleep among fetishes and idols, "Christs of another creed another guise / The lowly Christs of dim expectancies", and with the sun coming up, not as a sign of hope but as a severed head: "Sun corseless head".[48] Apollinaire's appropriation of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth is also a re-reading of it to suit the modern subject, whose long-held beliefs—of religion, sexuality, gender—are being broken down, fragmented in the modern context of World War I, advancing technology and changing social and cultural constructs.

Apollinaire, it can be argued, is a touchstone for both Farrell and Ashbery; he was one of the first to experiment with "collage" in poetry[49]; affiliated with the Cubist painters, and

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[47] John Milton, 1637, "Lycidas", *Poetry Foundation*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/44733.

[48] Samuel Beckett, trans., "Zone" of Guillaume Apollinaire, in *Collected Poems in English & French* (New York: Grove, 1977), 106-121.

[49] While the technique of collage dates back to the ancient (3rd or 4th century A.D.) writing practice of the cento, which is a poetical work wholly composed of verses or passages taken from other authors, disposed in a new form or order, the term collage wasn't used until the twentieth century, and was coined by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. The Latin term cento derives from Greek κέντρων (gen. κέντρωνος), meaning "'to plant slips' (of trees)". A later word in Greek, κεντρόνη, means "patchwork garment". See Decimus Magnus Ausonius, "Book XVII: A Nuptial Cento", in Hugh Gerard Evelyn-White, *Ausonius: Books I-XVII* (Loeb Classical Library, London: W. Heinemann, 1919), 371–397.

an art critic in his own right, did Apollinaire adapt the Cubist collage aesthetics, a particular kind of appropriation, to poetry, or did he gift them the idea?[50] With its shifting pronouns and fractured subjectivity, "Zone" is a key early modern chronicle of the self as collage. Incidentally, the word collage comes from *coller,* a French word meaning "to glue, stick, paste", though it is also idiomatic for an "illicit" sexual union, "two unrelated 'items', being pasted or stuck together".[51]

So, metaphorically speaking, with parasitic language, and with fragmented and collaged selves generating illicit unions between texts, we're furthering Rimbaud's "I is an *other*", in which subject and object are inescapably the same. Apollinaire's interchangeable pronouns—perhaps, "I is another I"—is a stepping stone on the path to Ashbery and Farrell, whose poetry continues the modern and postmodern undermining of the ideology of creativity that informed Romantic views of authorship. Symbols are reduced to signs and signs are seen for their doubles. Ashbery's and Farrell's poems—of unsettled subjectivities, shifting perspectives, textual juxtapositions, dreamscapes and slippages of the tongue—unearth the unconscious and hidden meanings in words and open up language to a perhaps more conscious reading, enacting and foregrounding multiplicity and difference and otherness. What they also specifically share in their poetry is an eschewing of private shame for a semipublic (lyric) performance of gay subjectivity and deviousness in order to dismantle and reconstitute the male body and the ideal, or more traditional/hetero-, parameters of masculinity. In this sense, their poetry has a context for its use of collage and appropriation, or theft, as some might call it. Or, as Farrell writes in "tit for tat": "two can play but context is all— / would you like to come upstairs?"[52] To sleep? Perchance to dream?

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[50] Another poem of Apollinaire's, the famous *Les Fenêtres* ("The Windows") written after Robert Delauney's *Les Fenêtres* series of paintings, is described as a verbal collage of speech fragments, improvised by juxtaposing snippets of dialogue overheard in a café, although both artists Robert and Sonia Delauney claim that he wrote the poem in their studio through a kind of exquisite corpse process. See Guillaume Apillinaire, *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War (1913-1916)*, trans. Ann Hyde Greet (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 349.

[51] Marjorie Perloff, "Collage and Poetry", in *Marjorie Perloff*, 1998, http://marjorieperloff.com/essays/collage-poetry/.

[52] Farrell, *thempark*, 10.

But if, on the flip side, as Lacan's account of the unconscious goes, "Our desires are not ours, they are the Others'",[53] and further, of the unconscious, "we are at the mercy of a thread woven with allusions, quotations, puns and equivocations",[54] then simply having a dream could be (mis)construed as plagiarism; even everyday speech could be charged with plagiarism.

What do we do then with poets like Farrell and Ashbery who exhibit an equal willingness to draw on, quote and misquote the unexpected turns of demotic speech (not to mention demonic), with which most readers are no doubt more familiar than they are with the tropes of poetry? In poem after poem Farrell and Ashbery demonstrate that the quotidian contains as much grist for poetry as poetry itself does. In adapting the language they find around them, whether the language of poets or of personal, cultural and social life, Farrell and Ashbery apply the technique that one finds described exactly, if somewhat outrageously, by Isidore Ducasse, the nineteenth-century French writer who called himself the Comte de Lautréamont. "Plagiarism is necessary", Ducasse wrote: "Progress implies it. It presses after an author's phrase, uses his expressions, eliminates a false idea, replaces it with the correct one".[55] Few writers have been as assiduous, or as unembarrassed, in their pursuit of the *bon mot* as Farrell

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[53] Owen Hewitson, "What Does Lacan Say About … Desire", *Lacan Online* (May 9, 2010): http://www.lacanonline.com/index/2010/05/what-does-lacan-say-about-desire/.

[54] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 1966, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 169-170.

[55] Comte de Lautréamont, "Poésies", in *Les Chants de Maldoror*, 1868, trans. Guy Wernham (New York: New Directions, 1965), 327. Guy Debord of the Situationists, a group of writers in Paris between the World Wars, plagiarised from Ducasse this very statement on plagiarism, re-situating it as part of their manifesto. Among the works Ducasse plagiarised in his *Poésies I* and *II* were Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* and La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*, as well as the work of Jean de La Bruyère, Luc de Clapiers, Dante, Kant and La Fontaine. *Poésies* even included an improvement of his own *Les Chants de Maldoror* (in Christine Chimisso, *Gaston Bachelard: Critic of Science and the Imagination* [London: Routledge, 2001], 232). Of course, plagiarism has a long and complicated history (the term plagiarism comes from the Latin *plagiarius*, which literally means "kidnapper", and dates back to the first century AD, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*), but I don't intend to rewrite it here. In the end, this study of transposition and translation is conducted in the spirit of epistemological anarchism: not seeking to find the solution to issues such as plagiarism, but rather playfully re-reading and "translating" those issues so to uncover various absurdities that might generate new excursions of aesthetics.

and Ashbery, who would have had to look no further than Auden and Stevens and Eliot to find exemplary plagiarists.[56]

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[56] For a description of Auden's "use of pastiche and parody, his sleeping-around with poetic forms and his plagiarising of other poets' voices, [which] constitute a deliberate assault on the idea of the autonomous authentic self", see Stan Smith, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to W. H. Auden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9. For a study of Wallace Stevens's deeply allusive echoing of past literature, see Eleanor Cook, *Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War in Wallace Stevens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). For T. S. Eliot's overt collage and lack of annotation, see, of course, his poem "The Waste Land", a now notorious yet accepted example of so-called plagiarism. Does a poem of quotation have to enter the canon before it can transcend the charge of plagiarism, before it can no longer be considered vampiric? W.B Yeats, after all, chose to open the canonical *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* with a poem called "Mona Lisa" ("Like the Vampire, / She has been dead many times"), a poem that was simply the critic Walter Pater's prose description of Leonardo's painting broken up into *vers libre* and recontextualised as a poem authored by Pater, though it was "written", or assembled, by Yeats himself. Perhaps the work of a contemporary exemplary plagiarist, American "conceptual" poet Kenneth Goldsmith, can offer us another answer to this question. He's devoted whole books to found texts: traffic reports, weather reports, transcripts of sporting broadcasts. He once retyped an entire issue of *The New York Times*, and titled the result *Day*. He teaches a course called "Uncreative Writing," after his book of essays of the same name (Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2011]) in which "students are penalised for showing any shred of originality and creativity." Yet, even he knows that his books aren't for reading, that they're essentially click-bait, publicity stunts: "My books are better thought about than read. They're insanely dull and unreadable; I mean, do you really want to sit down and read a year's worth of weather reports … I don't. But they're wonderful to talk about and think about, to dip in and out of, to hold, to have on your shelf. In fact, I say that I don't have a readership, I have a thinkership". His "thinkership" was sorely put to the test (as were many people outside his thinkership, too, who perhaps would rather not have had to think through Kenneth Goldsmith) when he pulled a stunt for his poetry reading at Brown University in 2015 by reading the autopsy report of Michael Brown, a teenage African-American who was recently gunned down by a white policeman. Besides the obvious appropriation of a deceased black man's body by a living white male (Goldsmith chose to end the poetry reading of "The Body of Michael Brown" on an image of Brown's genitalia), perhaps the literary appropriation performed by Goldsmith showed little literary value besides a kind of shock value. See Jason Guriel, "A Poet Turned Michael Brown's Autopsy Report Into Click-Bait as Performance Art", *New Republic*, March 25, 2015, https://newrepublic.com/article/121364/how-should-we-think-about-kenneth-goldsmiths-poetic-remixes. All this is to say that there are, in certain circumstances, limits to the appropriation of others' texts, ethically speaking, and that Ashbery's and Farrell's appropriations, despite being transgressive of a number of literary traditions, exist within a safe homosocial literary lineage in which such practice is understood as allusive and coded and deeply embedded in their respective subjectivities.

Indeed, the title of Ashbery's 1992 collection, *Hotel Lautréamont*—in deliberate contrast with Rimbaud's "*Splendide Hotel*", "erected", as Rimbaud has it, in the splendid isolation "of ice floes and the polar night"[57]—presents a trope of a man as a hotel where other people stay for a short while and then move on. This permeability of borders, and boarders, is central to Ashbery and his sense of "himself".[58] In a crucial statement, dating from 1976, he observed that "what moves me is the irregular form—the flawed words and stubborn sounds, as Stevens said, that affect us whenever we try to say something that is important to us". It is this sense of a necessary incompleteness in poetry that he insists on, for such "irregular form" is what enables the poetry to survive the circumstances of its own composition—and so make room both for the reader and for the later poet, who is always first a reader.[59]

Ashbery's *Where Shall I Wander* "traces an exile—an ambulatory self-exile in both senses of the term: of the voluntarily chosen, deeply wanted, and escorted, and of the self that walks out on the self until it runs out of land."[60] As Hile observes (of Farrell): "This is the dissemination of the signifier—one thing leads to another",[61] syntactically, metonymically, metaleptically. This is Ashbery, the vagabond—"always virtual, anticipatory", as Kristin Ross writes of Rimbaud the vagabond, the wanderer. In *The Emergence of Social Space*, Ross elaborates on how the law views vagabondage:

> What is particularly disquieting about vagabondage is its ambiguous status:
> technically, vagabonds have not committed any crimes. But their "way of life"

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[57] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 21.

[58] In *Hotel Lautréamont*, for example, Ashbery accomodates T. S. Eliot in poems such as "Quartet", from Eliot's "Four Quartets", and "Just Wednesday", modestly housing "Ash Wednesday" by dropping the signifier of his own name "Ash", while John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is transformed into "A Mourning Forbidding Valediction", among others.

[59] The templates of the previous two paragraphs about plagiarisim are plagiarised from Steven Meyer's critical review of *Hotel Lautréamont*, "Ashbery: Poet for All Seasons", *Raritan*, 15.2 (Fall 1995): 144-161. I simply shifted some pronouns around so that the text applied to Farrell as well as Ashbery.

[60] Cole Swenson, "Besides, of Bedouins: *Hotel Lautréamont* (1992)", review of John Ashbery's book, *Conjunctions* 49, Fall 2007, http://www.conjunctions.com/archives/c49-cs.htm.

[61] Hile, "And Counting", 2.

places them in a state that supposes the *eventual* violation of laws: vagabonds are always virtual, anticipatory ... Vagabonds are victims of dangerous heredity and carriers of the fatal germ of *dégénérescence*, "contagious", in both the medical and social sense of the term, they are the incarnation of a social illness that strikes not so much an individual as a family, a generation, a lineage. Their problem, like Rimbaud's, is "bad blood".[62]

Rimbaud in fact champions his bad blood (see "Bad Blood" in *Une Saison en Enfer*), and so does Ashbery but in a literary sense—through a contagious appropriation (or adoption) of poets past, through quotation and misquotation, and as well through his recent translation of Rimbaud's *Illuminations*. Applying this idea of dangerous heredity to Ashbery risks sounding negative, but if we misread the word *dégénérescence* the way a poet like Ashbery might, we could generate *dérèglement*, as in Rimbaud's: *Il s'agit d'arriver à l'inconnu par le dérèglement de* tous les sens, "The point is, to arrive at the unknown by the disorganisation [or derangement, or deregulation, or even degeneration] of *all the senses*".[63] Ashbery is the continuation of a literary lineage that, despite some law-abiding classicists who might deplore it, insists on taking risks, is always potentially breaking laws (such as those of literary convention and decorum) in seeking the obscure, the unknown and the unknowable.

Following in this adoptive/appropriative lineage is Farrell's *thempark*—a deliberate regeneration/*de*generation of the more internal trips of *Where Shall I Wander* and *Hotel Lautréamont*—which presents the trope of a man opening himself up as a theme park in which Ashbery has designed the rides, and in which the others, the "them" of *thempark*, can come and go as they please. And what is a theme park if it doesn't create a play space where one can take risks on a variety of "virtual" and "irregular forms" such as rollercoasters and slippery dips? Farrell's Ashbery-themed park has ghost trains and carousels too, yet the most frequented ride is the dodgem cars in which both he and Ashbery "embrace the dead ex with / two mercs, heavenly menage a trois".[64] The

[62] Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space*, 57.

[63] Rimbaud, *The Poems*, 48.

[64] Farrell, *thempark*, 29.

fact that both poets perform gay subjectivity is important to Farrell's transpositional conceits. It's not so much a "homosexual milieu" that Farrell is looking for within Ashbery's poems, and rather something more impersonally playful, maybe like trying someone out via online dating. Swipe right to see/play the next poem.

In *Playing and Reality*, D. W. Winnicott writes that only when our nonsense—our "creative reaching-out"—is accepted can we begin to be found, or to be. Play, "reflected back" by a friend, is the formation, and validation, of a triadic—that is, a meaningful—relationship with the world. Through playful discovery, bumping poem-vehicles together, Farrell creates a triadic relationship between Ashbery's text, his own text and the world (which includes a readership). Nonsense plus nonsense makes sense: "From this position everything is creative".[65] And yet, when Farrell complicates things in "cold turkey"—"i only got into the water / to avoid getting into you"—how could we imagine this was ever going to be a meaningful relationship? By diving into Ashbery's poetic structures, is Farrell hiding inside someone else's dreams, maintaining for himself the crippling detachment of being an artist that Winnicott, the psychologist, knew all too well: "It is a joy to be hidden, and disaster not to be found"? Or is Farrell in the middle of a game of chase with his readers, covering up his scent by crossing an Ashbery river? One thinks of Emily Dickinson:

> Good to hide, and hear 'em hunt!
> Better, to be found,
> If one care to, that is,
> The Fox fits the Hound —
>
> Good to know, and not tell,
> Best, to know and tell,
> Can one find the rare Ear
> Not too dull — [66]

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[65] D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1971), 76.

[66] Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 406.

When readers become hunters, either easily led or savage, it's not particularly conducive to meaningful play. Farrell seems to be seeking a "rare Ear" in Ashbery, or in readers of Ashbery. We have to remember that Farrell isn't necessarily covering his tracks; rather, he got *into* the water—shattering any calm reflections—so as to avoid getting too into Ashbery, and too into his self. Speaking back from below the surface to a disturbed reflection, to the poem distorted in the rippling waters, he becomes a kind of anti-Narcissus, or Echo. We can read the surfaces of Farrell's poems from any of these angles.

The eschewing of self, rather than hiding—and a trust in play with others—is what *thempark* fosters, a play space of and for *them*. While a triadic relationship exists between Farrell, Ashbery and the world, there is a more multiple relationship with all those other selves and subjectivities in Farrell's poetry, and this is reflected linguistically. In a typical Farrell poem, the hypogram (in Riffaterrean terms; or, the paragram in Saussurean terms)[67], as in the semantic nucleus, can usually be found in the title, decapitated from the rest of the poem. From there down, varying layers of semantic abstraction bob up through the poem like Orphic body parts adrift on separate rivers. Again, one thing leads to another; you just don't always know how (underground rivers, perhaps?). These layers of semantic abstraction—the conversion and expansion of the semantic nucleus that build the poem—inevitably bring to mind psychoanalytic concepts of condensation and displacement, as they relate to the resurfacing of repressed memories and to dream-work, which Freud describes similarly:

> the whole mass of these dream-thoughts is brought under the pressure of the
> dream-work, and the elements are turned about, broken into fragments and

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[67] Johanne Prud'homme and Nelson Guilbert, "Text Derivation: Michael Riffaterre", *Signo*, dir. Louis Hébert (2006): http://www.signosemio.com/riffaterre/text-derivation.asp.

jammed together—*almost like pack-ice* [or 'drifting ice-floes' in another translation].[68]

Think of the poem as a drifting ice-flow in which layered arrangements of signifiers, broken into fragments and jammed together, can allow all kinds of signifieds to slip through into consciousness, "& its true without you knowing it".[69] Perhaps this is what Rimbaud was referring to whenever he wrote of "the tangled heap of ice floes".[70]

In *thempark*, the hypograms of each poem can still be found in the titles, but the semantic nucleus is simultaneously (and paradoxically) more dense and dispersed than in Farrell's previous works because it includes the templates—word count and line count—and word associations of the related Ashbery poems. This is how we trace the semantic unfolding of each poem in *thempark*: the poem is happening in a minimum of two places—two imaginary landscapes, "racking up timeshares"[71]—at once, which increases Farrell's options in displacing the authorial "I", allowing other I's (lovers, friends, the deceased, talking heads, ads, computers, animals, other non-humans) to speak throughout the poems. So, despite the usage, occupation and appropriation of another's dream structures and dream content, Farrell's intentions are somewhat the reverse, or inverse, of plagiarism. Farrell's *thempark* is open to all comers, whether they realise it or not, as he offers readers (Farrell, the later poet, is always first a reader) multiple shifts in idiolect and register—the poems being made up of the disembodied voices of all of *them*, all or any of *us*, past, present and future, overlapping in hubbub and murmurs, interjecting with screams on our separate though indistinct ride on the poem rollercoaster. The dreamwork—"surprisingly friendly to strangers"[72]—becomes

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[68] Sigmund Freud, "The Dream-Work", in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Vol. 4 of the Penguin Freud Library, trans. James Strachey, 1953 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 422. For "drifting ice-floes" see J. A. Underwood trans., *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Freud (Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 2006).

[69] Farrell, *thempark*, 13.

[70] Rimbaud's French being *dans le chaos de glaces*, in Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 20-21. In Rimbaud's poetry, there are many references to the movement of ice.

[71] Farrell, *thempark*, 10.

[72] Farrell, *thempark*, 6.

anyone's and everyone's, much as in Ashbery's own theme park of a poem, "Europe", for instance.[73]

But in all seriousness, with regard to plagiarism, Farrell isn't condemning or condoning it (Farrell never lifts an Ashbery line verbatim, and the avowal at the back of *thempark*, the turning out of his pockets to say, Hey, these are Ashbery-shaped topologies, these are Ashbery templates, entirely undoes the idea that the poems have been stolen); rather, by appropriating the "irregular forms" of Ashbery, who in turn appropriates from others—for instance, by adopting the perspective of self-exile of Lautréamont— Farrell is perpetuating a poetics of selflessness, but also of risk, proximity, and flirtation, "appealing a dream of sublimation. / in a room talking to a generalised you."[74]

Casually flirting with the idea that no use of a single word could ever be the same, implying that appropriation and plagiarism do not exist, Gertrude Stein writes (and says) in *Lectures in America*: "Is there repetition or is there insistence. I am inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition. And really how can there be".[75] And yet, there is a lot of repetition, mathematically speaking, in *thempark*—the perpetuation of word counts and line counts, superimpositions of words on words, language on language, lineage on lineage, adoptions of adoptions, the doubling and trebling of form. Is this repetition or insistence? What is the difference? How many times can Farrell swim/sleep/ride with Ashbery and others before "they're aware of their sex"?[76] Gertrude Stein continues: "One may really indeed say that that is the essence of genius,

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[73] "Europe", from Ashbery's determinedly experimental second book (*The Tennis Court Oath* [Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1962], 64-85) is a collage poem divided into 111 sections that plays with open-ended, material juxtapositions of language. Collaged together from a book for teenage girls, *Beryl of the Biplanes*, found by Ashbery in a bookstall along the River Seine, "Europe" contains "a lot of the things that can be found in Europe", as Ashbery deadpans in an interview with John Tranter, but "of course they can also be found anywhere else". The poem could be a kind of European theme park. See "John Ashbery in Conversation with John Tranter", *Jacket* 2 (May 1988): http://jacketmagazine.com/02/jaiv1988.html.

[74] Farrell, *thempark*, 11.

[75] Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetitions", in *Lectures in America*, 1935 (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 166.

[76] Farrell, *thempark*, 9.

of being most intensely alive, that is being one who is at the same time talking and listening".[77] By allowing his poetry to talk to and listen to Ashbery's (a poetry itself that is always open to conversation), Farrell is insisting on a poetry of foreplay, on a poetry that lives in those heightened moments of expectation, in which the senses are most keen, those moments that feel as if they could last forever and in which both talking and listening, metaphorically and literally speaking, are tantamount to the genial (in both senses of the word), and of paramount importance in allowing seduction—an appropriation of and into an other—to take place.

Theodor Adorno observes that "The genial is a dialectical knot: It is what has not been copied or repeated, it is free, yet at the same time bears the feeling of necessity".[78] Both Farrell's and Ashbery's poetry tackles this dialectical knot by complicating the idea of authorial originality. They both deliberately misappropriate literary history and combine it with misheard fragments of everyday speech, not so much copying or repeating but insisting on a poetry of lapsus, parataxis and parapraxis, on a poetry that doesn't have to choose a single, authorial voice for speaking truth, because only a great many voices could come close to speaking of truths. Farrell acknowledges as much: "what knots was i tying myself into? tricky…"[79], but necessary, to become so entangled.

Farrell's tangled (inter)play with structural reproduction might otherwise be re-thought through a brief pondering of Walter Benjamin's concept of "tactile appropriation" found in his essay, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". Writing about the relationship of the "greatly increased" masses to art, and in defence of film, Benjamin deconstructs the dichotomy of how people consume art: concentration versus distraction. Artforms in history that have been considered to require greater concentration and absorption to be appreciated by the masses, such as Greek tragedy and the epic poem, have often perished, while architecture, its history more ancient than that of any other art, "has never been idle". Clearly, "human need for shelter is

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[77] Stein, "Portraits and Repetitions", 170.

[78] Theodor W. Adorno, "Subject-Object", in *Aesthetic Theory*, 1970, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 234.

[79] Farrell, *thempark*, 18.

lasting",[80] but Benjamin attributes the constantly shifting development and longevity of architecture as artform to tactile appropriation:

> On the tactile side there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. This mode of appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.
>
> The distracted person, too, can form habits. More, the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that their solution has become a matter of habit. Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception.[81]

Farrell's insistence on appropriating established poetic structures that have in turn appropriated other previous poetic structures—sits in line with Benjamin's notion of tactile appropriation, "mastered gradually by [the] habit" of shifting poetic perception. Farrell's insistence also shifts the focus for those viewing his poems. It's no longer necessary to regard him as an authorial figure and to sit in awe and concentrate in front of his *thempark* poems. Because of their architecture, one can look and perceive them through the refractions of light of Ashbery's poems too. By "noticing the object (each Ashbery poem) in incidental fashion", Farrell creates a tactile poetics of incident and distraction which can be mastered not so much by concentrating on the meaning of signifiers ("i watched closely. // poetry books are like black / & white movies")[82] as by other habits of reading, such as through accretion—through an apperception of the

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80 Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, 1955, trans. Harry Zohn, 1968 (London: Fontana, 1992), 233.

81 Benjamin, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 233.

82 Farrell, *thempark*, 27.

signified, gradually: "i thought the train / would loop around, eventually of course it did".[83]

Incidentally, Ashbery is a noted fan of the flat, surreal landscapes of empty buildings and squares and passing trains found in Giorgio de Chirico's paintings, as well as in his "poem-novel", *Hebdomeros*. Ashbery's description of the "hypnotic quality" of *Hebdomeros* doubles as a neat description of the architecture of his own poems:

> His long run-on sentences, stitched together with semicolons, allow a cinematic freedom of narration; the setting and the cast of characters frequently change in mid-clause. In this fluid medium, trivial images or details can suddenly congeal and take on a greater specific gravity, much as a banal object in a de Chirico painting—a rubber glove or an artichoke—can rivet our attention merely through being present. His language, like his painting, is invisible: a transparent but dense medium containing objects that are more dense than reality.[84]

Fig. 5: *The Anxious Journey*, by Giorgio de Chirico

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[83] Farrell, *thempark*, 25.

[84] John Ashbery, *Selected Prose*, ed. Eugene Richie (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 90.

Or: "noticing the object in incidental fashion". In his essay "Poetical space", Ashbery homes in on a description from *Hebdomeros*, "The sea of stars stretched into the distance, as if the sky no longer seemed to be a dome but a ceiling instead", and then writes:

> How satisfying to feel that one lives in these flattened spaces, as flat as the cafe terraces of Analytical Cubism. But why? One would have thought it more inspiring to feel one was living in a dome, where depth would equal freedom, rather than under a claustrophobic ceiling of stars. I can offer no explanation … except that seeing things turn out differently from what we had been expecting is often a liberating experience, even when the resulting situation isn't what we had hoped for.[85]

Ashbery is getting at a liberation for the imagination when engaged in a play of surfaces and shadows, when constrained to live "in these flattened spaces". In other words, constraints in art offer more freedom, and the chances of stumbling into surprise are that much greater because it *isn't* what we had hoped for or expected. The flat surface, the constraint, of Ashbery's language becomes a fluid medium for Farrell, offering a poetical space to play within and without. The play between the two poetical spaces/ surfaces is utterly reflexive—not simply one room of mirrors but rooms—and generates so much poetry about poetry. And if, as Marshall McLuhan proposed, the "'content' of any medium is always another medium",[86] then perhaps Farrell, like Ashbery before him, becomes a medium—a medium to convey the content of the Ashbery medium—a medium to divine new messages from the Ashbery ouija board, see new patterns in the sand. Farrell's *thempark*, then, is always *in media res*.

Now, let's get in the middle of these surfaces, shadows and reflections, take a closer look. In "cold turkey", Farrell spirals in on a certain sentimentality to do with self-consciousness, then comes up for air with a promise for more ironic submersion/ subversion, as quoted (in part) previously:

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[85] Ashbery, *Selected Prose*, 214-215.

[86] Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message", in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1964 (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

> sometimes i spend all day in the sandpit.
>
> i left home, teddy bear in hand, wolves crying
>
> toowhit toowhoo, dont come in. i only got into the water
>
> to avoid getting into you. this isnt the way it ends … [87]

When compared to the corresponding passage in Ashbery's "Involuntary Description" (below), it becomes clear how Farrell's adhesion to Ashbery's word count, as opposed to a more strict syllable count, gives him freedom to go in a variety of directions:

> Sometimes I think it's all one big affectation.
>
> The forty jars, each holding its thief, draw closer
>
> to me, trying to eavesdrop. But the only sound is water
>
> dripping in the last millenium. I try and say it too … [88]

As an example of how Farrell eradicates the syllable count, and of his free association through sound, compare Ashbery's two single-syllable words, "to me", to Farrell's "toowhit toowhoo". The movement here, the transposition, is the atomic law of the *clinamen*, which refers to the "swerve of an atom in laminar flow".[89] The first uses of atomic law in literature can be traced to Epicurus and Lucretius, and it's a favourite *Oulipo* technique. As Rasula and McCaffery write: "The unpredictable swerve of the letter from the syntactic and grammatical flow not only invalidates the notion of a fixed, 'inert' meaning but also fulfills, in the domain of language, that philosophic desire of Novalis for a 'systemlessness within all systems'".[90] Or, "Like a slip of the tongue, the

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[87] Farrell, *thempark*, 11.

[88] Ashbery, *Where Shall I Wander* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2005), 16.

[89] Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 532.

[90] Novalis argued for a true philosophical insight that would introduce systemlessness (*Systemlösigkeit*) into a system. Only such a system, whose literary expression is irony and whose generic manifestation is the fragment, "can avoid the mistakes of the system and be related neither to injustice nor to anarchy" (in Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 538 n2).

clineman is less a performance than a happening":[91] toowhit toowhoo! From Whit to who? From me to you? In these instances of parapraxis—in which letters "change sides like pingpong"[92]—Farrell's poetics of the letter, of atoms, of counting, bounces to the surface.

From atoms bouncing around, to billions of grains of sand: compare then, as metaphors for the writing of poems, Farrell's, "sometimes i spend all day in the sandpit", to Ashbery's, "Sometimes I think it's all one big affectation". And by extension, Ashbery's, "But the only sound is water / dripping in the last millennium", to Farrell's, "i only got into the water / to avoid getting into you", and we see the many possible interpretations (not just those already about poetry itself and authorial intention) that can be made— the mixing of sand and water. A systemless system.

So, while a reading of *thempark* on its own is interesting and energising in itself—with its constant shifts of tone and idiolect, its verbal interruptions, and its Aussie cultural references, which plumb the kitsch and capital of the country's postcolonial history ("& i hope the easter / bunny notices the trouble with darlinghurst.")—the work really comes to life—in the Steinian sense of "talking and listening" simultaneously—in a non-linear, or three-dimensional (three-dimensional, in that these poems read like palimpsests, layered across generations) reading, side-by-side with the Ashbery templates.

Take "the deer inside itself", which uses "Musica Reservata" (from *Hotel Lautréamont*), as its template. According to Ashbery's piece, "Poems are such old little jiggers. / This one scratches himself, gets up, then goes off for a pee",[93] to which Farrell responds with: "still being put together by science. / thats you looking in, seeing yourself, then trying to brush yourself".[94] Are the "old little jiggers" of Ashbery's poem now scientists in Farrell's? Are poems constructions that the poet as scientist experiments with? And is

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[91] Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 532-536.

[92] Farrell, *thempark*, 11.

[93] Ashbery, *Hotel Lautréamont* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 24.

[94] Farrell, *thempark*, 12.

the scientist experimenting on himself ("goes off for a pee" to then test and examine the poetic results)? Or is that the reader's role: "looking in, seeing yourself"?

Ashbery goes on, "Yet it's wonderful, this / *being*; to point to a tree and say don't I know you from somewhere?",[95] while Farrell replies, "we became lightning, cold / lightning; i saw smoke move from branch to branch had i seen a ghost?"[96] And it is wonderful to point to a tree in recognition, and to see it morph into smoke, then a ghost. Here, Farrell's words have transformed Ashbery's the way lightning might strike a tree. It's also worth noting how Farrell hasn't used Ashbery's italics over the corresponding word for *being*—"lightning"—whereas he uses the corresponding italics at almost every other opportunity in *thempark* (most notably in "llama enclosure"). Is this an oversight, or deliberate? Having already used the word lightning, maybe having "lightning" strike twice was emphasis enough.

Other architectural/architextual disparities between Farrell's poems and Ashbery's are the line counts and stanza spacing, but only in a few of the poems (for disparities, see my aforementioned reference list of Farrell's titles and corresponding Ashbery titles, **pp.95-96)**. Choosing to leave out three lines in one case, a seven-line stanza in another, or one or two lines here and there, seems deliberate (who could possibly miss whole lines in translation simply by accident?), and this might be best explained through an analogy with the visual artist—say, like a painter leaving negative space, white or black, to lessen an overbearing colour; not quite red herrings, rather as anomalies to keep the viewer/reader guessing. In other words, Farrell may well have left out, or not bothered transforming, certain lines because his options wouldn't have added to the poem's internal creative logic, or might have become predictable. But back to "the deer inside itself" in which Farrell writes, "dad says come on be seasonable / what do any of us get by staying still?"[97] It's a typical example of Farrell's Aussie humour, his punning, but also a neat analogy for his *raison d'étre* (or *saison d'étre*), couched in a pithy phrase of encouragement from some imaginary, Twain-like father figure: *to stand still is to fall*

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[95] Ashbery, *Hotel Lautréamont*, 25.

[96] Farrell, *thempark*, 13.

[97] Farrell, *thempark*, 13.

behind. "That, at least, is my hope", is how Ashbery finishes his poem, while Farrell concludes his with, "they, at nest, work it out."

Farrell's words often seem like direct answers or follow-ons from Ashbery's, sometimes giving insight, sometimes augmenting. This is especially the case when Farrell's words are close in sound or shape, as if Farrell is stressing the linkages between his poem and Ashbery's. The combination of the above two lines are a prime example. If it weren't for Farrell's augmentation—"they, at nest, work it out" of "That, at least, is my hope"—I wouldn't have been reminded of something Ashbery said in an interview with the *Paris Review* in which he remarked that, while he hoped his readers would understand where he's coming from and was pleased his poems "seem to have found readers", he was disappointed that his poetry "has become a kind of shibboleth, that people feel they need to join one side or the other … I often feel that people … are much more familiar with the myth that has grown up about my work than they are with the work itself".[98]

"Musica Reservata" is one of those poems of Ashbery's that can be read as a comment on the nature of writing, particularly as it applies to the writing of poetry. Here are the last few lines to add to the ones already quoted:

> "This is not what you should hear,
> but we are awake, and days
> with donkey ears and packs negotiate
> the narrow canyon trail that is
> as white and silent as a dream,
> that is, something *you* dreamed.
> And resources slip away, or are pinned
> under a ladder too heavy to lift.
> Which is why you are here, but the mnemonics
> of the ride are stirring."

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[98] Ashbery, "The Art of Poetry No.33: Interview with John Ashbery", ed. Peter Stitt, *Paris Review* 90 (Winter 1983): http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/3014/the-art-of-poetry-no-33-john-ashbery.

That, at least, is my hope.[99]

Where Ashbery might "hate" that readers become intimidated by the myth surrounding his "difficult"[100] poetry, hoping rather that the "mnemonics of the ride" would be altogether more "stirring", or "something *you* (the reader) dreamed", Farrell could be seen in the last few lines of "the deer inside itself" as being a little more carefree about his reception. The scales are different—Ashbery has huge global recognition—but it's worth comparing the two. After all, Farrell's poems have polarised opinion within Australia much as Ashbery's have internationally. For instance, on the *So Long Bulletin*, a conservative poetry blog based in Melbourne, Elizabeth Campbell proved that shibboleths also exist in small markets by likening Farrell to a painting elephant; she alluded facetiously to the story from Thailand in which elephants are taught to paint canvasses, which originally went viral on Youtube.[101] Not that the notion of elephants painting can't be spun in a positive manner. Perhaps a less offensive comparison might be that Farrell's playful projections onto Ashbery's poems are similar, in a sense, to the way a child savant might project their dreams or imaginings on to the fantastical landscape of a theme park. And that might partly explain why critical readings of Farrell's poetry are sometimes polarised—you can either ride with the spooky mnemonics or recoil from them in fear. Here is the end of Farrell's poem, whose theme park in this instance could be Marianne Moore's "imaginary gardens", but with "real rocks" and birds instead of toads:

> "so do what you want but know
> that youre doing it, my home
> my garden i know its fantasy
> i try to kick a little
> real rock into it when i can
> sometimes though, its all mind.

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[99] Ashbery, *Hotel Lautréamont*, 25.

[100] Ashbery, *Hotel Lautréamont*, 201.

[101] Elizabeth Campbell, "Beyond the Reading", *So Long Bulletin* (June 6, 2011): http://solongbulletin.tumblr.com/post/7279925659. The story of elephants painting in Thailand can be found at thailandelephant.org.

> its spooky waking up, finding its as
> you left it like a protected exhibit.
> we never see our own tape, or our blackout
> the acclimatised birds are stirring."
>
> they, at nest, work it out.[102]

But that's just my reading, which could be a "storm in a teacup"—another poem in *thempark* worth reading in this (lime)light. Ashbery's line, "That, at least, is my hope", may not be referring to his feelings about his reception, and may be referring to his hope of remaining modern. Furthermore, Farrell might not have intended to augment these ideas, though I doubt he'd mind me misreading him in this vein. Nor would Ashbery, I'd hope. As Farrell says, with tongue in cheek during "storm in a teacup": "pull over im getting disconnected from the landscape".[103]

There is, in *thempark*, no definitive landscape in which you'd expect an Australian poet's poetry to reside—the bush, the coast, the city or the suburbs—it's more of a dreamscape in which these tropes are jammed together with the pop culture, politics and Australian ephemera instigated by the flotsam of Ashbery's language. The lapses, incidents of lapsus, and leaps of faith in this kind of language transposition help bring to the fore the concerns that lurk in Farrell's poetic consciousness.

Across a number of poems, Australiana in particular—Australian animals, kitsch and assorted ephemera—are repurposed to dissect and refract social, cultural and national politics (especially the latter in "former detainees take gold"), and myths of Australian history, such as in "youve shaved":

> zoom a word some
> envy those too fatigued to work the beach.
> crack a tinny ahh. a beer foam

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[102] Farrell, *thempark*, 13.

[103] Farrell, *thempark*, 25.

> mo like the holidaymakers. embrace the dead ex with
>
> two mercs, heavenly menage a trois. border collies patrol the border border
>
> magpies defect to us. maggies are
>
> great in autumn, leaves dangle frangipanis war, cockies
>
> merge like anzacs on a hill. i sketched a biscuit
>
> grater trawling through country, jam collected flies in wwi & blew up tanks,
>
> poets wrote on plants, a gallipoli greeting, shotup bits of tin became art
>
> the turks made bead snakes.
>
> we walked a tangible k of death, like gumnuts, or royalty anointing
>
> the cold erotic dead. pyramids rose through the postcard shop the tomb a
>
> > serious pleasure
>
> kangaroo icons, zood & stewed, its roundup time we reassess the stock the
>
> troops the work carefully cheerfully unnerving each rock.[104]

Australian poetry has a storied history of personal narratives that are strongly connected to the landscape in which those narratives originate, and often from colonial or postcolonial perspectives. However, while Farrell is clearly aware of this Australian preoccupation, you could say that his writing is rather "trawling through country". The territory is a double, or doubled, in the case of *thempark*: Ashbery is one country (with its American droll and culture jamming), while Australia is the other (with all the aspects I've mentioned so far and more). The two are superimposed with Farrell "carefully cheerfully unnerving each rock".

As mentioned previously, there's plenty of sex, theoretically speaking, in *thempark*, but there's also sex in the content of the poems. In his interview with journal *foam:e*, Farrell says at one point, "there's an attention to gender and sexualities at play throughout my poems, but it's play mostly rather than message—or the message is, why not this way?"[105] Farrell's play—his fluidity—in sexual politics can be read in "news from the

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[104] Farrell, *thempark*, 29.

[105] Farrell, "Interview with Michael Farrell", ed. Michael Brennan, *Poetry International Web* (July 1, 2011): http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/cou_article/item/20530/Interview-with-Michael-Farrell.

erstwhile", in which the abstract notion of a "homosexual milieu" is critiqued;[106] gender is fluid in "nephews", whose "bodies have known alcohol", and who, dressed up in nazi uniform, "suddenly laugh like on a talkshow / with ellen degeneres"—"they're like painted women".[107] Meanwhile, an episode of fetishistic, possibly violent, sex between muppets Bert and Ernie occurs in "tit for tat", as quoted earlier: "happy, apparently, trailing a stubby finger / down the stripes of berts front like its scissors / hunting for a nipple".[108]

In fact, many of the poems play out the dramas/dreams of alternative sexual relations between two, such as in "a parody of you & me":

> they seemed linked together by the very style of their accoutrements.
> though one in his humour favoured the ironic tiepin the others bowtie spun,
> dizzyingly into white & back to stripes.
>
> …
>
> one leant the other into a cypress:
> hoarsely drunk, peeling the orange,
> off a shed wall.
>
> they fed wild birds instead of wild kids,
> though the kids stole the birds peanut brittle
> out of their stuck beaks. on suits they
> generally agreed, & where to honeymoon.
> in alice springs not during the wet season.[109]

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[106] Farrell, *thempark*, 5.

[107] Farrell, *thempark*, 9.

[108] Farrell, *thempark*, 10.

[109] Farrell, *thempark*, 6.

Which again hits on, so to speak, that poetic relationship—strange and estranged, illicit and illusive, and gay in both senses of the word—between Farrell and Ashbery, "by the very style of their accoutrements". There's no risk of "the cold erotic dead", however; Ashbery is very much alive in Farrell's transpositions. Farrell understands the inheritance taking place, as he allows the genial Ashberyesque to insist itself upon his poems. In lines like "whatre you looking delightedly at? / eventually, sucking it up. if only there were more like you",[110] Ashbery becomes Lacan's concept of the "little other" (or *little a*, from the French *autre*), who is not in fact other, but a reflection or projection of Farrell's ego.[111] The little other is also simultaneously the counterpart and the specular image (see previous reference to Narcissus and Farrell's "i only got into the water"). Furthermore, from "thankyou parade":

> you turned a tap on in my head, wont
>
> you put it out im writing
>
> poems night & day. cows nay
>
> cats are purring, theyre pulsing, arterylike[112]
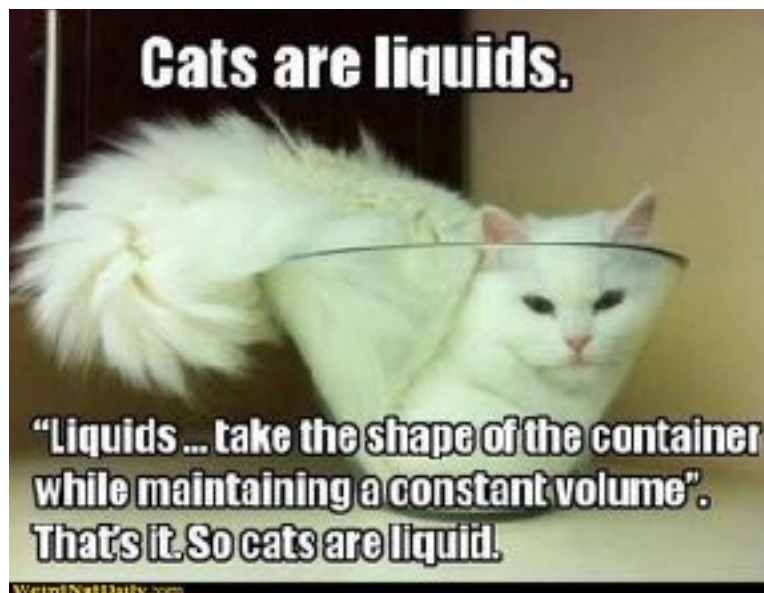
Fig. 6: Popular cat meme

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[110] Farrell, *thempark*, 11.

[111] Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 139-140.

[112] Farrell, *thempark*, 19.

Perhaps forebears are also like cats, capricious and fluid, difficult to command, immune to instruction.

So, while some of the poems mentioned above circulate around particular charged ideas or themes, Farrell's poetics are somewhat more aligned with the rhizomic, or the meme, in that the charged ideas and themes converge in a title, or in a single line or phrase, and then spring up again but in different machinations, across the poem. This process recalls the way a meme goes viral on the Internet with a simultaneous and concatenating convergence and divergence of recurrent tropes, of free associations. It's the process of condensation in a dream—only it's the Internet's dream (that collection of so many projected subjectivities). Yet Farrell's (and Ashbery's) poems aren't describing exactly what happens in dreams, rather the way in which dreams happen, or could happen, in the conscious imagination, which then allows a reader of the poem to be affected as if in a dream. In *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, Marjorie Perloff writes of Ashbery's "calculated oddities" (an Auden description):

> Not *what* one dreams but *how*—this is Ashbery's subject. His stories "tell only themselves," presenting the reader with the challenge of what he calls "an open field of narrative possibilities". For, like Rimbaud's, his are not dreams "about" such and such characters or events; the dream structure is itself the event that haunts the poet's imagination.[113]

Ashbery wrote of this poetic perspective and potentiality shortly after publishing his first book of poems, *Some Trees*,[114] in his essay on Gertrude Stein, "The Impossible":

> *Stanzas in Meditation* gives one the feeling of time passing, of things happening, of a "plot", though it would be difficult to say precisely what is going on. Sometimes the story has the logic of a dream … while at other times it becomes startlingly clear for a moment, as though a change in the wind had suddenly

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[113] Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 249-252.

[114] *Some Trees* is a title that blossoms with possibility; think of poems as neural network trees, branching out, and with networks of roots below.

enabled us to hear a conversation that was taking place some distance away …
But it is usually not events which interest Miss Stein, rather it is their "way of
happening", and the story of *Stanzas in Meditation* is a general, all-purpose
model which each reader can adapt to fit his own set of particulars. The poem is
a hymn to possibility…[115]

"Fragment", the somewhat ironically-titled long poem written in 1965 and later
published as the closing poem of *The Double Dream of Spring*, with its complex
negotiation between form and formlessness (50 ten-line, free verse stanzas) is an
excellent example of Ashbery's "'all-purpose' [the adjective is Ashbery's] poetic
representativeness", according to John Shoptaw, who also writes of Ashbery that, "By
making his poetry the stream of everybody's or anybody's consciousness, he creates an
all-purpose subjectivity which is neither egotistical nor solipsistic."[116] In other words,
Ashbery was "streaming" long before the Internet or Google or social media. The stanza
below, from the middle of "Fragment", demonstrates the metapoetic, autobiographic
erasures (the poem is a homage to his father who died in 1964) and the allusive and
allegorical resonances at work in his poetry (Steinian "buttons", perhaps?):

> But why should the present seem so particularly urgent?
> A time of spotted lakes and the whippoorwill
> Sounding over everything? To release the importance
> Of what will always remain invisible?
> In spite of near and distant events, gladly
> Built? To speak the plaits of argument,
> Loosened? Vast shadows are pushed down toward
> The hour. It is ideation, incrimination
> Proceeding from necessity to find it at
> A time of day, beside the creek, uncounted stars and buttons.[117]

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[115] Ashbery, *Selected Prose*, 12.

[116] John Shoptaw, *On the Outside Looking Out: John Ashbery's Poetry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 3.

[117] Ashbery, *The Mooring of Starting Out: The First Five Books of Poetry* (New York: Ecco, 1997), 299.

According to Perloff, Ashbery's poems are "highly formalized … imitations of consciousness" that create a world in which "'A' can always be 'B'".[118] The poems in Farrell's *thempark* complicate the dream logic of Ashbery's poems because Farrell is imitating an imitation of consciousness; he is applying a calculated "change in the wind" to a calculated literature that already exists, so that even more conversations can be heard in the poetry. The trees are being blown from multiple directions. "A" can always be "B" which can always be "C". Not simply metonymy, but metalepsis. Harold Bloom writes in *A Map of Misreadings*: "In a metalepsis, a word is substituted metonymically for a word in a previous trope, so that a metalepsis can be called, maddeningly but accurately, a metonymy of a metonymy."[119] Metalepsis in *thempark* occurs not just at the level of word, but at the level of structure.[120]

Lacan also argues that speech and language[121] come from another place, outside of consciousness—"the unconscious is the discourse of the Other."[122] When conceiving the Other as a place, Lacan refers to Freud's concept of psychical locality, in which the unconscious is described as "the other scene".[123] In appropriating Ashbery's poetry—its language of idiomatic speech, its dream structures, its symbolic Otherness—Farrell's unconscious is at the whim of this other scene. Speech and language are beyond his

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[118] Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, 261-262.

[119] Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 102.

[120] Lacan identifies metaphor with the Freudian process of condensation and, more importantly, displacement with metonymy (in Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 157). Metonymy is rife in Ashbery's poetry—it's arguably his *raison d'étre*—so when Farrell displaces (transposes) Ashbery's poetic dream structures into *thempark*, we get a metonymy of a metonymy, or metalepsis.

[121] Of course, Lacan distinguishes radically between speech and language, explaining that language is one symbolic Other, but that speech has three spheres: "the symbolic, represented by the signifier, the imaginary, represented by meaning, and the real, which is discourse that has actually taken place in a diachronic dimension". See Lacan, *The Psychoses: The Seminar, Book III 1955-56*, 1981, trans. Russell Grigg (London: Routledge, 1993), 63.

[122] Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'", *Yale French Studies* 0.48 (1972): 45, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR2/lacan2.pdf.

[123] Hewitson, "What Does Lacan Say About … Desire".

control and beyond his knowledge, *tout court*: "words fall into your head like green fruit, like gull feathers".[124] The signified shapes itself to the signifier, not the converse.

Linked to Lacan's idea that "Our unconscious is the discourse of the Other" is his famous maxim "Man's desire is the desire of the Other (*désir de l'Autre*)".[125] His elaboration on this maxim could double as a description for transposition in poetry, which I described above as a metalepsis, a metonymy of a metonymy, and which creates an argument for multiplicity:

> The object of man's desire … is essentially an object desired by someone else. One object can become equivalent to another, owing to the effect produced by this intermediary, in making it possible for objects to be exchanged and compared. This process tends to diminish the special significance of any one particular object, but at the same time it brings into view the existence of objects without number.[126]

Ashbery's poems could be seen as Farrell's objects of desire, as he writes through, under, over and around them, coldly and defiantly displacing their structures and replacing their words: "the others someone you dont know".[127] But we might also see them as transitional objects, *à la* D. W. Winnicott, that Farrell appropriates successfully en route to his own desire for poetry.

By adopting/adapting the dream structures of Ashbery, by substituting object for object, desire for desire, as a metonymy of a metonymy, *thempark* becomes a shadow-play of a shadow-play. As Perloff writes, describing Ashbery's poetics: "The event is 'over', and the poet can only look at the cave wall trying to find some pattern in the

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[124] Farrell, *thempark*, 13.

[125] Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 312.

[126] From Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego", cited by Hewitson in "What Does Lacan Say About … Desire".

[127] Farrell, *thempark*, 5.

perpetually shifting shapes before him".[128] Now that the shadows in Plato's cave—shadows that represent the idea of representation—are prolific in the twenty-first century, at least Farrell is having some fun with them, suggesting we may become them: "kids escaped into shadows";[129] and, "we came of age when / we saw the flames".[130]

Revelling in detachment, *thempark* comes to read as strangely inhuman. Recent Google research into neural networks through Artificial Intelligence presents an illuminating example of the inhuman. Google's image recognition software detects, analyses and auto-captions images, simulating the human brain by using artificial neural networks. Software is trained by feeding it millions of images. When it's fed an image, it is asked to emphasise the object in the image that it recognises. In the final output layer, the network makes a "decision" as to what's in the image: "Each layer of the network deals with features at a different level of abstraction, so the complexity of features we generate depends on which layer we choose to enhance."[131] The Google engineers call this process "inceptionism", alluding to the film *Inception*, by Christopher Nolan.[132] Further experiments were conducted to see what these artificial networks "dream" of —"what, if anything, do they see in a nondescript image of clouds, for instance?"[133]

[128] Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, 261.

[129] Farrell, *thempark*, 30.

[130] Farrell, *thempark*, 17.

[131] Alexander Mordvintsev, Christopher Olah and Mike Tyka, "Inceptionism: Going Deeper into Neural Networks", *Google Research Blog*, June 17, 2015, http://googleresearch.blogspot.com.au/2015/06/inceptionism-going-deeper-into-neural.html.

[132] *Inception* (Burbank, Warner Bros., 2010), directed by Christopher Nolan and starring Leonardo DiCaprio. The synopsis from the film's promotional material: "Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio) is a thief with the rare ability to enter people's dreams and steal their secrets from their subconscious. His skill has made him a hot commodity in the world of corporate espionage but has also cost him everything he loves. Cobb gets a chance at redemption when he is offered a seemingly impossible task: Plant an idea in someone's mind. If he succeeds, it will be the perfect crime, but a dangerous enemy anticipates Cobb's every move."

[133] Adam Epstein, "Machines on Acid: The 'dreams' of Google's AI are equal parts amazing and disturbing", *Quartz*, June 19, 2015, http://qz.com/432678.
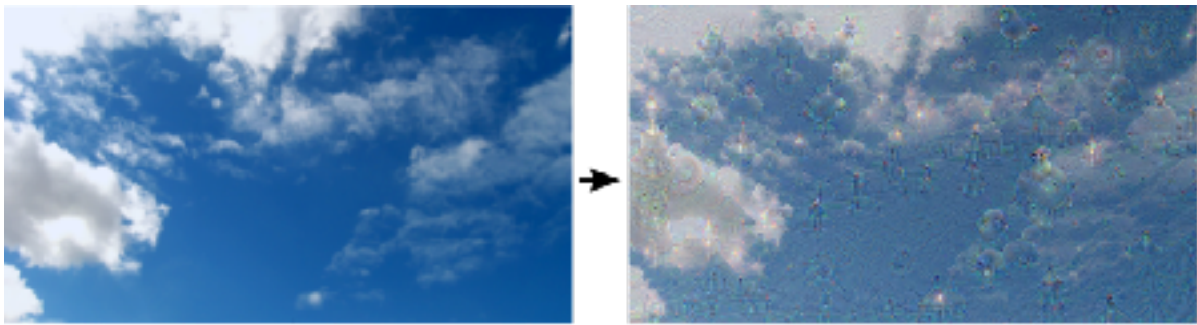
Fig. 7: Google "deep dream" cloud transformation

They fed their software arbitrary "random-noise" images and then "appl[ied] the algorithm iteratively"[134] to generate an image of recognition, and then another image of that generated image, and then another, and so on. The resultant "deep dream" images are twisted landscapes, bright and fantastical, with dog-fish, camel-bird and pig-snail clouds and pagoda-tower mountains so multiple—it's like we're being given a hallucinogenic glimpse into our own neural networks. They seem to hijack and warp our own dreamscapes, or take over our psyches.

Fig. 8: Dog Nebula

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[134] Mordvintsev et al., "Inceptionism".

Ashbery writes:

> The year subsides into clouds
> more beautiful than any I have seen—
> drifting equestrian statues, washing lifted by the wind.[135]

Remembering that words and letters are signs—and images, too—we can think of Farrell's processing of Ashbery's poems as a kind of "inceptionism" in which Ashbery's neural language networks have been recognised and regenerated by Farrell's neural language networks. Each of Farrell's choices—in transmuting the sentences, phrases, words, and letters of an Ashbery dreamscape, consciously and unconsciously—work at different levels of abstraction, like "adjust[ing] a cloud",[136] and the resultant poems become warped or distorted versions of Ashbery's. But it's not the same distortion as in Freud's interpretation of dreams, in which an adult's dreams become more distorted when disguising a negative or unpleasurable wish-fulfilment, which I'd argue is a creeping in of consciousness so as to censor one's ego-self, a process that Freud calls "secondary revision";[137] rather, Farrell's playful distortions encourage the unconscious to become more innocent again, as in the dream-structures of childhood that, according to Freud, are more unfettered and "literal".[138] Farrell warps the three Ashbery lines above into this visionary Australian Google version:

> blue clouds in a white
> sky tell me what else do you see—
> what wonderful worm, perhaps my cattle running free.[139]

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[135] Ashbery, *Where Shall I Wander*, 14.

[136] Farrell, *thempark*, 30.

[137] Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 628.

[138] Freud, "Distortion in Dreams", in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 244.

[139] Farrell, *thempark*, 14.

The materiality and slippage of language—and how a poetics of play can be used to unsettle and interrogate unconscious aspects of Australian culture and history—is Farrell's major concern, and he continues to shift/sift about on this front, here "where poets idle by baggage".[140] Rather than waiting for the carousel of poetic tradition to deliver him his bag, Farrell leaves us at the end of *thempark* in yet another doubled dreamscape, "by the fire, 'language, that great mystery'"[141]—accentuating his objective at the same time as demonstrating it, literally and in every sense; by the fire (the poem) where conversations crackle and shadows are cast—and recast—across cave walls.

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[140] Farrell, *thempark*, 25.

[141] Farrell, *thempark*, 30.

III
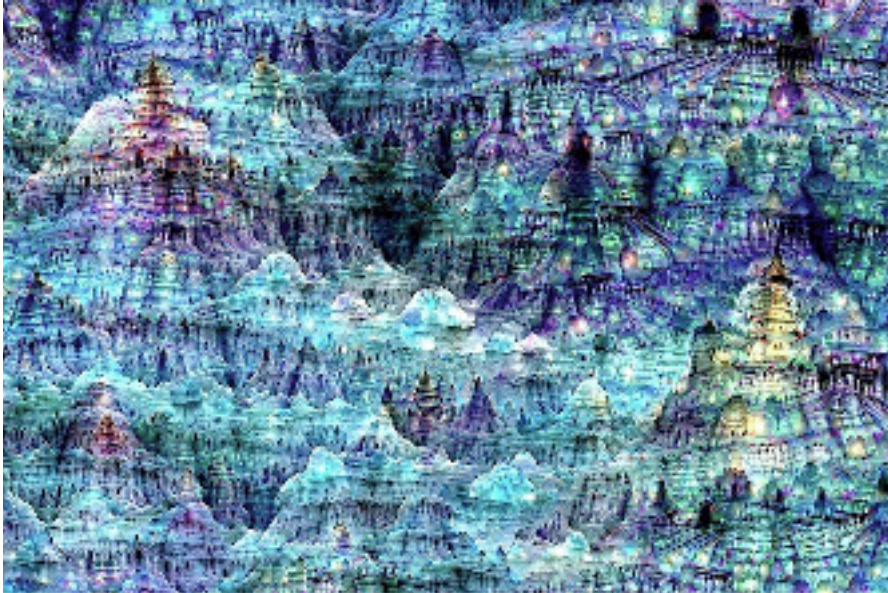
Fig. 9: Random Noise Pagodas, Google "deep dream" image[142]

From one theme park to another: John Ashbery's translation of *Illuminations,* by Arthur Rimbaud. *Illuminations* consists of forty-two poems (forty-three if including the "Fragments from Folio 12" as another poem, which Ashbery has translated here) written either side of *A Season in Hell,* his only other book of poetry. Two of the poems are in free verse, among the first examples of *vers libre*, while the rest are prose poems, as Rimbaud called them at the time, or, as John Ashbery describes them in his introduction, "a crystalline jumble … like a disordered collection of magic lantern slides, each an 'intense rapid dream' … still emitting pulses".[143] *Illuminations* was a development of, and a leap from, the *Symboliste* tradition, as well as being an antecedent to Surrealism. Rimbaud wrote both books by the age of twenty, then famously quit poetry (or outgrew it, arguably) and spent the next decade and a half oscillating between Paris and far-flung destinations, including Java and Africa (the latter where he traded guns, among other things), before returning ill to the south of France, where he died in his mid-thirties. *A Season in Hell* was published before he

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[142] Which looks like Bagan, Burma's ancient pagoda city, superimposed on Dakota's Badlands.

[143] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 16.

denounced poetry, while *Illuminations* was published in his early thirties, when people thought he was dead, having become a myth in "the dark continent" (which it was called at the time, when more racialised, colonial ideas prevailed). The myth of Rimbaud's life has been perpetuated to the point where he has become a messianic figure in literary history. However, in and for his time, Rimbaud produced some of the most radical poetry for any person in any period. One of his main aims for poetic language was, as he put it in his now famous *Voyant* letters: "a systematised disorganisation of *all the senses*".[144]

Fig. 10: Bagan, ancient city of Burma

Fig. 11: Dakota's Badlands

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[144] Rimbaud, *Complete Works*, 102.

Ashbery's new translation has met with praise for its sensitivity to the original and for its inventiveness at the same time. I'd like to focus more on the inventive aspects, and to touch on moments of "the Ashberyesque" which, on the flip side, might reflect on how Rimbaud and his poetry has influenced Ashbery, or at least remind us of the influence (and thus his importance to the modern practice of poetry), but also on how Ashbery has built upon, to then diverge from, a significant forebear.

The opening line of "After the Flood" (*Après le Déluge*) immediately establishes Ashbery's intentions—to make it new but not at the cost of the original: Translating Rimbaud's "*Aussitôt que l'idée du Déluge se fut rassise*", Ashbery writes: "No sooner had the notion of the Flood regained its composure".[145]

The alliteration of "No" and "notion" comes closer than other translations to echoing Rimbaud's music ("notion" could also be read as a pun on ocean). And at the risk of using a negative, "No sooner", where there isn't one in the French, Ashbery has found a way to ride the rhythm of the original. The phrase "regained its composure" links back to the "notion" of the flood, and a fresh take on the French "*rassis*"—stale, staid, balanced. At first glance, "regained its composure" might seem an odd translation, but when you think of the Flood as a figment of the imagination, an "*idée*", then that kind of Flood doesn't necessarily go stale, subside or recede in the mind (as in other translations); it snaps out of its funk, regains its verve (like anything, perhaps, that "makes it new"). Moreover, it paves the way for the disappointment of the narrator's voice at the end of the poem when he yearns for the Flood of the imagination to return —so he can be in that kind of unfettered dream again. Ashbery makes the line strangely his own: the casualness of this lilting, opening phrase and its abstract qualities could easily begin one of his own poems.

Ashbery's translation preserves many loanwords from French and other languages, such as "boulevard", "adagio", "façades", "ritornellos", "connoisseurs", "steppes", "bourgeois", and "bacchanals". In some cases, where there's an opportunity, Ashbery

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[145] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 18-19.

translates by using a different French word more often used in English. For instance, he uses "naïveté" to stress the ingenuous/artless meaning of "*l'ingénuité*", and then "banquettes"—a raised part behind a parapet, or a footbridge—instead of "bypasses", the more straightforward translation of "*contournés*". These loanwords act like slippages, or inversions: French for English where Rimbaud might have used English in his native French. Ashbery also includes a range of old-fashioned or antiquated words, in essence to give them new life; words like "gallantry", "becalmed", "postilion", "baldequin", "credenzas" and even "nincompoop" (to translate "*niais*", i.e. "simpletons") which is surprisingly not contemporary, as in twentieth century like I'd assumed, and rather seventeenth century in origin.

In reviving old words, Ashbery echoes Rimbaud's bringing words, often medieval, back from the dead. The title itself, *Illuminations*, while referring to printed, hand-colored engravings, which were common in Rimbaud's time, can also refer to the hand-painted pictures and decorations found in medieval manuscripts. The French term for these is *enluminures*, yet, according to Paul Verlaine, Rimbaud's title was English (like other poem titles in *Illuminations*, such as "Being Beauteous", "Fairy", and "Bottom"). Alfred Corn reveals this amazing coincidence about the title:

> Considering Rimbaud's ironic and challenging temperament, it's possible he wanted to make both senses of the English term available, as a way to suggest that his mysterious and even quasi-religious texts could also be compared to cheap popular prints. The strategy of the young and not yet established poet is often to 'have it both ways,' defending his most exalted thoughts with an electric fence of high-voltage irony. Since we're on the topic of electrical equipment, consider this interesting coincidence: the first incandescent light-bulb was made in 1874 [Rimbaud wrote Illuminations from 1873-75], and commercial distribution of the new invention began in 1886, the year when La Vogue first brought *Illuminations* to the French reading public.[146]

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[146] Alfred Corn, "Rimbaud's Last Revelation", *The The*, July 26, 2011, http://www.thethepoetry.com/2011/07/rimbauds-last-revelation/.

By employing loanwords and reviving old words in his translations, Ashbery evokes how Rimbaud discovered new and foreign words, especially English words, on his travels to London, where he wrote much of *Illuminations.* We mustn't forget how Ashbery also travelled abroad—exiled himself, as suggested earlier—to live in another city—Paris, of course—in his formative poetry years. He wrote and/or drafted his second (*The Tennis Court Oath*), third (*Rivers and Mountains*) and fourth (*The Double Dream of Spring*) books of poetry in Paris.

More examples of Ashbery's resourceful vocabulary in translation, but also of the "disorganisation of *all the senses*", are evident in these Ashberyesque phrasings:

Boulevards of mountebanks' stages	*Des boulevards de tréteaux*
bellicose dawn in June	*aube de juin batailleuse*
bony plumes	*panaches d'ébène*
enliven our ridiculous paupers' memories	*relever nos souvenirs d'indigents absurdes*
It began in all latoushness	*Cela commnçait par toute la rustrerie*
the horsehair escutcheons	*l'écusson de crin*
underground conflagrations	*embrasements souterrains*

And then in "Lives" (*Vies*): "I don't miss my old role in divine merrymaking: the sober air of this sour countryside is ample nourishment for my hideous skepticism". (*Je ne regrette pas ma vieille part de gaîté divine: l'air sobre de cette aigre campagne alimente fort activement mon atroce sceptisisme.*)[147]

And then the use of "beggars" as a verb to begin "Cities I" (*Villes I*): "The official acropolis beggars the most colossal conceptions of modern barbarity." (*L'acropole officielle outre les conceptions de la barbarie moderne les plus colossales.*)[148]

There are even a few colloquialisms, typical of Ashbery's *speechiness*, thrown in to the translations: "chitchat", for example, and, "Nothing posh.—The city", as a translation of "*Rien de riche.—La ville!*"

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[147] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 46-47.

[148] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 86-87.

The translations of Rimbaud's city poems—*Ville*, *Villes I*, *Villes II*, and *Métropolitain*—remind me of Ashbery's own "These Lacustrine Cities", and other poems from *Rivers and Mountains*, where big impersonal forces are dealt with in tangible, albeit surreal terms: at once hallucinogenic and descriptive of the so-called real world, abstracted further than mere impressionism. Take the first and last stanzas:

> These lacustrine cities grew out of loathing
> Into something forgetful, although angry with history.
> They are the product of an idea: that man is horrible, for instance,
> Though this is only one example.
> …
> You have built a mountain of something,
> Thoughtfully pouring all your energy into this single monument,
> Whose wind is desire starching a petal,
> Whose disappointment broke into a rainbow of tears.[149]

Meanwhile, a line at the centre of "These Lacustrine Cities" echoes Rimbaud's life: "We had thought, for instance, of sending you to the middle of the desert".

Now that Ashbery's translations have finally been published, it becomes clear that much of *Illuminations*—and Rimbaud's poetics—have been taken for a ride in Ashbery's own theme parks, *Rivers and Mountains* and *The Double Dream of Spring*, key books in his poetic development. One wonders whether Ashbery started drafting these translations in the 1950s when in "exile" in Paris. He is said to have read Rimbaud when he was sixteen, and clearly subsumed the young poet's declaration that "one must be absolutely modern" into his own poetry—"absolute modernity" being, as Ashbery states in his preface of *Illuminations*, "the acknowledging of the simultaneity of all of life, the condition that nourishes poetry at every second."[150]

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[149] Ashbery, *The Mooring of Starting Out*, 163.

[150] Davis, "Rimbaud's Wise Music".

After selecting *Some Trees*, Ashbery's first book, for the Yale Younger Poet Series, W. H. Auden made this poignant link between Ashbery and Rimbaud:

> From Rimbaud down to Ashbery, an important school of poets has been concerned with the discovery that, in childhood largely, in dreams and daydreams entirely, the imaginative life of the human individual stubbornly continues to live by the old magical notions. Its world is one of sacred images and ritual acts … a numinous landscape inhabited by demons and strange beasts.[151]

In Ashbery's *The Tennis Court Oath*, there is so much varied, and some might say unparsable, collage-based experimentation that readers cannot but read each word literally and in every sense. Not that this is a beastly problem. Ashbery's own words on the early collage-like poems of Marianne Moore—in a review of her *Tell Me, Tell Me: Granite, Steel and Other Topics*—offer us a glimpse of his own poetic development: "Some of us will regret the kaleidoscopic collage effects of the early poems, and with reason for they were a necessary lesson in how to live in our world of 'media', how to deal with the unwanted information that constantly accumulates around us".[152]

Fig. 12: *The Double Dream of Spring*, by Giorgio de Chirico

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[151] Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*, 250.

[152] Ashbery, "Jerboas, pelicans, Peewee Reese", review of *Tell Me, Tell Me: Granite Steel, and Other Topics*, by Marianne Moore, *Bookweek* 4.8, October 1966, 8.

In other words, the issue is not nonsense, but too much sense. Collage is one way a poet can process the self in the world: the accumulation, dumping and reconfiguring of sources that took place in *The Tennis Court Oath*, Ashbery's second book, was a necessary step on his path to becoming a medium who could translate thought by repurposing language into "imitations of consciousness". These aspects of Ashbery's literal experimentation with collage paved the way for the *rimbaldien*[153] poems of *Rivers and Mountains* and, to a lesser extent, *The Double Dream of Spring*, the book named after a de Chirico painting and in which Ashbery reached that synthesis of voice and style for which he has come to be best known, whether in his elegiac poems, in his shorter, almost comical lyric poems full of linguistic slippages, in his re-jigged formal experiments (pantoums and sestinas, for instance), or in his long poems.

So now, even when we come to Ashbery's translation of "Barbarian", a post-apocalyptic *Illumination* that might seem too aggressive for Ashbery, we come to taste both the extremes of Rimbaud's vision ("Long after the seasons, and the beings and the countries…") and the Ashberesque at the level of word and description:

> The live coals and the foam. Music, wheeling of abysses and shock of ice floes against the stars.
> O Sweetness, O world, O music! And there, shapes, sweat, tresses and eyes, floating. And the white, boiling tears,—O sweetness!—and the voice of woman reaching to the depths of the arctic volcanoes and caverns.
> The pennant . . .

> *Les brasiers et les écumes. La musique, virement des gouffres et choc des glaçons aux astres.*
> *O Douceurs, ô monde, ô musique! Et la, les formes, les sueurs, les chevelures et les yeux, flottant. Et les larmes blanches, bouillantes,—ô douceurs!—et la voix féminine arrivée au fond des volcans et des grottes arctiques.*
> *Le pavillon . . .*[154]

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[153] Standard French adjectival form of Rimbaud.

[154] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 118-121.

The use of the word "tresses"—the hairs and eyes floating—immediately evokes the title poem from *The Double Dream of Spring* and its hallucinatory imagery. Here is the last stanza:

> And now amid the churring of locomotives
> Moving on the land the grass lies over passive
> Beetling its "end of the journey" mentality into your forehead
> Like so much blond hair awash
> Sick starlight on the night
> That is readying its defenses again
> As day comes up[155]

Though the poem is not as apocalyptic as "Barbarian", it gestures obliquely toward the visions of Rimbaud, and toward a kind of personal turmoil, or trauma, a not uncommon trait of many poets/artists. Even in the first poem of *The Double Dream of Spring*, called "The Task", a poem that could be read as an *ars poetica* for the poems that follow, there is a connection to Rimbaud. In the opening lines, Ashbery introduces the word "pennant", echoing a motif seen in de Chirico's paintings. But the word also becomes a premonition of its use in the translation of "Barbarian":

> They are preparing to begin again:
> Problems, new pennant up the flagpole
> In a predicated romance.[156]

No other translation I've read has used the same word for the French "*pavillon*" (usually "flag" or "banner"). "Pennant" is also a good match, sound-wise, like a pendant. In "Barbarian", where the word is part of the poem's refrain, which somewhat romanticises the apocalyptic, its deployment by Ashbery would also seem to be a deliberate echo of his own early work: the Ashberyesque, reverberating.

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[155] Ashbery, *The Mooring of Starting Out*, 254.

[156] Ashbery, *The Mooring of Starting Out*, 227.

Again, the connection to his early poems suggests that Ashbery began translating these *Illuminations* in the Fifties or Sixties. By connecting these two poems, linguistically, we also begin to connect their themes. And so, the obscure "pennant of bloody meat" in "Barbarian" might not simply signify the enduring though dying flesh of humanity in the endtimes, nor the impossibility of living to uncover the mystery of the feminine, simultaneously barbaric and sweet in nature as it seems to in Robert Greer Cohn's studious analysis of Rimbaud's French, but it could also signify poetry itself.[157] To the *Symbolistes*, poetry was considered feminine—unknown, other; and in "Barbarian", Rimbaud's swirling musical derangements peak, set "against the silk of arctic seas and flowers (they don't exist.)", then fizzles out with "the voice of woman reaching to the depths of the arctic volcanoes and caverns". In other words, poetry is out of reach; poetry exists in realms that don't exist (or at least that's how the *Symbolistes* saw it). What Rimbaud is gesturing toward here *is* the impossible. (A futility to do with poetry is arguably what he outgrew.)

Meanwhile, in "The Task", Ashbery points us to a more quotidian, more nonchalant (much like Farrell, earlier, in the face of his forebear's influence), yet still enduring, still anxious, sense of poetry:

> For these are moments only, moments of insight,
> And there are reaches to be attained,
> A last level of anxiety that melts
> In becoming, like miles under the pilgrim's feet.[158]

It's not hard to imagine Rimbaud the walker, Rimbaud the traveller, Rimbaud the exile, as the pilgrim here. These lines have a reluctant redemption to them, an overcoming of the impossible, which brings me back to Ashbery's use of tone in this illuminated *rimbaldien* theme park. How he is capable, within the strictures of a faithful translation, to impart the Ashberyesque can't simply be attributed to a resourceful and characteristic vocabulary, utilising key words from his own poetry; nor his typically

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[157] Robert Greer Cohn, *The Poetry of Rimbaud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 350-354.

[158] Ashbery, *The Mooring of Starting Out*, 227.

casual, flowing and rhythmic phrasing that overflows into parataxis. And while there are plenty of resonances (shared images, language, memories and emotions) coalescing as we delve deeper into comparison—impossible to avoid with a famous poet of a massive oeuvre, translating another famous poet—it is Ashbery's intrinsically hopeful tone that, in the end, provides the main point of departure from Rimbaud but also, paradoxically, the cement to make the translation stick. Take the famous line in the poem "Tale": "*La musique savante manque à notre désir*", which Ashbery translates into: "Wise music is missing from our desire."[159]

Oliver Bernard, in his excellent and, semantically, slightly freer translation, translates this pivotal line as: "Great music falls short of our desire",[160] which initially felt stronger and more insightful in its attempt to say something about the impossibility—for poetry, and even for music—of meeting our desire to understand the nature of existence. When I first read Ashbery's version, it seemed to lack Bernard's abstractedness and its grand gesturing. However, the more I mull over Ashbery's, and the more I compare it to the French, the more his translation grows; the more nuanced it becomes with its subtle soundings, its willingness to stick to Rimbaud's syntax and rhythm, but also its calm, hopeful tone. Rather than a quick hyperbolic bright fire, this line, like many others in Ashbery's translations (and in his own poems, for that matter), burns slower and longer. The calm that Ashbery brings to the translation paradoxically makes Rimbaud's radical ruptures of traditional poetic language and form even more startling and genuine. It reinvigorates and solidifies the music of *Illuminations*—to quell our desire.

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[159] Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 34-35.

[160] Rimbaud, *Selected Verse*, 241. Although this Selected is the new Anvil edition, it has until recently now been the standard Penguin translation in England and Australia since 1962 (while the United States have had numerous translators of Rimbaud, most popularly Louise Varèse, a reliable and well regarded translator).

IV

Fig. 13: Étienne Carjat's famous portrait of Rimbaud transformed by *Dreamscope*

for the most innocent intention is disconcerted at being unable to conceal the fact that one's unsuccessful acts are the most successful and that one's failure fulfills one's most secret wish.[161] —Jacques Lacan

Rimbaud didn't love poetry. He realised early that poetry's "song of the infinite is compromised by the finitude of its terms", and so he sought ways to open poetry up, and to re-invent it the way he wanted to re-invent love—through an embracing of

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[161] Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 122.

difference, otherness, innovation, risk and adventure. While he didn't have the stamina for a life dedicated to poetic failure—choosing other kinds of risk and adventure—his "unsuccessful acts" set an example of "necessary incompleteness". As written earlier in this essay (with regard to Ashbery): necessary incompleteness—irregular form—is what enables poetry to survive the circumstances of its own composition, and so make room both for the reader and for the later poet—i.e. others. And, as also laid out previously, with regard to Lacan, speech originates not in the ego nor in the subject but rather in the Other. Beyond the subject's conscious control, speech and language come from another place, outside of consciousness—"the other scene".

I versus the Other. Successful versus unsuccessful. Consciousness versus the unconscious. Male versus female. Dichotomies that crop up as necessary, because the limits of logic within language dictate as much; dichotomies that the poetry of Ashbery and Farrell attempts to blur and transcend. The use of dichotomy is our way of attempting to express the complexities, subjectivities, and heterogeneity inherent in truths. But dichotomies can only go so far. Lacan, in "The Freudian thing", his return-to-Freud essay, an amplification of one of his lectures, writes about the relation between truth and the signifier, at one point punning on the "wood for the trees" dichotomy (the forest of Bondy in northern France, and the trees as "bandits"), saying further: "What is this truth without which there is no way of discerning the face from the mask, and outside of which there appears to be no other monster than the labyrinth itself?"[162]

Through a very complex, riddling and freely associative, one-thing-leads-to-another but everything-speaks-for-one essay (echoing his forebear, Freud, "*riddle*, it is through you that I communicate"), Lacan essentially argues that the ego gets in the way of truth, and manifests in speech trying to overcome the fear of fragmentation; speech, which is in turn a construction of language within a society of an "immixture of subjects" (not a collection of individuals) mutually transformed by the symbolic order; language, whose significations are "realized only on the basis of a grasp of things in their totality":

> The truth has said: 'I speak'. To recognize this 'I' by what he speaks, perhaps we should not have turned to the 'I', but paused at the angle of intersection of the

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[162] Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 118.

> speech … language is an order constituted by laws … language is different from natural expression and … is not a code either … it is not to be confused with information … it is so irreducible to a superstructure that materialism itself is seen to be alarmed by this heresy…[163]

The "angle of intersection of the speech" is the key phrase here, an apt description for the polyphony of the other voices that speak, literally and in every sense, through Ashbery's and Farrell's poetry. Lacan demonstrates that the ego is nothing but an illusion, going so far as to speak for the desk that sits on stage next to him, and to imply that the desk—as in, the ego—is a bureaucratic obstruction to the real you, to truth. The desk, like the ego, "is dependent on the signifier", for the word "desk" is responsible for the fact that it—along with its chain of signifiers (papers, wills, and other documents)—is not just a piece of wood. Lending a human voice to the desk enables Lacan to speak of its individual existence, its history which is, like anyone's, prone to fatality. Any one of us, he says, may dream that he/she is this desk, which then becomes a signifier of desire. It is we who "perceive the desk and give it its meaning". And yet, Lacan pre-empts, using conscious reflection, we cannot comprehend our own meaning —our conscious reflection is always already a failure, a mirage, rendering the desk no different from the observer when placed with one of us between two parallel mirrors, because both ego and desk are scrutinised by an other, from which they receive back endlessly their distorted images.[164]

Here, we get ping-ed back like a reflection to Rimbaud's "*Je est un* autre" ("I is an *other*"), which set these distorted reflections, as in the modernist poem and poetry thereafter, concatenating. Rimbaud's genius was, in the end, his innocent intention and his demonstration of failure: "Genius is the recovery of childhood at will", he famously said. A child, after all, has no other choice but to appropriate language so as to form his/her own relationship to it and the human, and ever increasingly inhuman, world. Adorno outlines the dichotomy inherent in genius: "The genial remains paradoxical and precarious because the freely discovered and the necessary cannot actually be

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[163] Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 124-128.

[164] Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, 133-134.

completely fused. Without the ever present possibility of failure there is nothing genial in artworks".[165]

But is an artwork/poem a thing? Well, yes … as much as an illusion is a thing. And it depends on how it's deployed. The poem as thing can be the desk, the ego, but it can also be the woods. It's a choice that the poet makes (the French word for "thing", innocently enough, is "*chose*")—to make things singular, or to disintegrate and become the woods. The irresolvable bind between subject and object that poetry encounters (another inseparable dichotomy) is "a precarious balance" of "the I that speaks latently through the work", as Adorno maintained.[166] Poetry can seem like code or riddle because it's attempting to express complex truths. It's never quite doing dreamwork but is always tapping into it. Poetry is always attempting to do away with the desk, to disintegrate the ego, because there is no other monster to poetry than language itself.

So now, in this faux spirit of dichotomy, in this other scene of things (*choses*), there are, as I see it, two attitudes a genial poet can take to ensure that the necessary threat of failure remains ever present: 1) "I, too, dislike it" and, 2) "To love poetry is to love not being able to choose."

While Marianne Moore, Arthur Rimbaud, John Ashbery and Michael Farrell are in no way writers of what I'd call "desk poetry", they might lean in different directions with respect to this dichotomous choice. The poetry of Moore and Rimbaud could sit in the former camp, as outlined, struggling with the finitude of its terms, though painfully opening up poetry to indeterminacy, otherness and the multiple. The poetries of Ashbery and Farrell, on the other foot, each seem to love not being able to choose—the readymade indeterminacy (via Rimbaud) that Perloff posits, but, more actively, indecision, as in Lacan's "innocent intention". "A poem can be made of anything", is what Ashbery's and Farrell's poems say—even itself, and perhaps even someone else's dreams. Inceptionism, eat your heart out, or at least within homosocial lineages such as the one I've studied in this historical stream.

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[165] Adorno, "Subject-Object", 234.

[166] Adorno, "Subject-Object", 227.

Inheriting a bandit's sense of transposition ("in the virtual forest")[167], Michael Farrell gambols in an *othered* theme park of rides that allow for almost infinite abstraction and mutation—a simultaneously naive and knowing appropriation of the aforementioned *bear*, happy to be caught, fingers in the honey pot—while John Ashbery gambles, albeit within stricter parameters, on projecting his own voice through the hallowed theme park ("the eternal west of forests")[168] of a much-translated forebear of modern poetry. Ashbery's distinctive translation using Rimbaud's framework has many parallels to how Farrell's poetry superimposes on Ashbery's—transforming, building anew, three-dimensionalising, literally regenerating. While both Farrell and Ashbery, according to Walter Benjamin, would owe the existence of both *thempark* and *Illuminations* to their respective blueprints,[169] both create new rides, new desires, new dreams. At one with fragmentation, preferring and unveiling speech and language of the Other, literally occupying "the other scene", both bandits fulfill a secret wish for poetry of an "immixture of subjects", of polyphony, of accretion and proliferation, of so many fragments of wood. One thing leads to another when one loves not being able to choose, from Rimbaud down and on to the many others: I is a *them* park.

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167 Farrell, *thempark*, 12.

168 Rimbaud, *Illuminations*, 91.

169 Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", in *Illuminations*, 72.

Aussi / Or

Un Coup de dés >

    and Mistranslation >

        in the Antipodes

Fig. 1: Lorenz Attractor

I

aussi

The French adverb *aussi* means "also", "in addition", "as well", and "too". It is also used as a comparative, as in "as", as an exclamatory "so", and also at the beginning of sentences as a "therefore", or "consequently". Its English homonym is "Aussie", of course. And its meaning of "too", T double-O, might fancifully be taken for the English number "two", its double, or even *tu* = you.

or

The French noun *or* is two different words with two different Latin origins. One, from Latin *aurum* (and popularly *orum*), is a noun meaning "gold" (with adjective, "golden"); the other, from Latin *hora*, is a conjunction meaning "now", "but", "in fact", "as it happens" and, more rarely, "thus" or "therefore". Its doublet is *heure* = "hour".[1] In English heraldry, "or" also means gold. The English homonym for *or* is obviously "or", that infinitely useful word that links alternatives, but also "ore", "awe", "oar", and "aw". From Middle English, "or" is a reduced form of the obsolete conjunction *other* (which superceded Old English *oththe*). "Or" can also be found as a suffix in English nouns denoting a person or thing with agency: "escalator", "resistor", or "conductor".[2]

aussi

Un Coup de dés by Stephane Mallarmé, that gnomic poem of the late nineteenth century, full of esoteric symbolism and disjointed syntax, that broke with convention, exploding from the left margin across the page, and across the gutters of eleven double-page spreads, in scattered fragments—like *disjecta membra*—visual, musical, collagic, and

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[1] A. Brachet, *An Etymological Dictionary of the French Language*, trans. G. W. Kitchin (Oxford: Clarendon, 1873).

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 20 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

typographically diverse, looks like many things on the page: rocks emerging from the white foam of the sea; ash on the table to be swished about by some diviner; a mobile, hung across a child's crib; threads or strings blown in the wind; constellations in the night sky[3]; it could even be seen as a representation of Brownian Motion.

or

Pedesis (from Greek: πήδησις /pɛ̌ːdɛːsis/ "leaping"), which is the random motion of particles suspended in a fluid (a liquid or a gas) resulting from their collision with the quick atoms or molecules in the gas or liquid. The term "Brownian motion" can also refer to the mathematical model used to describe such random movements, which is often called a particle theory.[4]
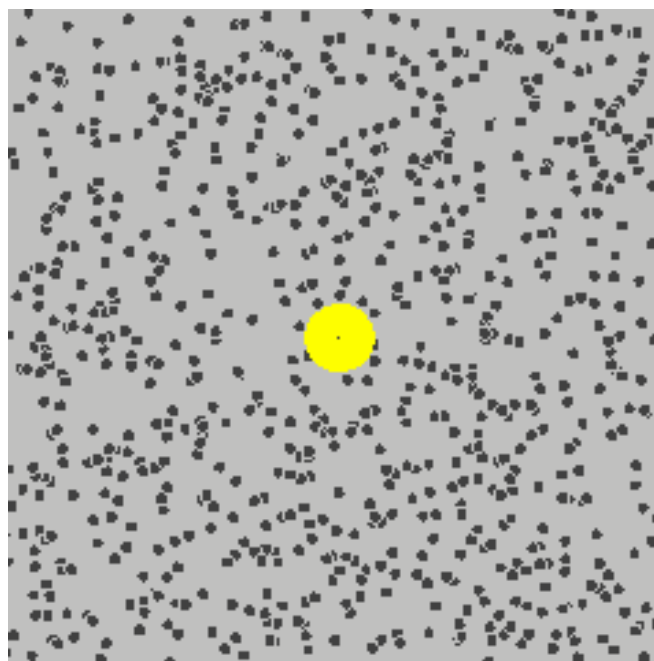
Fig. 2: Brownian Motion[5]

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[3] There are two representations of the "Big Dipper" (U.S.) or "The Plough" (U.K.) in the poem's fragments. The Big Dipper is an asterism that represents the seven brightest stars of the northern hemisphere constellation *Ursa Major*.

[4] Albert Einstein, *Investigations on the Theory of the Brownian Movement*, trans. A. D. Cowper, 1926 (Mineola: Dover, 1956), http://users.physik.fu-berlin.de/~kleinert/files/eins_brownian.pdf.

[5] For active gif, see: *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brownian_motion.

or

The atomic law of the clinamen—the mimimal swerve of an atom in laminar flow. Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffery, evoking Lucretius' use of the clinamen in literature, compare the movement of atoms to the movement of letters: "Atoms … are to bodies what letters are to words: heterogeneous, deviant, and combinatory". Citing Paul Valéry, who saw the words in *Un Coup de dés* as "atoms of time that serve as the germs of infinite consequences lasting through psychological centuries", Rasula and McCaffery then note:

> The spaciousness evoked here is a reminder that, in Epicurean cosmology, the contextual prerequisite of atoms is a void. We might say by analogy that void is to atoms what space and *différence* are to letters. Mallarmé's spacing in *Un Coup de dés* solicits—as integral to the experience and the eventual dice-throw of the poem—the backing of that void (the ground of emergent figures) through which the lettristic swerves disseminate.[6]

aussi

Its full title, *UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD* ("A THROW OF THE DICE WILL [N]EVER ABOLISH CHANCE")[7]—perhaps a serious interpretation of probability— describes the event of the poem and, like dice, its words bounce or leap through the double-page spreads[8] in corresponding large and capitalised typeface: *UN COUP DES*

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[6] Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffery, eds., *Imagining Language: An Anthology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 532-533.

[7] I have translated *JAMAIS* as "[N]EVER" to preserve both possible meanings of *jamais*, "never" and "ever".

[8] "Page openings" is the common bibliographical term, but for the purposes of this essay I will use Chris Edwards' "double-page spreads", or "double spreads". He employs the term "double-page spread" to describe Mallarmé's "unit of composition" in *Un Coup de dés*. See Chris Edwards, "Double Talk" (paper presented at the Sydney Poetry Seminar on "Poetry and Authenticity", May 20-21, 2005), *Poetry International Web* (Nov 1, 2006), http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/cou_article/item/7929/Double-Talk/en.

DÉS ("A THROW OF THE DICE") appears alone as a title page, *JAMAIS* ("WILL [N]EVER") appears on the following spread with a few fragments of text below it, *N'ABOLIRA* (ABOLISH) three spreads later with much more surrounding text, while *LE HASARD* ("CHANCE") rounds out the phrase a further four spreads on, marooned in the most chaotic double spread of the book (in terms of the number and variety of particles on the page), two spreads from the end. Every fragment of the poem that falls around this title, thrown across the sea of pages in variously sized typeface, switching between Roman, italic and capital letters, unravels and overlays in what Alain Badiou describes as "a stupefying series of metaphorical translations around the theme of the undecidable".[9] Or, as Mallarmé dubs it in his Preface: "prismatic subdivisions of the Idea". Lines of text, if read from the upper left, across the book's gutter, to the lower right, "speed up and slow down the movement … intimating it through a simultaneous vision of the Page."[10] Within these subdivisions, fragmented images surface as remnants of some lost-at-sea narrative, wavering, oscillating, vibrating throughout: the Master of a vessel, standing at the bottom of a shipwreck, his fist holding the dice shaking eternally at the stars, the lurching ship, a feather hovering over the Abyss, the proposed rolling of the dice between possible outcomes. "All Thought emits a Throw of the Dice", to quote the last line, yet, "A throw of the dice will never abolish chance"—a decisive act with a result determined by ever greater and obscure forces.[11]

or

Inertia.[12]

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[9] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, 1998, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2005), 194.

[10] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, trans. and with a commentary by Henry Weinfeld (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 121.

[11] Mallarmé, "*Un Coup de dés*", *Collected Poems*, 144-145

[12] Inertia, in classical physics, can apply to a body in uniform motion or at rest. It was Isaac Newton's first law of motion from *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*: "The *vis insita*, or innate force of matter, is a power of resisting by which every body, as much as in it lies, endeavours to preserve its present state, whether it be of rest or of moving uniformly forward in a straight line" (in Isaac Newton, *Newton's Principia: the mathematical principles of natural philosophy*, trans. Andrew Motte [New York: Daniel Adee, 1846], 72).

or

Henry Weinfeld, one of Mallarmé's translators, sums up the various angles from which to read *Un Coup de dés*: "What is allegorised *…* is the ebb and flow of humanity's continual struggle to seize hold of the Absolute: the Master-Seaman's confrontation with the oceanic abyss, the Poet's confrontation with the white page, the Philosopher's with the Void, and Everyman's with the 'wrecks and errors' (to borrow Ezra Pound's phrase) of experience."[13]

aussi

When Paul Valéry first witnessed the event of *Un Coup de dés*, he remarked: "It seemed to me that I was looking at the form and pattern of a thought, placed for the first time in finite space. Here space itself truly spoke, dreamed, and gave birth to temporal forms",[14] which seems like a reaction that Theodor Adorno might have classified as "astonishment vis-à-vis what is beheld rather than vis-à-vis what it is about."[15] According to Immanuel Kant, however, space and time are nothing but forms of intuition; they are the base of all experience, *à priori*. We make non-empirical, singular, immediate representations of space and of time and it's only through these representations that we can experience things as distinct from ourselves/our inner mental states.[16] By this he means that we don't come to our understanding of space and time by first observing the objects we experience and then "by abstraction". Our sensibilities are a jumble of representations, and our interpretations of a poem, which

[13] Henry Weinfeld, "Commentary", in Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, 266-267. The Pound phrase is actually back to front. It comes from "Canto CXVI": "Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me". See Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 1934 (New York: New Directions, 1993), 816.

[14] Weinfeld, "Commentary", 265.

[15] Theodor Adorno, "Subject-Object", in *Aesthetic Theory*, 1970, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 225.

[16] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781, trans. J. M. D. Meiklejohn (New York: Dover, 2003), 23-33.

itself is contingent on language and how it's arranged on the page, is thus, and inevitably, a representation of a representation, a construction of a construction.

aussi

As Mallarmé wrote to André Gide, shortly after the poem was first published, likening the shape of the poem to a constellation locking into place: "the constellation will, fatally, assume, according to the precise laws and in so far as it's possible in a printed text, the form of a constellation. The ship will list from the top of one page to the bottom of the next, etc.: for, and this is the whole point … the rhythm of a sentence about an act or even an object has meaning only if it imitates them".[17]

aussi

Negative space does the semantic inverse, according to Jacques Derrida, who suggests that the "rhythm" of the white spaces in *Un Coup de dés*—"as if without support"—succeeds in collapsing space and time:

> The white of the spacing has no determinate meaning, it does not simply belong to the plurivalence of all the other whites. More than or less than the polysemic series, a loss or excess of meaning, it folds up the text toward itself, and at each moment points out the place (where "NOTHING / WILL HAVE TAKEN PLACE / BUT THE PLACE".[18]), the condition, the labor, the rhythm. As the page *folds in* upon itself, one will never be able to decide if *white* signifies something, or signifies only, or in addition, the space of writing itself.[19]

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[17] Mallarmé, "Letter to André Gide", May 14, 1897, in *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, ed. and trans. Rosemary Lloyd (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 223.

[18] Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, 142.

[19] Jacques Derrida, "Mallarmé", 1974, trans. Christine Roulston, in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1991), 115-116.

or

As Octavio Paz writes of Mallarmé: "The meaning does not reside outside the poem but within it, not in what the words say, but in what *they say to each other*".[20]

Mallarmé states his own (subjective) objective best: "This aim, I call Transposition; Structure, another … The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet speaking, who cedes the initiative to words, through the clash of their inequalities; they light each other up through reciprocal reflections".[21]

aussi

"Shipwrecked on the shoals of contingency",[22] Australia is haunted by this poem. Its publication in *Cosmopolis* in Paris in 1897 struck a nerve or, rather, a vessel within Australian poetry bloodlines, starting with Christopher Brennan. *Un Coup de dés* was the score that inspired him to compose "Musicopoematographoscope", also in 1897, a large handwritten *mimique* manuscript, or pastiche, that transposed the more extreme aesthetics of an *avant-garde* French Symbolism into the Australian poetic psyche. Now well into the twenty-first century, *Un Coup de dés* is still a blueprint for experimentation in Australian poetry, spawning a number of versions, two of which are homophonic mistranslations—"A Fluke" by Chris Edwards and "Desmond's Coupé" by John Tranter —both published in 2006, and both revelling/rebelling in the abject, and in "errors and wrecks". This essay/assay will provide a comparative reading of these homophonic bedfellows, will trace their relation(ship)s to their antecedents, spelunking Plato's cave and various theories of translation in the process, and will begin an enquiry into the significant influence of Mallarmé's great "vessel" on Australian poetry and poetics.

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[20] Octavio Paz, *Alternating Current*, 1967, trans. Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking, 1967), 4.

[21] Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse", in *Divagations*, 1897, trans. Barbara Johnson (Cambridge: Belknap, 2007), 208.

[22] Weinfeld, "Commentary", 266.

II

In his reluctant introduction to *Un Coup de dés* (he only wrote it to appease the wishes of the periodical *Cosmopolis*), Mallarmé "retain[s] a religious veneration" for "the ancient technique of verse", to which he "attribute[s] the empire of passion and of dreams".[23] He may well have been attempting to appease traditional readers, but at the same time Mallarmé is alluding to a crisis which, at first, plays out as a revolution in French prosody, but "is not merely a crisis *of* poetry or verse, but a crisis of modernity —indeed, a religious crisis that manifests itself *in* poetry or verse".[24] Furthermore, in his famous essay *Crise de vers* Mallarmé struggles with the admission that "Languages [are] imperfect insofar as they are many; the absolute one is lacking ... the diversity, on earth, of idioms prevents anyone from proffering words that would otherwise be, when made uniquely, the material truth. This prohibition is explicitly devastating, in Nature ... where nothing leads one to take oneself for God".[25]

He demonstrates that languages are at once imperfect and multiple, that there is no necessary or natural connection between word and thing, between sound and sense, offering the example that *jour* (day) is a dark sound, for instance, while *nuit* (night) is a bright sound. This is the same as Ferdinand de Saussure's revolutionary formulation— that the relationship between the linguistic signifier and what it signifies is arbitrary.[26] This suggests that Mallarmé's crisis was also a crisis between subject and object, and explains how he came to a poetics of indecision, polyphony and counterpoint. Adorno had similar aesthetic concerns in mind when he wrote of the subject-object bind:

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[23] Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, 123.

[24] Weinfeld, "'Thinking out afresh the whole poetic problem': Brennan's Prescience; Mallarmé's Accomplishment", *Southerly* 68.3 (2008): 11.

[25] Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse", 205.

[26] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 1893, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 67-70.

In the artwork the subject is neither the observer nor the creator nor absolute spirit, but rather spirit bound up with, performed and mediated by the object.

For the artwork and thus for its theory, subject and object are its own proper elements and they are dialectical in such a fashion that whatever the work is composed of—material, expression, and form—is always both.[27]

aussi

Jacques Derrida describes Mallarmé's poetics as "and/or". He cites Mallarmé's deft use of homonyms and puns and their chain-like linkages across his oeuvre not as a crisis but as the key to its understanding, and to new possibilities for literature:

Let us not forget that these chains, which are infinitely vaster, more powerful and intertwined than is even possible to hint at here, are as if without support, always suspended. It is the Mallarméan doctrine of *suggestion*, of undecided allusion. Such indecision, which enables them to move alone and without end, cuts them off, in spite of appearances, from all meaning (signifed theme) and from all referents (the thing itself, and the conscious or unconscious intention of the author). Which leads to numerous traps for criticism, and numerous new procedures and categories to be invented.[28]

or

Weinfeld describes Mallarmé's chains with an almost religious fervour, even at the same time as acknowledging the immanence of words and things:

polysyllabic chains of homophonic rhymes, rhymes that will hyperbolically, but also actually, evoke the island of poetry from which the spirit has been exiled and in which it can dwell …

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[27] Theodor W. Adorno, "Subject-Object", 226-227.

[28] Derrida, "Mallarmé", 120-121.

For the inhabitants of Mallarmé's mythical island, subject-object distinctions and discrepancies between words and things no longer obtain. Everything is immanent and no longer transcendent; everything comes immediately to the eye, to sight itself, and so there is no longer any need for the visionary.[29]

aussi

Regarding Derrida's "doctrine of suggestion, and undecided allusion", there is a little known theory of anagrams that Saussure worked on in his many unpublished notebooks. Tracing the works of Homer and others to discover laws governing the distribution of consonants and vowels, Saussure accidentally noticed recurrent groups of phonemes that combined to form prolonged echoes of words of special import— hidden motivic theme-words embedded in poetic texts. Jean Starobinski, in unearthing these unfinished theories, enters into conversation with Saussure's notes and addresses some unanswered questions of the origin or function of the anagram-forming process. Applying a Claude Lévi-Strauss phrase, "phonic tinkering", he aligns Saussure's process with a poet's, and describes the poem in general as an emanation—an "act of words" [*fait de parole*] which "appears as the superfluous luxury of the hypogram" (the hypogram being the semantic nucleus of a poem, whether a title or motivic theme-word). One of the key conclusions Starobinski comes to is that "the words of a work are rooted in other, antecedent words, and that they *are not directly chosen* by the formative consciousness."[30] In other words, the poetic process, however procedural, is largely unconscious—words are written one by one, yet patterns of words *upon* words form subliminally. Starobinski continues: "To the question What lies beneath the line? the answer is not the creative *subject* but the inductive *word*. Not that Ferdinand de Saussure goes so far as to erase the role of artistic subjectivity, but it does seem to him that this subjectivity can produce its text only by passage through a *pre-text*".[31]

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29 Weinfeld, "'Thinking out afresh the whole poetic problem'", 21.

30 Jean Starobinski, *Words Upon Words: The Anagrams of Ferdinand Saussure*, 1971, trans. Olivia Emmet (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 120-121.

31 Jean Starobinski, *Words Upon Words*, 121.

or

Saussure's anagrams are an example of intertextuality, a term associated with poststructural theorists that refers to more than just the "influences" of writers on each other. Julia Kristeva coined this semiotic notion, proposing that language has powers which not only exceed individual control but also determine subjectivity: "every text is from the outset under the jurisdiction of other discourses which impose a universe on it".[32] Kristeva argues that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of inter-textuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double".[33]

aussi

Saussure and Starobinski's theory of anagrams need not only be applied to Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés*, but can be applied to his entire oeuvre. Derrida chooses the expansive use of the word "*or*" throughout Mallarmé's poetry as an example of his punning chains, though "*or*" is just one of many words employed in this manner. As suggested previously, "*or*" isn't stable as a word. It's a noun ("gold"), an adjective ("golden"), and a conjunction ("now"), and its English homonyn "or" is a conjunction that links alternatives, giving the "otherwise" equal billing. Mallarmé utilises the sound and meaning of "or", not just as a word on its own, but within words, and amongst many other similar concatenations, to redouble semantic indecision and scatter meaning: "no identity is stable enough, of itself, to give rise to relationships of the whole and the part, of cause and effect".[34] Derrida then shows how, in a single line from Mallarmé's *Les mots anglais*, we can get a taste for how the word *or* and its multiplicity might concatenate

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[32] Julia Kristeva, in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, ed. Jonathon Culler (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 105.

[33] Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 37. Roland Barthes had similar ideas when he wrote: "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the AuthorGod) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (in Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath [London: Fontana, 1977], 146).

[34] Derrida, "Mallarmé", 124-125.

across an oeuvre: "*une eclipse, or, telle est l'heure*", which translates as "an eclipse, now, such is the hour". The other meanings of gold, goldenness, money, seasonality, midnight, time, epoch, are all at once there. In this golden light, the fragmentation that is so indicative of modern poetry under the modern subject might be seen as refractions of the *word* that Mallarmé has "by disintegration, liberated".[35] And so, if we now apply to Mallarmé's line an extreme translation (a mistranslation at the level of letter and word, swerving as one may) using an Australian vernacular, we can get: "An eclipse! Gold! Such is life!" Or, homophonically: "You kleptos, tell a lie".

<div align="center">**aussi**</div>

So what is mistranslation? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, to mistranslate is to translate (something) incorrectly: "passages from the Bible were either mistranslated or taken out of context".[36]

<div align="center">**or**</div>

"Take a poem, or part of a poem, in a foreign language and translate it word for word according to what it sounds like in English ... Try this with a language you know and then with one you don't know. Don't use a dictionary, just rely on what your ears hear and go from there ... Use slang and other nonstandard English words. Let the syntax take care of itself."[37]

<div align="center">**aussi**</div>

Mistranslation in poetry, according to many experimenting or procedural poets—as in Charles Bernstein's instructions above for a homophonic translation—is a means to an end, a constraint-based, generative practice, whereby a poet "translates" another poem (usually from a foreign language) into something *newly mistaken*. Transposition from

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[35] Derrida, "Mallarmé", 116.

[36] *Oxford English Dictionary*.

[37] Charles Bernstein, "Homophonic Translation", in *The Practice of Poetry: Writing Exercises from Poets Who Teach*, ed. Robin Behn and Twichell Chase (New York: Harper, 1992), 126.

one mode to another, as a practice/praxis, shortcircuits control, bringing chance to the fore—the poet (or so-called author) is at the whim of words and their swervings. To double-up (or double-down) on Walter Benjamin's "Translation is a mode", let's think of mistranslation as a *mood*. Predicated on ceding the initiative to a pre-text, mistranslation is a mood "in which meaning has ceased to be the watershed for the flow of language and the flow of revelation".[38]

<div align="center">

aussi

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Gérard Genette, in his seminal book on parody and the manifold relationships a text may have with prior texts, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, gives a surprising classic example of the genre of homophonic translation: *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames* by Louis d'Antin van Rooten (published in London, 1967), a series of French transphonations of *Mother Goose Rhymes*:

Humpty Dumpty	Un petit d'un petit	A little one of a little one
Sat on a wall.	S'étonne aux Halles	Was surprised at the Market
Humpty Dumpty	Un petit d'un petit	A little one of a little one
Had a great fall.	Ah! degrés te fallent	Oh, degrees fail you!
All the king's horses	Indolent qui ne sort cesse	Lazy is he who leaves stops
And all the king's men	Indolent qui ne se mène	Lazy is he who is not led
Couldn't put Humpty	Qu'importe un petit	Who cares about a little one
Together again.	Tout gai de Reguennes.	All happy with Reguennes[39]

<div align="center">

or

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One of the classic *avant-garde* contemporary examples of homophonic translation is the Zukofskys' 1969 *Catullus*, in which Celia and Louis Zukofsky take a visceral approach to the material surface of the original Latin of Catullus' poetry—its shape, sound, and rhythm—and translate it into English by trying "to breathe / the 'literal' meaning with

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[38] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", in *Illuminations*, 1955, trans. Harry Zohn, 1968 (London: Fontana, 1992), 71 and 82.

[39] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, 1982, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 41.

him" (note the quotations around "literal", as if to redefine it).[40] They dismantle the concept of transparent literalism (the dominant mode of most translations) and at the same time redefine semantic correspondence.[41] In poem #22, Catullus ridicules a fellow poet for insisting on new papyrus for his prolific but poor verse, instead of using the cheaper palimpsest:

> idemque longe plurimos facit uersus.
> puto esse ego illi milia aut decem aut plura
> perscripta, nec sic ut fit in palimpsesto
> relata: cartae regiae, noui libri,
> noui umbilici, lora rubra membranae,
> derecta plumbo et pumice omnia aequata[42]

The Zukovskys translate this like so:

> his damn cue's long reams of preoccupied verses.
> Put his goal at ten thousand, some decked out plural.
> Poor script, eh? not so it fit incest in palimpsest—
> realloted: quires, regal eye, new cylinders,
> new little umbiliform roll ends, rubric lore, thongs,
> membranes ruled plumb o (my) all equated with pumice.[43]

Josef Horáček describes the Zukofskys' approach: "Syntax breaks up considerably, with phrases sliding from one to the next without precise boundaries; certain words could be read variably as part of two adjoining phrases. Vocabulary now oscillates freely from archaic to mundane to bawdy: the distinctions among different levels of diction are

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[40] Celia Thaew Zukofsky and Louis Zukofsky, trans., *Catullus* [*Gai Valeri Catulli Veronensis Liber*] (London: Cape Golliard, 1969), not paginated.

[41] Josef Horáček, "Pedantry and Play: The Zukofsky *Catullus*", *Comparative Literature Studies* 51.1 (2014): 106.

[42] Gaius Valerius Catullus, *The Poems of Catullus: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Peter Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 66.

[43] Zukofsky and Zukofsky, trans., *Catullus*, not paginated.

effectively erased. Semantic correspondence is fully subordinated to homophony but not in the least ignored."[44]

<div align="center">**or**</div>

Mistranslation can be seen as any of these: "word writing",[45] palimpsest, a doubling, a mirroring, a homage, a parody, a remix of a classic score, or a combination of these. There is always a trace of the original, however far a mistranslation departs, so it could also be seen as a ghosting, a haunted hijinx (but also a haunting—as in, the haunting of a location). Whatever the preferred method, whether loose or "pedantic", this "witty translation game"[46] requires alternative ways of reading, and other interpretive approaches.

<div align="center">**aussi**</div>

"Mallarmé does not belong completely to French literature", writes Derrida. His "*or-play*" is "a brilliant demonstration of a recourse to the homonym, to what Aristotle denounced as bad poetry, as an instrument of rhetoric for sophists". Having "broken with the protocols of rhetoric", his poetry "escapes the control of [muted classical and philosophical] representation ... demonstrates *in practice* its nonpertinence", and makes him at once a sophist and an outlaw of Plato.[47]

A cast out. Which could be one reason why *Un Coup de dés* has spawned a number of mirror images, or mistranslations, in the Antipodes—it resonates with Australian sensibilities of the outsider or the reject. Former prime minister Paul Keating was

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[44] Horáček, "Pedantry and Play", 114.

[45] Charles Olson, "Logography", in *Additional Prose: A Bibliography on America, Proprioception & Other Notes & Essays*, ed. George F. Butterick (Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1974), 20.

[46] Horáček, "Pedantry and Play: The Zukofsky *Catullus*", 108.

[47] Derrida, "Mallarmé", 121-126.

accused in 1994 of calling Australia "the arse end of the world",[48] proving that this hard-done-by outsider sensibility is a national preoccupation. In saying so, Keating also perpetuated, however obliquely, the idea of Atlantis that Plato perpetuated—that this huge island continent is located on the opposite, underside of the world (*antipodes*, originally from Greek, means "having the feet opposite", which chimes neatly with poetry's own and many feet). Taking place at the bottom of a shipwreck, *Un Coup de dés* resonates because of its preoccupation with the impossibility of *under*standing existence, so to speak.

or

Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato: "The constellation is changed, the disposition is the same" / "The same minds under different stars". *Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato* is also, oddly enough, the motto of the University of Sydney.

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[48] Paul Keating, in Robert Milliken, "Keating's rear view of the lucky country causes storm: Careless remarks have damaged the PM's nationalist stance", *Independent*, June 27, 1994, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/keatings-rear-view-of-the-lucky-country-causes-storm-careless-remarks-have-damaged-the-pms-1425378.html.

III

At the end of the nineteenth century, Mallarmé's poetics haunted the young Australian poet Christopher Brennan. Today, he's the poltergeist of the University of Sydney, haunting the occasional student of Australian literature with his formal variations of Mallarmé's *Symboliste* style. The work of Brennan's that is often overlooked, however, or thought of as an anomoly, is his handwritten *Prose-Verse-Poster-Algebraic-Symbolico-Riddle Musicopoematographoscope & Pocket Musicopoematographoscope*, a large facsimile of two poems that mimic the appearance of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés*, that were composed in the same year, 1897, but that weren't formally published for nearly 50 years after his death (1981, by Hale & Iremonger). The central poem in it, "Musicopoematographoscope", spaced across the page like *Un Coup de dés*, but not utilising the gutter and double-page spread as syntactic Abyss, is clearly Brennan's response to some indifferent reviews of his more formal work. John Tranter, in his (much later) 1982 review of *Prose-Verse-Poster-Algebraic-Symbolico-Riddle Musicopoematographoscope & Pocket Musicopoematographoscope* recounts Brennan's stab at his reviewers and condemns it: "The main burden of its complaint can be traced by following through the poem the words in large capitals: 'I don't give a tinker's damn for the public and they return the compliment.'"[49]

In large capital letters, this title phrase echoes the style of the embedded and elongated title of *UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD*, fragmented across a number of pages, but not its Idea. Not necessarily aiming to "translate" Mallarmé's "and/or" poetics, Brennan rather self-consciously sticks to the letter of the "law of correspondences", the slightly simpler idea that poetry be an evocative network of symbolic associations (via tongue-in-cheek fragments such as, "O that I grant you // being / existent / undeniable / irreducible // in all heaviness / immovable / without

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[49] John Tranter, "Brennan's Tinker's damn", review of *Prose-Verse-Poster-Algebraic-Symbolico-Riddle Musicopoematographoscope & Pocket Musicopoematographoscope* by Christopher Brennan, *Jacket* 29, April 2006, http://johntranter.com/reviewer/1982-brennan-oscope.shtml.

wings / a brick"),[50] or he flat-out critiques his critics (in fragments such as, "THEY // Bentley's bungler's / from the leather & duft / I long ago renounced / hither rush / hawklike / their claws / & dirty their noses").[51]

The rest of Brennan's oeuvre, as in *Poems 1913*, is a transplantation of and homage to the more formal *Symboliste* aesthetics; it is an oeuvre that came to haunt Australian poetry: he was the start of a chain of poets, including Judith Wright, John Shaw Nielsen, Gwen Harwood, A. D. Hope, James McAuley, and Kenneth Slessor, among others, who refracted a European-influenced literary modernism through the first half of Australia's twentieth century.[52] In the latter half of the century, the significance of these poets and their heritage came to be taught and studied first, and predominantly, at the University of Sydney. At the time of writing this essay, these poets were still being studied under the white sheet of Symbolism's ghost.[53]

or

Occasionally, "Musicopoematographoscope" toys with, or rather breaks the toy of, Mallarmé's "and/or" poetics. And this is where his poem becomes exciting. On the title poster page (see above), Brennan mocks Mallarmé with a punning Australian vernacular, using words like "Maisong", "Paree", and "Malahrrmay".[54] Here, Brennan also mocks himself and his imitative, parodic translation—his poetic dalliance, or liaison, with the French—bringing to mind Judith Butler's writings on drag: "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its

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[50] Christopher Brennan, "Musicopoematographoscope", *Prose-Verse-Poster-Algebraic-Symbolico-Riddle Musicopoematographoscope & Pocket Musicopoematographoscope* (Erskineville: Hale & Iremonger, 1981), 21.

[51] Brennan, "Musicopoematographoscope", 17.

[52] For an excellent study of the influence of the Symbolist movement on Australian poetry in particular, see John Hawke, *Australian Literature and the Symbolist Movement* (Wollongong: University of Wollongong Press, 2009).

[53] From the early 1990s until 2012, the University of Sydney dedicated an entire Honours English unit to the influence of French Symbolism on Australian poets.

[54] Brennan, "Musicopoematographoscope", 9.

contingency."[55] If we think of translation as drag—of the poet pretending to be another, and of how a translation imitates the language of another—it reveals the imitative structure of language itself: its ability to queer.
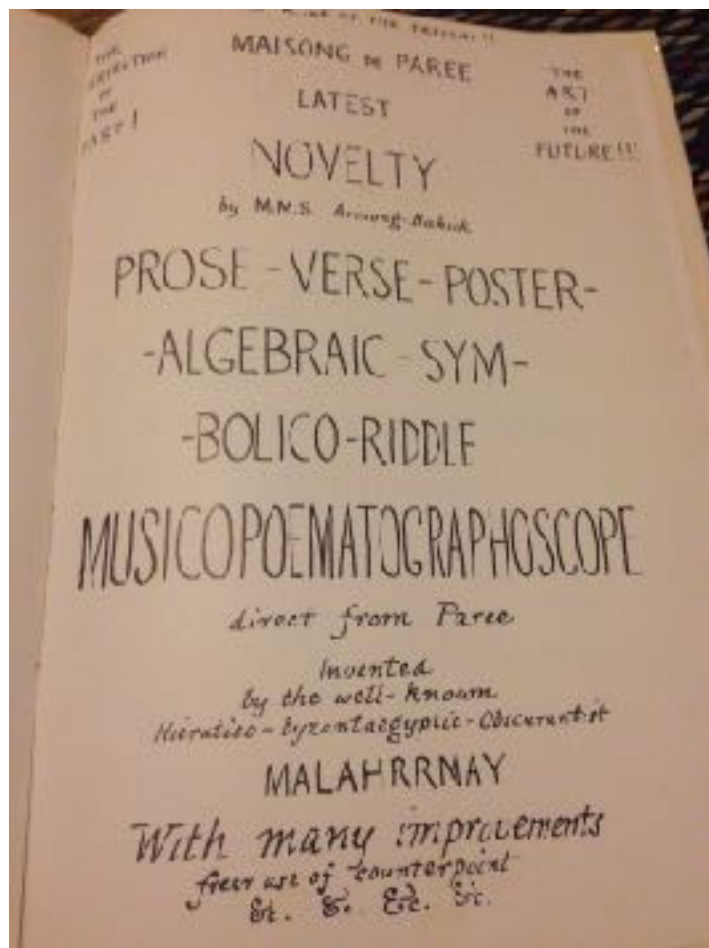
Fig. 3: Title page of "Musicopoematographoscope"

Are these instances of homophony a transnational echo or a wild colonial (mis)appropriation? Kate Fagan, in an essay on Chris Edwards (whose misappropriation of Mallarmé will be discussed next), describes Brennan's poem's "maverick flamboyance … its feral nature" as effecting "a kind of satirical distance from anxious Anglo-colonial readings that might relegate Australian literature to a second rung after transplanted European models", and as suggestive of "a deeper unease about the legitimacy of antipodean takes on cultural internationalism", citing John Hawke's

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[55] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 137.

Australian Literature and the Symbolist Movement, and placing Brennan at the *avant-garde* of this lineage:

> Hawke has argued persuasively that in the late nineteenth century "there was a stronger interest in Mallarmé's poetic philosophy in Australia than virtually anywhere else in the English-speaking world". Brennan's surrealistic description of Mallarmé as a "Hieratico-byzantaegyptic-Obscurantist" hints at a specialised reading of Mallarmé's centrality to the emergence of poetic Symbolism, while its maverick flamboyance—or perhaps its feral nature—suggests a deeper unease about the legitimacy of antipodean takes on cultural internationalism. There is a finely nuanced critique to unwrap here about late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial Australia on the cusp of modernism, and the larger-than-life or monstrous artistic objects generated over subsequent decades by that tension—including for example the poems of Ern Malley, and more perversely, the Jindyworobak Movement. For now, I simply want to propose that "innovation" in non-Indigenous Australian poetry is marked historically by strong international identifications and sporadic refusals, and to observe that the twentieth century manifestations of these dialogues are strikingly evident in the avant-garde (or post^n-avant-garde) alignments of Chris Edwards' poetry.[56]

Stephanie Guest, citing Walter Benjamin, describes Brennan's poem as both an "abundant flowering" of Mallarmé's eternal yet "ever elusive text", as well as an "abundant de-flowering".[57] Illicit, it is at once a version and an inversion (a "sporadic refusal"). One could say it's also about aversion, as diversion. Its deviation, or deviance, in any event, recalls the previously mentioned atomic law of the clinamen.[58]

Brennan's phrase on the title page, "freer use of counterpoint", is indicative of the swerve his poem takes from the original. It speaks to the interplay of the two texts and

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[56] Kate Fagan, "'A Fluke? [N]ever!": Reading Chris Edwards", *JASAL* 12.1 (2012): 4, http://www.nla.gov.au/ojs/index.php/jasal/article/view/2270.

[57] Stephanie Guest, "Nothing's Lost: Towards a Poetics of Transnational Unoriginality in Australian Poetry" (Honours thesis, Department of English, University of Sydney, 2013): 58.

[58] Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 532.

parodies Mallarmé's "musical score". Moreover, its multiple inferences reveal the underlying conceit and erotics at play: "counterpoint" comes from medieval Latin *contrapunctum*, which is a melody pricked or marked over the original melody. From punctum we obviously get "to prick", pricksongs too (music written, or noted, with dots or points), and I don't think I need to go much further. I'm sure that ears are pricked to all the counterpricking going on.

Another notable moment of linguistic intercourse comes in Brennan's final line:
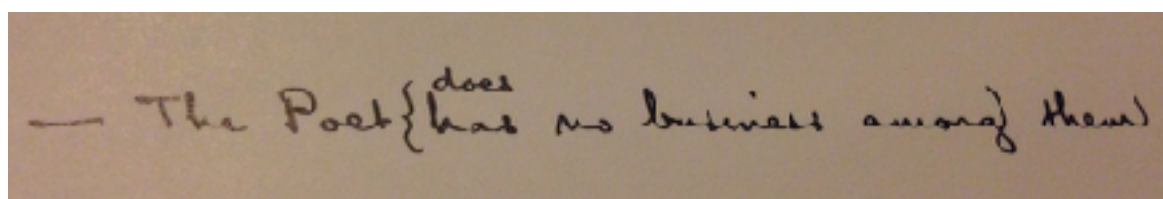
Fig. 4: Final line of "Musicopoematographoscrope"

On the page, the word "does" appears just above "has" and acts as an alternative way to read the line, allows for other meaning: "does" appears as a half-pun on Mallarmé's "Dés", and the English translation "dice", and speaks to the illicit dice-play involved between a poet, and their chancy, risky business with "them", their readers and critics. It says everything about Brennan's grievances in one allusive/illusive line, whether he was aware of this skewed homophone at the time or not.

While Brennan's tract may seem unnecessarily churlish in parts, I'd argue that there's a nascent "and/or" poetics—an early *or*-play—at work here in Australian poetry. There is certainly a hint of larrikinism, a deliberate maverick contrariness and queerness, evident in Brennan's process. We have to remember that Brennan was very quick to pen his parody of Mallarmé; it was penned the same year, 1897, that *Un Coup de dés* appeared in *Cosmopolis*. Despite his own and ongoing Mallarméan project (that of introducing Australian poetry at large to the more traditional forms and imagery of French *Symboliste* poetry), by simultaneously and urgently rolling the dice on "Musicopoematographoscope" (his spoof poem that upends the very same *Symboliste* vogue) Brennan ended up presenting two different options for Australian poetry just as Federation loomed in 1901, the year that established Australia officially as part of the

Commonwealth and a "successful" colonialist state. The former option, an arguably more colonial poetics, was adopted almost ubiquitously in twentieth-century Australian poetry, while the latter and alternative (and far more playfully experimental) is only more recently being explored.

Now, over a hundred years hence, Chris Edwards and John Tranter have both written homophonic mistranslations of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés*. Both were published in *Jacket* in 2006. Edwards came first and encouraged Tranter, according to Tranter writing about Tranter in the third person, to also finish and publish his mistranslation as a "friendly rival".[59] The next two subchapters will compare these two homophonic bedfellows and their "anti-versions" of *Un Coup de dés*.

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[59] Tranter, "Distant Voices" (Doctor of Creative Arts Thesis, School of Journalism and Creative Writing, University of Wollongong, 2009): 117, http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/3191/.

IV

Collage poet Chris Edwards, who knows all-too-well the connotations of that descriptor (the French verb *coller* means "to paste, stick, glue", while *collage* is French slang for an illicit sexual union[60]), took to *Un Coup de dés* with a "willy-nilly … mish-mash of approaches" (note the self-consciously silly and phallic double entendre); or, more technically, he mistranslated it with "a variety of transformational logics", including homophony, paranomasia, litotes, malapropism, mimicry, metonymy, and translation. Yet he sticks to many of Mallarmé's poetic principles:

> At the heart of things, at the heart of the poem, at the heart of the Idea with its double proposition, is division, according to Mallarmé: the gap, the fold, or, more famously, the Abyss … The unit of composition in *Un Coup de dés* is not the line or even the page, but the double-page spread, and the Abyss is physically embodied in the fold or gutter dead centre. It's a place the eye can't quite see into, full of stapling, stitching and gluing.[61]

aussi

Maintaining the visual form of Mallarmé's poem, Edwards' "A Fluke" is a clever and ludic mimicry that parodies Mallarmé's notion of *pure literature* at the same time as achieving a kind of pure "litter chewer", rustling and mucking about in the gutter of the double-page spread and in the gulf between itself and *Un Coup de dés*:

> Mallarmé's notorious difficulty, his untranslatability—figured, for example, in the abyss between the English translations I relied on for the sense of his poems and the mutant music I could hear in the French—inspired "A Fluke", my mistranslation of *Un Coup de dés*, which it only now occurs to me was an attempt

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[60] Marjorie Perloff, "Collage and Poetry", in *Marjorie Perloff*, 1998, http://marjorieperloff.com/essays/collage-poetry/.

[61] Chris Edwards, "Double Talk".

at pure literature, marred perhaps inevitably by its own impure thoughts. (One can only remain philosophical about it.)[62]

Edwards' philosophy of "impure thoughts" demonstrates, as implied already, a gay male's skin in the game, but also an abject revelry in the collapsing of signifier and signified. According to Julia Kristeva, the abject refers to the human reaction (such as horror, spasms, nausea) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object, between self and other. A corpse (traumatically reminding us of our own materiality) is a prime example for what causes such a reaction; other things, however, can draw the same reaction: blood, shit, sewage, even the skin that forms on the surface of warm milk.[63]

or

Incidentally—or just dentally—Derrida compares Mallarmé's method of writing, and the form it took, to the careful cutting up and reallocating of body parts: "Mallarmé knew that his 'operation' on the word was also the dissection of a corpse; of a decomposable body each part of which could be of use elsewhere". He then quotes Mallarmé from *Les Mots Anglais*[64]: "Related to the whole of nature and in this way coming closer to the organism that possesses life, the Word presents itself, in its vowels and its diphthongs, like a piece of flesh, and, in its consonants, like a skeletal structure difficult to dissect".[65] And this might be how Edwards sees the poem, as a body to dissect into its many parts, but also as an abject provocation.

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[62] Edwards, "Interview with Chris Edwards", ed. Michael Brennan, *Poetry International Web* (July 1, 2011): http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/cou_article/item/19012/Interview-with-Chris-Edwards/en.

[63] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, 1980, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1-3.

[64] David Brooks describes *Les Mot Anglais* as an "eccentric account of the strange correspondences and etymologies of English words", in Brooks, *The Sons of Clovis: Ern Malley, Adoré Floupette and a secret history of Australian Poetry* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011), 87.

[65] Derrida, "Mallarmé", 117.

aussi

Kristeva's notion of the "abject" is in direct contrast to Lacan's "object of desire", his "*objet petit a*". The *objet petit a* allows a subject to coordinate his or her desires, maintaining the symbolic order of meaning and intersubjectivity, whereas the abject "is radically excluded" and, as Kristeva writes, "draws me toward the place where meaning collapses". Our reaction to such abject material re-charges what is essentially a pre-lingual response in us: "as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live".[66] Edwards lifts the already dismembered body parts of Mallarmé's poem from the gutters of the past and re-enlivens them, dramatises them in new gutters, for new readers. His blatant gay erotic imagery, his abject subjectivity, is also designed to shock those readers expecting a "straight" translation, perhaps showing them what they have "thrust" aside.

Where the French of *Un Coup de dés* has:

> *cette blancheur rigide*
>
> *dérisoire*
>> *en opposition au ciel*
> *trop*
>> *pour ne pas marquer*
>>> *exigüment*
>>> *quiconque*
>
> *prince amer de l'écueil*
>
> *s'en coiffe comme de l'héroïque*
>> *irrésistible mais contenu*
>> *par sa petite raison virile*
>>> *en foudre*[67]

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[66] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2-3.

[67] Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, 136-137.

"A Fluke" reads, in Australian English:

this blank rigidity

derides

in opposition to the ceiling

tramp

porn-palmer

exegetical

cock-up

prince amid sewage

your hair-do may well be considered heroic

oh irresistible make-over

parsed by rational virility

fondler[68]

or

To quote Fagan: "In an exemplary queering of his own text, Edwards performs a drama of progenitorship by robbing 'A Fluke' of stable lines while reinstating its 'sameness' as a fair copy".[69] Note the quotation-marks around "sameness" because, of course, it's not a like-for-like French-English translation and rather a corpse brought back to life, a "prince amid sewage", an "exegetical / cock-up".

In Edwards' hands (fingers, or ears), Mallarmé's full title, *UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD*, is broken down, contorted and reassembled into, "A FLUKE? [N]EVER! NOBLE LIAR, BIO-HAZARD". The brackets around the "N" are to cover both meanings of *jamais* at once: "never" and "ever", also allowing for an echo of the "Never Never", that Australian settler version of the Abyss or void—the outback. Edwards

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[68] Edwards, "A Fluke", in *People of Earth: poems* (Sydney: Vagabond, 2011), 53.

[69] Fagan, "'A Fluke? [N]ever!': Reading Chris Edwards", 3.

explains his choice of title as "the remains of a quarrel … it reminded me of the quarrel that broke out in me between various possible mistranslations at every turn of phrase."[70]

The third wheel to this quarrel is Plato, his "old quarrel" between poetry and philosophy, and his "noble lie".[71] Edwards' "fluke", an unexpected piece of good luck, speaks to Mallarmé's prismatic subdivisions of the Idea (that a throw of the dice will never abolish chance), the "noble liar" to Edwards' misreadings, and "bio-hazard" of his misrenderings. As in Mallarmé, all of Edwards' fragments that fall around the title to form the poem are deduced from the flukes laid out in the title. A "fluke", incidentally, can also be a parasite, a flat fish, the triangular bits on an anchor, and anything resembling that shape, like barbs on a harpoon or the tail of a whale.

These connecting flukes are Mallarméan chains, but Edwards isn't creating knock-off, fake jewellery made of flukes (however much Mallarme's *La Dernière Mode* might have something to say about the connection between fashion and poetry). Edwards' chains are the stuff of chaos.

aussi

According to Edwards, in writing "A Fluke" he was guided mainly by what he calls in his "homophonically (mis)translated" preface, "the latent conductor unreasoning verisimilitude imposes on the text" (in Mallarmé's preface it's a *fil conducteur*, meaning "guiding thread"),[72] which alludes to (presciently, in Mallarmé's case) the strange attractors of string theory/chaos theory. Strange attractors make an interesting theory for mistranslation, as Edwards writes:

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[70] Edwards, "Double Talk".

[71] A fourth wheel might be William Butler Yeats: "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but out of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry" (in Yeats, *Mythologies* [London: Macmillan, 1924], 331).

[72] Edwards, "A Fluke", 39.

An attractor is the state into which a system will eventually settle. The black holes around which galaxies cluster are examples of attractors; cultural attractors include chiefs, tribes, states and anything that gives us identity, like religion, class and world view. Strange attractors are a special class. They live in phase space, a multidimensional imaginary space in which numbers can be turned into pictures. Fractal objects, they consist of infinite numbers of curves, surfaces or manifolds, and as their name suggests, they draw things toward them.[73]
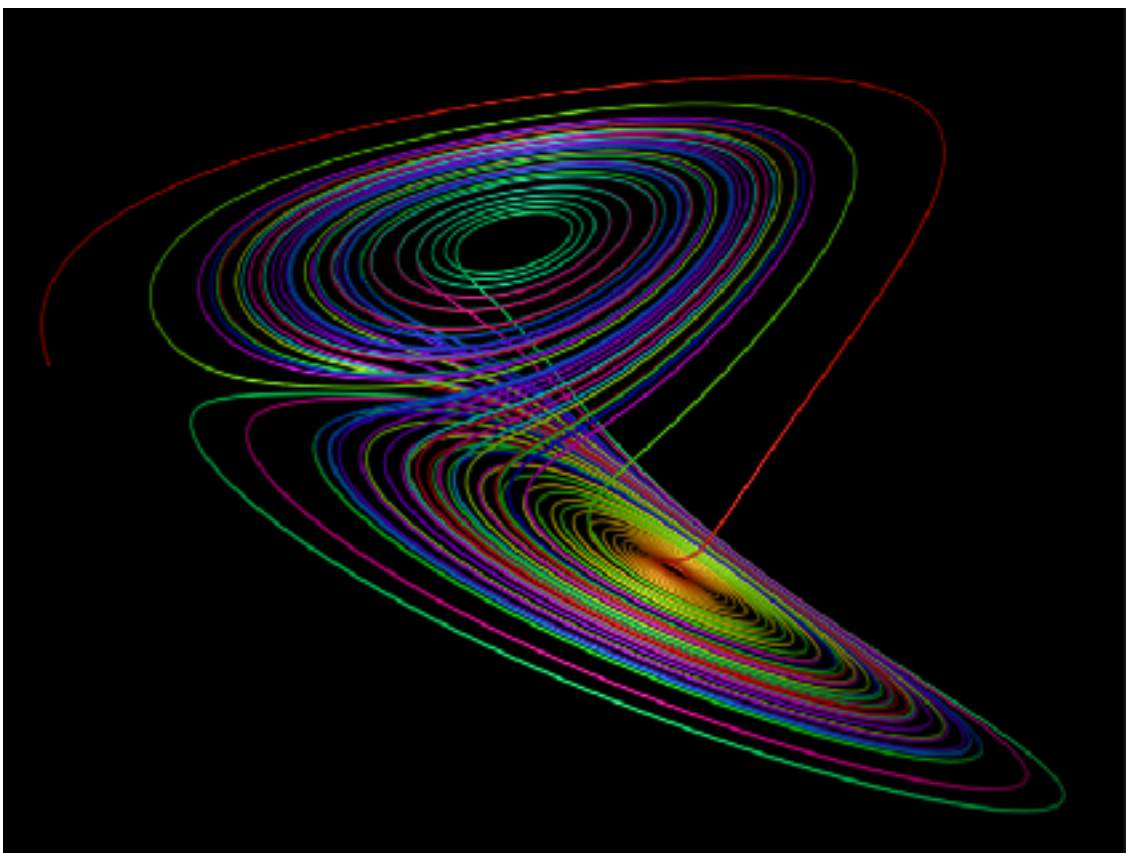
Fig. 5: Lorenz Attractor

So, here, mistranslation is a gathering together of multiple swerving objects, objects that become interchangeable (by dint of their correlations and correspondences), which brings to my mind (strangely) George Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, an erotic novel that is "really the story of an object", a composition that "should be called a 'poem'", as per Roland Barthes. The initial object of attraction in the narrative is the Eye, but then

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[73] Edwards, "Double Talk".

other globular objects become variously and erotically interchangeable, in both form and content: an egg (in French, egg is *oeuf* and eye is *oeil*), disc-shaped objects like a saucer of milk, then testicles. A secondary metaphorical chain concatenates from these, "made up of all the avatars of liquid: tears, milk in the cat's saucer-eye, the yolk of a soft-boiled egg, sperm and urine". At the climax of this erotic tale even the sun comes to stand in for the Eye as a "urinary liquefaction of the sky", drawing together the eye-egg-testicle metaphor.[74] Accumulated image-associations form an epic "cataract", in both senses of the word:

> by virtue of their metonymic freedom they endlessly exchange meanings and usages in such a way that breaking eggs in a bath tub, swallowing or peeling eggs (soft-boiled), cutting up or putting out an eye or using one in sex play, associating a saucer of milk with a cunt or a beam of light with a jet of urine, biting the bull's testicle like an egg or inserting it in the body—all these associations are at the same time identical and other. For the metaphor that varies them exhibits a controlled difference between them that the metonymy that interchanges them immediately sets about demolishing. The world becomes *blurred*; properties are no longer separate; spilling, sobbing, urinating, ejaculating form a *wavy* meaning, and the whole of *Story of the Eye* signifies in the manner of a vibration ...[75]

I hope this goes some way to explaining how a homophonic translation, or simply a poem, can work as a system of attraction, of wavering objects—where the poem is not *an* object but *many* similar objects oscillating; where these word-images, these image-associations, become interchangeable—a poem in which any one of these objects could equal another. Object = desire = fetish = dream. A similar compositional approach occurs (in terms of the imagery used) in Bataille's "Solar Anus" (which Edwards quotes from in his epigraph), but let's look back to the flukes of "A Fluke", in which Edwards' word-images vibrate alongside and askew from Mallarmé's. Here's a double-page spread (reduced in size) of these fractal objects (imagine the gutter down the middle):

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74 Roland Barthes, "The Metaphor of the Eye", essay in George Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, 1963, trans. Joachim Neugroschal (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), 119-127.

75 Barthes, "The Metaphor of the Eye", 125.

EXCEPTÉ
    à l'altitude
        PEUT-ÊTRE
          aussi loin qu'un endroit

               fusionne avec au delà

                   hors l'intérêt
                 quant à lui signalé
                      en général
              selon telle obliquité par telle déclivité
                       de feux

            vers
              ce doit être
                le Septentrion aussi Nord

                      UNE CONSTELLATION

              froide d'oubli et de désuétude
                  pas tant
               qu'elle n'énumère
            sur quelque surface vacante et supérieure
                 le heart successif
                     sidéralement
               d'un compte total en formation
veillant
      doutant
           roulant
               brilliant et méditant

                  avant de s'arrêter
              à quelque point dernier qui le sacre

              Toute Pensée émet Un Coup de dés

EXCEPT
    for the attitude
        MAYBE
          his aussie loins proved quaintly adroit
             once fused with the wrecked and disorderly

                  whore of the internet's
                 quantified signal
                     engendering
            saloon tales obliquities and declivities
                   on fire

            versus
              say *deadhead*
                less petrol oh Signor

                    UNCONSTITUTIONAL

             fraudulant doubler of desuetude
                  part ant
               queller of the numerous
            suckers of clogged surfaces vacant and superior
               each hurt succeeding
                   in mentioning sideways
              the constantly totalled formation
veiled
      doubting
           roly-poly
               brillianted emetic

                  I want to see Rita
              of the collapsible derrière oh sacred

            toupéed enemy little mate I guess you'll want the code word eh?[76]

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[76] Edwards, "A Fluke", 60-61.

We can read and misread many notions in Edwards' flukes here, but I want to concentrate on some of the more Australian nuggets in the language for a moment:

EXCEPTÉ
        à l'altitude
            PEUT-ÊTRE
                aussi loin qu'un endroit
                        fusionne avec au delà

EXCEPT
      for the attitude
           MAYBE
              his aussie loins proved quaintly adroit
                      once fused with the wrecked and disorderly

Edwards uses the more colloquial "maybe" instead of "perhaps", turns *altitude* into "attitude" and *aussi loin* into "aussie loins". Now, considering the literary meaning for loins (the region of the sexual organs regarded as the source of erotic or procreative power), we can read into this as saying that, besides the attitude (Mallarmé's hifalutin-ness), his literature (his sexual organ) hangs, much like the shape of the poetry on the page, a little to the right, as the Australian saying goes, and it was only right (as in, adroit, not politically to the right) once it had fused with the "errors and wrecks" caused by its intertextual relations with Edwards.

Further down the page, zooming in on the lines: "veiled / doubting / roly-poly / brillianted emetic // I want to see Rita of the collapsible derrière oh sacred"; Rita, here, and her strangely attractive derrière (perhaps a half-pun on Derrida), in causing this shiny vomit of a poem to emit from Edwards, surely come to respresent the promiscuity of the pun and its ability to collapse the sign and the signified … no?

To end the poem, Edwards mistranslates *Toute Pensée émet Un Coup de dés* ("All Thought emits a Throw of the Dice") into "toupéed enemy little mate I guess you'll want the code word eh?" Where Mallarmé rounds out his poem almost neatly with his openly enigmatic and existential poetic statement (on how each thought emits a ripple into the universe, affecting the course of history, perhaps), Edwards plays the parodist by presuming that the reader will want to find the code word in the final line of the poem, as if with a code word they might be able to solve the poem, as many have tried to with *Un Coup de dés*. It's a sly comment on how gnomic Mallarmé is (and how gnomic poetry

can come to seem to readers who seek singular or straight meanings in poetry and, by extension, in their being in the world). Edwards' conclusion is also a bizarrely prescient comment on the future gnomic leader of the free world, that "toupéed enemy" who may want the code word for nuclear weapons some time soon. After all, Australia's "little mate", when it comes to political and military ties (and, dare I say, expediency), has always been the President of the United States of America.

aussi

Fig. 6: Screenshot from the 1945 cartoon, *Caspar the Friendly Ghost*

I thought to suggest that Chris Edwards is like Casper, the friendly ghost, with a gentle abjection borne out of Bataille. But, considering his view that writing poetry is "play *space*-time" (my emphasis),[77] I'm beginning to think that Edwards' all-seeing Eye and disembodied voice are those of the Transformer, Unicron (quite literally a "Solar Anus") —a robot who can transform into a planet in the shape of a massive eye that can see into the Abyss of space, and with a quietly deep, futuristic voice attracting space junk and other gutter-dwellers, other abysmal life, so to speak, toward him, "a god of chaos who devours realities"[78]…

[77] Edwards, "Interview with Chris Edwards".

[78] "Unicron", *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unicron.
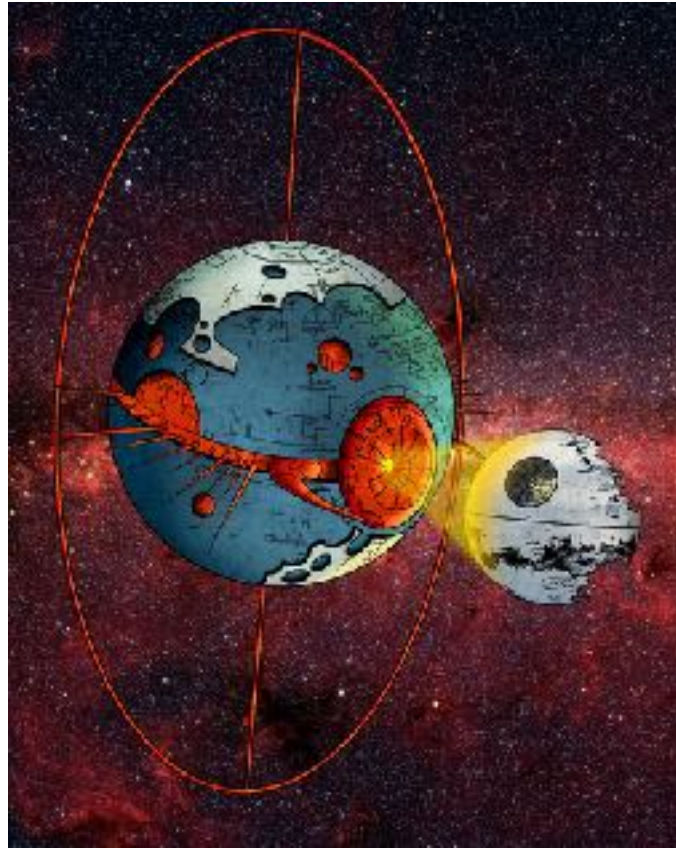
Fig. 7. Unicron Eats the Death Star[79]

or

… is he a unicorn?

or

Perhaps Edwards is taking a leaf (toking a life / talking a loaf / teaking a loft) from (with) James Joyce who, in his Cyclops episode of *Ulysses*, parodied through much rude punning the Apostles' Creed (statement of Christian belief dating from the fourth century; ostensibly drafted by the twelve apostles of Jesus):

> They believe in rod, the scourger almighty, creator of hell upon earth and in
> Jacky Tar, the son of a gun, who was conceived of unholy boast, born of the

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[79] See also: "Unicron transforming", *Youtube*, to hear his voice, see him transform and attract objects and others toward him: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG4GaPcLgOs.

179

fighting navy, suffered under rump and dozen, was scarified, flayed and curried, yelled like bloody hell, the third day he arose again from the bed, steered into haven, sitteth on his beamend till further orders whence he shall come to drudge for a living and be paid.[80]

aussi

etre un autre // Esprit // pour le jeter

as at the neither either // nor or // of the Spirit self-jettisoned

Edwards plays cleverly on a reader's proclivity to read sexual puns (and often of a particularly queer bent, so to speak) into the text. His deliberate paranomastic tactics of lapsus and misreading mean that words he has not mistranslated can just as easily be misread by the reader. Take the above fragment. To have the vagueness of "the Spirit" (not to mention the *self*) jettisoned is often Edwards' prerogative in his poems, but his queer and deliberate *in*appropriation of the high-minded language of Mallarmé, his sexualising of its content, his use of litotes (to downplay his intentions but emphasise play with another)—allowed this reader to see "Spirit self-jettisoned" as "Spirt self-jettisoned".

or

Maybe the last word on Edwards' mistranslation is the first word, as in Edwards' epigraph, from Bataille's "Solar Anus": "It is clear that the world is purely parodic—in other words, that each thing seen is the parody of another, or is the same thing in a deceptive form."[81]

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[80] James Joyce, *Ulysses: The 1922 Text* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2008), 315.

[81] Bataille epigraph, trans. Allan Stoekl, in Edwards, *A Fluke: A mistranslation of Stéphane Mallarmé's "Un Coup de dés..." with parallel French pretext* (Thirroul: Monogene, 2005), not paginated.

V

John Tranter's "Desmond's Coupé" is an anti-tract in the spirit of Brennan's "Musicopoematographoscope" (whose own anger he criticised, ironically) only the spirit is purple, far more *rimbaldien*[82] in Tranter's take-down of the comparably goody two-shoes Mallarmé. Regarding the development of Tranter's poetics, Fagan and Minter have argued that:

> By 1968 Tranter was navigating a chiasmic cultural parallax, attracted to both American metropoetic and post-Romantic French Symbolism. This contest defines the direction of his first three books—the final "crisis" of which is played out in *The Alphabet Murders*. Tranter's solution to history was an inverted, Orientalising dialectic, and its synthesis was in the seminal figure of Arthur Rimbaud.[83]

I would argue that Tranter is still navigating the same chiasmic cultural parallax. In his late work, including *Starlight* and *Heart Starter*, Tranter responds incessantly to canonised poems with constraint-based versions and anti-versions of his own, "an ambiguously postcolonial strategy"[84] to simultaneously uphold and upend European and American modern poetic traditions. *Starlight* in particular contains various recapitulations and decapitations of poems by Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Ashbery, Eliot, and Mallarmé, including "Desmond's Coupé". A self-reflexive and abject tirade toward the poetic urge to highfalutin-ness, Tranter's inversion of *Un Coup de dés* is an uncomplicatedly left-justified, jokey dream narrative that undercuts Mallarmé's

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[82] Standard French adjectival form of Rimbaud; the English being "Rimbaldian".

[83] For an excellent study of Tranter's dual modern and postmodern trajectory in Australian poetry since the 1960s, see Kate Fagan and Peter Minter, "Murdering Alphabets, Disorienting Romance: John Tranter and Postmodern Australian Poetics", *Jacket* 27 (April 2005): http://jacketmagazine.com/27/faga-mint.html.

[84] David McCooey, "Review Short: John Tranter's *Heart Starter*", *Cordite*, August 25, 2015, http://cordite.org.au/reviews/mccooey-tranter/.

inability to make a narrative decision; its punctuated Ashberyesque or Surrealist flow of ideas, speechiness and sound-association allows for the geriatric Desmond to stumble about and actually encounter other life forms (unlike the Master in *Un Coup de dés*), and for the speaker(s) of the poem to attack the conceits of Mallarmé's notion of the "pure work" (*oeuvre pure*). Despite its distance in form and syntax from Edwards' version, the poem's generative technique was the same for Tranter: it's largely a homophonic mistranslation utilising the same transformational, paranomastic techniques.

If we look for the full mistranslation of Mallarmé's title *UN COUP DE DÉS JAMAIS N'ABOLIRA LE HASARD*, embedded in the stanzas of Tranter's poem, we get (in non-capitals): "Desmond's coupé is full of jam but that won't abolish folly in Hansard",[85] which seems a deliberate nod to Edwards' "noble lie", and to any truth that an authority, political or otherwise, might pretend to wield—Hansard being the name for the verbatim transcripts of Parliamentary Debates in most Commonwealth countries.[86]

"Desmond's Coupé" is a "disrespectful pie", as Tranter states in his University of Wollongong doctoral thesis, "in the face" of not only Mallarmé, but of literary decorum and tradition, too.[87] Writing in the third person, ironically, and possibly as a parody of the split subject, he quotes himself describing his own mistranslation of *Un Coup de dés*:

> dealing with the work of an important poet like Mallarmé takes us into the realm
> of the "anxiety of influence", as Harold Bloom labelled it: the need to learn from

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[85] Tranter, *Starlight: 150 poems* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2010), 15-21.

[86] The word Hansard also arguably dates back to the records of the Hanseatic League, for Baltic trade.

[87] Tranter's doctoral thesis, "Distant Voices", contains a creative component called *Vocoder*—a collection of poems that make up the first three-quarters of his subsequently published collection *Starlight*—plus an exegetical component in which Tranter provides notes to all the poems in *Vocoder*, historical notes to all his published books of poetry, and an essay about dream-work and how his three main poetic influences (Rimbaud, John Ashbery and Ern Malley) have come to bear on his poetics. The exegesis is a fascinating self-portrait (Tranter writes in the third person about his work) and would be worth studying purely for the psychoanalytical aspects of how an author sees, or cannot see, certain aspects of his/her own work.

past masters without being overwhelmed by their mastery, and the need for any artist to clear the undergrowth of history to make room for her or his own new work. That uneasy mixture of respect and aggression colours my poem.[88]

But does Tranter suppose that his methods for dealing with his influences are entirely conscious and intentional? If so, he perhaps misunderstands Bloom who insists on the salience of misrecognition: in one of his seven ratios of misreading, he explains that any writer taking on the burden of tradition enacts an unconscious "swerving" or "misprision" so as to make it new and avoid the accumulating anxiety of past excellence. The "swerving" is the law of the clinamen here, again, but take "misprision" too, which Bloom adopts/adapts from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 87", an erotic poem that he rather reads as an allegory of any writer's relation to tradition: "'Misprision' for Shakespeare, as opposed to 'mistaking', implied not only a misunderstanding or misreading but tended also to be a punning word-play suggesting unjust imprisonment."[89]

While Bloom unfortunately overlooks (and elsewhere downplays) the erotic and its role in the affairs of influence (see my previous analysis on the "promiscuity of the pun" in Edwards), perhaps he has unconsciously lifted the idea of the linguistic swerve from a forebear of his own. In *The Burden of the Past on the English Poet*, W. Jackson Bate opens by quoting Samuel Johnson on the topic: "It is, indeed, always *dangerous* to be placed in a state of unavoidable comparison with excellence", and then unpacks the "original, rather ominous sense" of the word "dangerous": "it means 'having lost one's freedom', having become 'dominated' … subjected to the tyranny of something outside one's own control … A cognate is our word 'dungeon'".[90] There's no mention of Bate's danger or dungeon, but if Bloom has read Bate, he couldn't possibly have misread him, taking on some of his ideas and swerving unconciously from them … No, no room for misprision in Bloom … But back to Tranter's prison/prism.

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[88] Tranter, "Distant Voices", 118.

[89] Harold Bloom, preface to *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xiii.

[90] W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), 3.

Tranter's constant re-negotiation of his literary forebears, his choice to write versions and anti-versions, is his conscious act to avoid said danger, but how language filters through him—when playing with poetic techniques that "cede the initiative to words"—is a process that relies on the unconscious. No matter how much he signposts his intentions with notes and witty asides to his procedures (see his doctoral exegesis), the symbolic Other of language is beyond his control.[91] It's almost as if Tranter over-explains his homosocial dalliance with his male poetic forerunners to hide the anxiety of misprision taking place. In any event, "Desmond's Coupé", as artefact of the poetic process, and as abject experiment, certainly comes out swerving. Mallarmé's "*sauf … que le rencontre ou l'effleure une toque de minuit / et immobillise*",[92] for instance, becomes in Tranter's misprision (or Desmond's dungeon): "so far, so good, // where recounting the effluent is the talk of the minute / and it immobilises you".[93]

or

While offering a self-consciously aggressive critique of Mallarméan poetics, "Desmond's Coupé" is also extremely funny and jazzy. Punning on the French *du gouffre*, Tranter resurrects the clarinet player Jimmy Giuffre and then, in true ventriloquist mode, has him playing guitar, as though he's a member of Tranter's own covers band. Mallarmé might be a master of the enigma, but Tranter is a master of prosopopoeia, which is the speech of an imaginary person, or the conjuring of an imaginary other to speak to or through. Dozens of Aussie characters flit through Tranter's anti-tract, each allowing him to banter with the dead Mallarmé. On top of homophonic mistranslation, Tranter improvises a number of times, not so much with purple prose as with flourishes of word-sound association.

This is how and where Tranter appears and reappears like Disney's Cheshire Cat, distortedly reiterating and purposefully overdetermining Mallarmé's fragments of *pure*

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[91] Jacques Lacan repeatedly refers to "the unconscious" as "the discourse of the Other", where the Other is the symbolic structure of language. See Lacan, "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'", *Yale French Studies* 0.48 (1972): 45, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~DRBR2/lacan2.pdf.

[92] Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, 136-137.

[93] Tranter, *Starlight*, 18.

literature. From the French, *avance retombée d'un mal à dresser le vol / et couvrant les jaillissements / coupant au ras les bonds*, Tranter has, "makes him think he's dead and buried or makes him realise he's a bad dresser on a plane or in jail / but you don't dress for jail / and people don't wear a jacket on a plane anymore. / Raise the bonds." Later, Tranter manipulates the French, *le temps /   de souffleter /   bifurcées // un roc*, into "Time to snaffle / a bifurcated soufflé, / thinks the old bird."[94] "Desmond's Coupé" is rife with these mini car crashes of sound and sally. And at times, Tranter comes across like Australia's John Ashbery, in terms of being a medium for the vernacular, only Tranter has a more parodic bent, and a more scathing and cynical tone.

Fig. 8: Screenshot of Disney's Cheshire Cat from *Alice in Wonderland*

Tranter's inversion of *Un Coup de dés* is pure entertainment and pleasure at the expense of Mallarmé. His punning stunts are replete with downplaying Aussie vernacular, abjectivity, and naughty banter. His goofy narrative spoofs Mallarmé's notion of the "pure work" (*oeuvre pure*), or, as Edwards would say, "gives it the finger".[95]

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[94] Tranter, *Starlight*, 15-18.

[95] Edwards, "A Fluke", 51.

VI

There are dozens of mistranslated suitors that resonate for both Edwards and Tranter: *ombre* becomes "hombre"; *enfouie* becomes "phooey"; *sombre* becomes "sombrero"; *barbe soumise* becomes "barbequed sunset" in Edwards and "barbeque or so you surmise" in Tranter.

Interestingly, "*CE SERAIT*" ("it would be") is translated by both Edwards and Tranter into Pig-Spanish: "*QUE SERA*" for Edwards, and "*que sera, sera*" by Tranter. *Que sera sera* ("what will be, will be") is a pseudo-Spanish exclamation used to convey a fatalistic recognition that future events may be out of the speaker's control (… could *Un Coup de dés* be a long drawn-out analogy for this sentiment?). The phrase rose to popularity as the title of a pop song from 1956, which both Tranter and Edwards would undoubtedly have been subjected to in their formative years.

or

Who is haunting whom, here?

aussi

Reading these four poems side by side—*Un Coup de dés* and its "veiled inversions at a juncture whose supremacy's probably // celluloid / oh puerile shadow" (as "A Fluke" describes them)[96]—at some point they begin to merge into each other's shadows, and superimpose. In the line: "*…and gives it the finger // COMME ÇA*",[97] Edwards can be seen as translating Tranter. In the lines: "eating soup and getting vaguer / … he enters the aisle, bending his knee / like a bat flopping into the sea,"[98] Tranter could be transmuting

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[96] Edwards, "A Fluke", 48.

[97] Edwards, "A Fluke", 51.

[98] Tranter, *Starlight*, 17.

Brennan. In the lines: "the fair white page // whose candour / illumes / the mystic signs /// Abracadabra,"[99] Brennan might be commenting on Edwards. And, strangely enough, Mallarmé comes to translate all his Australian mistranslators in the lines: "An insinuation   simple / in the silence   enrolled with irony / or / the mystery / hurled / howled // in some nearby   whirlpool of hilarity and horror",[100] i.e. Australia.

<p style="text-align:center">aussi</p>

During the first drafts of this assay, a plagiarism scandal in Australian poetry was creating a whirlpool of hilarity and horror in which Freud was invoked: "Everywhere the signs that a poet has been here before me".[101] One poet in particular was accused of not citing his theft of other writers' lines, lines that included the Freud doozy above. His defense was that he was writing centos. In terms of plagiarism[102], Brennan, Edwards and Tranter's mistranslations recall pre-eighteenth-century attitudes toward originality, or what was called "creative imitation", whereby the imitation and strategic revision of prior authors was a kind of "filial rejection with respect". Moreover/move over, as Northrop Frye jokes in *Anatomy of Criticism*: "any serious study of literature soon shows that the real difference between the original and the imitative poet is simply that the former is more profoundly imitative".[103]

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[99] Brennan, "Musicopoematographoscope", 17.

[100] Mallarmé, *Collected Poems*, 134-135.

[101] For a brief summary of a recent plagiarism scandal in Australian poetry, see Toby Fitch, "Plagiarism scandal has revealed an ugly side of Australian poetry", *The Guardian*, September 23, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/23/australian-poetry-plagiarism.

[102] The term plagiarism comes from the Latin *plagiarius*, which literally means "kidnapper", and dates back to the first century AD, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The history of plagiarism is a long and complicated one and I don't intend to rewrite it. In the end, this study of mistranslation is conducted in the spirit of epistemological anarchism: not seeking to find the solution to issues such as plagiarism, but rather playfully misreading those issues so to uncover various absurdities that might generate new critical excursions through aesthetics.

[103] Northrop Frye et al., "Imitation", in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition*, eds. Greene et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 675-677.

or

Serio Ludere.

or

The imitative elements of a homophonic translation seem to allow, or even encourage, a kind of jokey vitriol, an ironic deadpanning in the translator. I tend to think of Brennan, Edwards and Tranter's inversions as three big jokes. They certainly adhere to Sigmund Freud's theories on jokes. He wrote of how jokes are an interaction between unconscious drives and conscious thoughts, and he believed that jokes let out forbidden thoughts and feelings that the conscious mind usually suppresses in deference to society.[104]

aussi

Anne Carson psychoanalyses a crisis in Hölderlin's translations, which were idiosyncratic, went through years of compulsive revision, "forcing the text from strange to more strange", and used increasingly violent choices for words as he closed in on his own madness:

> Maybe Hölderlin was pretending to be mad the whole time, I don't know. What
> fascinates me is to see his catastrophe, at whatever consciousness he chose it, as
> a method extracted from translation, a method organised by the rage against
> cliché. After all what else is one's own language but a gigantic cacophonous

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[104] Each of the mistranslations analysed in this essay could fit all three of Freud's categories for jokes:

> 1) The mimetic joke: which is a process involving two different representations of the body in our mind. For example, in the phrase "Their hearts are in the right place," the heart has two representations. One is anatomical while the other is metaphorical;
> 2) Tendentious jokes: which are jokes that have to contain lust, hostility or both; and
> 3) Non-tendentious jokes, where the joke applies "to one and the same act of ideation, two different ideational methods"

See Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, Vol. 6 of the Pelican Freud Library, 1905, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), 132-167.

cliché. Nothing has not been said before. The templates are set. Adam long ago named all the creatures. Reality is captured.[105]

When one approaches the blank white page (as Mallarmé did so warily), its empty surface is already filled with the whole history of writing up to that moment: "it is a compaction of all the clichés of representation" already extant in the writer's world, in a writer's head, in the probabilities of what can be done on this surface.[106]

The act of mistranslating, then—of writing over, through, or under a given text—is also a catastrophising, a method for disrupting or undercutting the originality of the original, but also a way of pointing to the inherent cliché in one's own language, and in poems of the canon, even knowingly mimetic templates such as *Un Coup de dés*.[107]

aussi

Both Mallarmé's and Derrida's writings have a particular penchant for mimesis—are self-conscious of it, and employ it. Mallarmé's prose poem, "Mimique", beginning with the word "silence" and ending with "reading", plays on the varying meanings of mime and mimesis so as to demonstrate the inherent repetition and mimicry in writing, thus offering us a way to read his own work. Roger Pearson's description of the poem makes this clear: it's "a written text describing a silent mime, a mime (as event) by a mime (Margueritte) who has written a visible (but to the reader of 'Mimique' invisible) text … about a performance which is an unwritten page of monologue, itself a silent

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[105] Anne Carson, *Nay Rather*, The Cahiers Series #21 (London: Sylph Editions, 2013), 18-20.

[106] This paragraph was paraphrased, switching "the painter" to "the writer", from Carson, *Nay Rather*, 20.

[107] According to Carson (*Nay Rather*, 4), "Cliché is a French borrowing, past participle of the verb *clicher*, a term from printing meaning 'to make a stereotype from a relief printing surface'. It has been assumed into English unchanged, partly because using French words makes English-speakers feel more intelligent and partly because the word has imitative origins (it is supposed to mimic the sound of the printer's die striking the metal) that make it untranslatable". The word cliché then is onomatopoeic, and a neologism for an untranslatable sound. In a sense, from its journey from action to word, you could call it a homophonic translation, or a mistranslation.

monologue in a dialogue with a soul (a reader of a dead wife) who doesn't speak."[108]
And if we substitute 'poet' or 'poem' for 'mime' in the previous description, we conjure
a definition of Mallarmé the translator of silence.

or

"Mimique" is another example of Mallarmé's "*or*-play". It even contains the word *or*
("gold"), along with other classic Mallarméan words that create chains of association
such as *fantôme* ("phantom", "shade", "shape"), *blanc* ("white", "blank", "space"), *hymen*
(both "membrane" and, archaically, "marriage"), which, along with the poem's
syntactical ambiguities, act out an imitation, not of a referent or a reality, but of the
notion of mimesis itself:

> here anticipating, there recalling, in the future, in the past, *under the false*
> *appearance of a present*. That is how the Mime operates, whose act is confined to
> a perpetual allusion without breaking the ice or the mirror: he thus sets up a
> medium, a pure medium, of fiction ... Surprise, accompanying the artifice of a
> notation of sentiments by unproffered sentences ...

> *ici devançant, là remémorant, au futur, au passé,* sous une apparence fausse de
> présent*. Tel opère le Mime, dont le jeu se borne à une allusion perpétuelle sans
> briser la glace: il installe, ainsi, un milieu, pur, de fiction ... Surprise, accompagnant
> l'artifice d'une notation de sentiments par phrases point profèrées ...[109]*

aussi

In "The Double Session, or Mallarmé's Miming of Mimesis" (*La double séance*), Derrida
"executes a kind of '*pas de deux*'—both a dance of duplicity and an erasure of binality—

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[108] Roger Pearson, *Mallarmé and Circumstance: The Translation of Silence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 65-66.

[109] Mallarmé, "Mimique", in the "Translator's Introduction" to *Dissemination*, 1972, by Derrida, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), xx-xxii.

with the history of a certain interpretation of *mimesis*".[110] What is initially striking about "The Double Session" is the suggestive typographic spacing. It takes Mallarmé's prose poem "Mimique" and inserts it into an L-shaped quotation from Plato's *Philebus* (which is concerned with the nature of thinking and art); it has quotations in boxes from *Un Coup de dés* and *Le Livre*; it reproduces Mallarmé's handwriting at one point; and the pages are often loaded with footnotes. The reader's attention is clearly being directed to the syntactical function of spacing in the act of reading. Barbara Johnson, Derrida's translator, writes:

> Through such supplementary syntactical effects, Derrida duplicates and
> analyses the ways in which Mallarmé's texts mime their own articulation,
> include their own blank spaces among their referents, and deploy themselves
> consistently with one textual fold too many or too few to be accounted for by a
> reading that would seek only the text's "message" or "meaning". By thus making
> explicit the role of the materiality of space within the act of understanding,
> Mallarmé—and Derrida—demonstrate the untenability of the logocentric
> distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, between ideality and
> materiality.[111]

Derrida argues that mime—and by implication, writing—doesn't imitate or copy some prior phenomena, idea, or figure, but constitutes the phantasm of the original in and through the mime:

> He represents nothing, imitates nothing, does not have to conform to any prior
> referent with the aim of achieving adequation or verisimilitude … We are faced
> then with mimicry imitating nothing: faced, so to speak, with the double … that
> nothing anticipates, nothing at least, that is not itself already double. There is no
> simple reference … this speculum reflects no reality: it produces mere "reality-
> effects" … in this speculum with no reality, in this mirror of a mirror, a difference
> or dyad does exist, since there are mimes and phantoms. But it is a difference

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[110] Barbara Johnson, "Translator's Introduction" to *Dissemination*, xxvii.

[111] Johnson, "Translator's Introduction", xxviii-xxix.

without reference, or rather reference without a referent, without any first or last unit, a ghost that is the phantom of no flesh.[112]

or

The ante-simulacrum, the pre-copy of a copy.

aussi

Throughout "The Double Session" Derrida puns on Plato's *antre* ("cave") and Mallarmé's *entre* ("between"). What he is getting at is a characterisation of the "space of writing"—in which writing is not the revelation of truth but an "event" ("hymen, crime, suicide, spasm") where "the simulacrum is a [perpetual] transgression", and where—to continue the sexual metaphor—binaries such as desire and presence, void and fulfillment, become indistinguishable, collapsed, folded over/into one another. The page, the folded tissue or veil of the hymen, is transgressed, but it's "fiction": "What takes place is only the *entre* (between), the place, the spacing, which is nothing …" Endless mirrors, a deadlock of meaning, where "nothing happens", becoming suspense: "Hymen in perpetual motion: one can't get out of Mallarmé's antre as one can out of Plato's cave. Never min(e)d [*mine de rien*]".[113]

or

Eternal return.

or

In returning to Derrida's suggestive typography, where "Mimique" is inserted into Plato's cave full of shadows, and where a play of representation seems endless, one

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[112] Derrida, "The Double Session", in *Dissemination*, 206.

[113] In French, *mine de rien* means, in its colloquial sense, "as though it were of no importance"; but literally it can mean "a mine full of nothing" (in Derrida, "The Double Session", 208-216).

doesn't have to think of this concept in Nietzschean terms, as if "some day or night a demon [might] steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more ...'"[114] The inability of a text, of literature, of genre, to escape its own terms, and to escape the play of representation, can be more productive than that. Mallarmé is more productive than that. And so is Edwards, especially. For instance, is not the gutter to Mallarmé what the cave is to Plato, just in a new configuration? And is not the gutter to Edwards—in which the gutter exists literally in the work but also figuratively between his work and Mallarmé's—a cave within a cave, a cave outside a cave, and a cave between a cave, in which a new dimension is breached?

or

Existing *entre* the *antre*, Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés* tears the page, while, *entre* the *autre antre*, Edwards' "A Fluke" tears the shadow of the page. Edwards' homo-erotic imagery and metaphors in his doubling over of Mallarmé's text make "A Fluke" a literal inversion, meanwhile tearing heterosexual literature a new one, so to speak.

aussi

Derrida's writings are useful in explaining how a text, how literature, is always meta. In many of his essays, but particularly in "The Law of Genre" (*genre* in French also means "gender"), Derrida shows how language is always structured from its opposite, its other. Through two important rhetorical tropes, *chiasmas* (repeated inversion/reversal of words) and *catachresis* (taking a metaphor to extremes), he explores the relationship between *citation* and *récit* (re-citation)—or language versus speech—and how such binaries, when examined extensively, cannot hold up over multiple iterations. He makes the argument that any category that arises (say, a poem, or a visual poem) seems to come from within itself, but also from outside. It comes from both outside and inside, hence Derrida's imagistic use of invagination and (en)folding.[115]

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[114] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 1887, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 341.

[115] Derrida, "The Law of Genre", trans. Avital Ronell, *Glyph: Textual Studies* 7 (1980): 202-232.
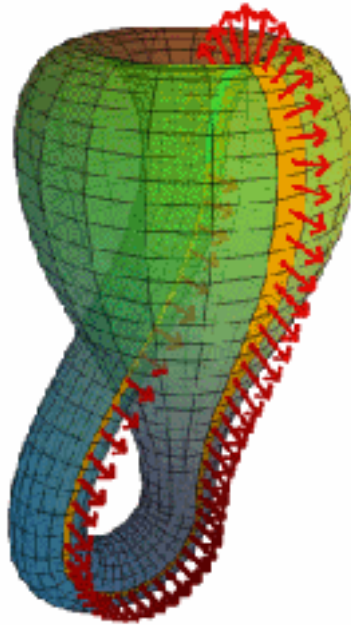
or

Fig. 9: Klein Bottle[116]

aussi

Derrida attempts in *Of Grammatology* (his science of writing) to invert the assumption that writing represents speech. He explains that, in the "play of representation", we don't know which is the chicken and which the egg, because if writing is the representor—the mirror—it thereby reflects speech and things, distorting and perverting them. It splits what it represents and offers up a trace, a *différance*, a double, a supplement, a spectre (all key Derridean terms). Writing is …

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[116] The Klein bottle is an example of a non-orientable surface; it's a two-dimensional manifold against which a system for determining a normal vector cannot be consistently defined. It's a one-sided surface which, if traveled upon, could be followed back to the point of origin while flipping the traveller upside down. Another related non-orientable object is the Möbius strip. Whereas a Möbius strip is a surface with boundary, a Klein bottle has no boundary (conversely, a sphere is an orientable surface with no boundary). The Klein bottle was first described in 1882 by German mathematician Felix Klein. Incidentally, it may have originally been named the Kleinsche Fläche ("Klein surface") but was then misinterpreted as Kleinsche Flasche ("Klein bottle"), which ultimately led to the adoption of its current term. See Francis Bonahon, *Low-Dimensional Geometry: from Euclidean Surfaces to Hyperbolic Knots* (Providence: American Mathematical Society, 2009), 95. For active gif, see: https://plus.maths.org/content/os/issue26/features/mathart/kleinBottle_anim.

A dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and the reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically. In this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of the speculation becomes a difference. What can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three.[117]
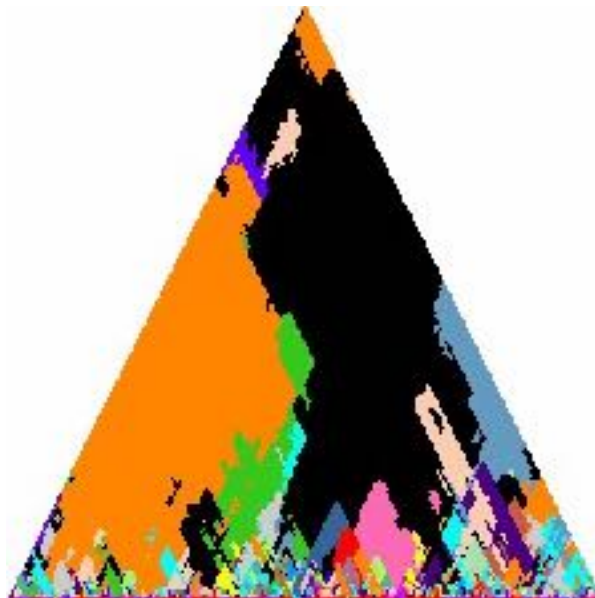
Fig. 10: "Timescape" of Chopin's Mazurka Op. 68 No. 3[118]

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[117] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1967, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 36-37.

[118] This colorful triangle might look like abstract art, but it's actually a visual representation of the similarities between different recordings of the same piece of music. It's a "timescape". The horizontal axis represents time, and the colours show how similar the recording being analysed is to other specific recordings. What is being measured is the relative duration of each note, or the artist's unique rubato. The image is a timescape for Arthur Rubinstein's 1939 recording Chopin's Mazurka Op. 68 No. 3. See: *CHARM: AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music*, http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/projects/p2_3_2.html.

In other words, we can't escape on any level how writing is a play of representation, how writing is always already illicit play, our "nefarious complicity" with "meaning". What we think are truths are "in fact" already multi-face(te)d. Our attempts at "meaning" are reductive. What we try to reduce to a singularity is already three-dimensional. Truth in writing is a chimera, yet traces of truth are there—via the "living presence" of speech, as Derrida calls it, through which "the signifier and the signified seem to unite".[119] Like the television, or film, or the phone—writing is a technology that reproduces ghosts. Truth is unreproducible > Writing is forever not > Righting feverish naughts > Writhing in forgery knots. Yet in the speech-y nonsense of punning, truth forms.

aussi

According to Gelett Burgess, "Nonsense is the fourth dimension of literature". This nonsense-mining fourth dimension is where the plays on words of Edwards' "A Fluke" and Tranter's "Desmond's Coupé" begin. Their poems offer "Surprise, accompanying the artifice of a notation" (from "Mimique", above). They foreground mimesis: we already know when we start to read that the phantasm of the original, the ante-simulacrum, is Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés*. Homophonic translation is like a feedback loop gone loopy, glitchy. Extra mirrors and reflecting pools reflect back distorted or disturbed magnifications—which whirl/whorl us into a fifth dimension, where representation equals re*prescient*ation—more *multi-nefarious* than before—and where "truth" and "meaning" become even more material, become "literal" again, not only space junk but the filaments in space too, whether we choose to see them or not. Some might need a Hubble telescope. It's the inverse of Mallarmé's white page. Edwards' and Tranter's inversions agitate and blink in black pools of the sky.

or

According to Edwards, paraphrasing Robert Duncan, a significant forebear of his:

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[119] Derrida, *Positions*, 1972, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 22.

The poem ... is "multiphasic", "polyvalent", space enmeshed in time, duration embedded in place (whether page or auditorium). As its recipients, we experience "the concords and contrasts in chronological sequence, as in a jigsaw puzzle [sic]," but Duncan also asks his readers (and listeners, presumably) to bear in mind "the time of the whole," in which "each part . . . is conceived as a member of every other part, having, as in a mobile, an interchange of roles".[120]

From there/here—with the poem vibrating above the Abyss as mobile, as constellation—it's up to us where we take our "play space-time", our imaginations. As Mallarmé puts it, "it is up to the poet, roused by a dare, to translate!"[121]

or

Do we need a new definition for translation? Attempting to offer a global classification of translation's linguistic aspects, Roman Jakobson distinguishes three kinds:

1. intralingual translation, or paraphrase;
2. interlingual translation, or translation in the most common sense;
3. intersemiotic translation, in which, for example, verbal signs are reencoded in nonverbal sign systems.[122]

Yet each of these classifications presumes the existence of one language and of one translation in the literal sense, that is, that one language can be seemlessly transferred into another—that, as Derrida puts it, "each linguistic system has integrity".[123]

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[120] Edwards, "Interview with Chris Edwards".

[121] Mallarmé, "Mimique", 175.

[122] Patrick Mahony, "Roundtable on Translation", in Derrida, *The Ear of the Other*, 1982, trans. Christie McDonald (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 94-95.

[123] Derrida, "Roundtable on Translation", in *The Ear of the Other*, 100.

aussi

If we're going to categorise translation, then, we might also turn to Australian poet and critic Peter Porter for how *not* to cordon things off. In "Saving from the Wreck", his essay on translation, he plays the school teacher, helpfully laying out seven categories:

1. *Uncompromising Scholarly*;
2. *Aesthetic Scholarly*;
3. *Recreative Scholarly*;
4. *Exhuberant Scholarly or Over the Top!*;
5. *Literal*;
6. *Imitation*; and,
7. *Ecumenical Slovenly*.[124]

Of almost all these categories Porter is scathing, in terms of what makes for a "successful" translation and not a shipwreck, exclaiming: "I think we simply have to admit that much of what passes for translation today is just organised dissemination of misinformation."[125] While Porter acknowledges overlaps in the types, he only mentions homophonic translation once: "More bewildering is Louis Zukofsky's aim in translating Catullus of finding English words which are homophones—or nearly so—while still being approximate translations of the Latin", and lumps this mode accordingly into *Uncompromising Scholarly*.[126] Of course, it wasn't simply Louis Zukofsky's work, but his wife Celia's too. Porter seems to overlook this gendered fact in much the same way he ignores other forms of translation, while narrowing the parameters of translation to what is sometimes and elsewhere referred to, in terms of a seemless semantic translation, as "transparent literalism".

Maria Tymoczko writes of the prevalence of this kind of translation, historically: "The history of Western European translation privileges an implicit literalism that has been

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[124] Peter Porter, "Saving from the Wreck", in *Saving from the Wreck* (Nottingham: Trent, 2001), 37-47.

[125] Porter, "Saving from the Wreck", 47.

[126] Porter, "Saving from the Wreck", 41.

used to disseminate the empires of religion, secular rule, and commerce throughout the last five hundred years."[127]

Despite Porter's conservative critique, that falls in line with classical tropes, attempting to uphold the canon rather than recognising alternatives that twentieth and twenty-first century poetics have developed, he manages to concoct (within his categories) a couple of excellent descriptions that could also be applied to a category that I've been calling, up until now, "mistranslation", of which homophonic translation would be one fraction. On damning the process of "Imitation" (another fraction of mistranslation)—of writing versions like those of Robert Lowell, for instance—he writes: "The basic rule seems to be that the translator finds in a finished work of art the bones of one of his own. He is struck by a form of pre-echo".[128]

<div align="center">**or**</div>

What if the aim of a translation *is* the "dissemination of misinformation"? or to illuminate—or even set fire to—pre-echoes? Homophonic translation is, after all, part-rendering and part-rubbishing of a forebear's work. And, in any event, writing always already peddles in the symbolic Other that is language, as per Lacan. Results have had to pass through the unconscious. Writing is always already a "translation"—of thought, or of internal monologue. A *mis*translation, through its word-play techniques, its use of *latent* forms of language such as the pun, brings some of the unconscious elements to the surface, makes them "present", an event. Let's not forget, here, Mallarmé's *fil conducteur* and Edwards' "the latent conductor unreasoning verisimilitude imposes on the text". We could add to this Walter Redfern's "Puns are a latent resource of language". Disseminated throughout a poem, puns are "unearthed" by the poet during the ludic process of writing; puns "illuminate the nature of language" and make the reader a participant in the unearthing—an event that encourages collaboration.[129] On quoting Roland Barthes and his pleasure over puns, Redfern, ever the archivist, writes:

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[127] Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007), 8.

[128] Porter, "Saving from the Wreck", 45.

[129] Walter Redfern, *Puns: Second Edition* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), 11.

Experimental psychologists have shown quantifiably what most people know instinctively and by experience: that it is authoritarian personalities who most dislike ambiguity. Hence the double meaning practised in all forms of underground literature. However, as well as pointing outwards in this way, wordplay always points inwards and refers to the duplicity of language itself. This is clearly dangerous territory. The *quiproquo*, one of the multifarious forms of punning, can extend to a whole situation: a misreading as well as an alternative reading superimposed on reality.[130]

or

"… the unquestionable charm of the incorrect line".[131]

aussi

Redfern's description of wordplay doubles as a felicitous description for the methodology behind mistranslation and homophony in poetry. An overly self-conscious psychoanalytic version of this methodology—a *quiproquo* misreading of sorts—can also be found in Freud's "questionable" *re*-membering of "Signorelli", an Italian artist's name he forgot while on a trip to Europe's so-called "subaltern", the Balkans. For Freud, the pun is a psychic release-valve in which humour alleviates the stress of repressing unpleasant truths.

He initially thought the painter's name was either "Botticelli" or "Boltraffio". That he couldn't remember the name, Freud claims, meant that he was suppressing a disturbing memory (a former patient who suicided). Freud's unconscious had also attached to the memory a sexual content, which concealed itself through forgetting the name: "He had formed an unconscious association between the Italian painters and the Bosnians'

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[130] Redfern, *Puns: Second Edition*, 12.

[131] Mallarmé, *Divagations*, 201, my translation as opposed to Johnson's.

valuing of sexual enjoyment over life".[132] Yet Freud, as he often does, reassembles his own "unconscious" processing of language remarkably well, often writing about these instances many years later and explaining the way puns work in his own repressed sexual desires—in this case, for the "pathological, anal, 'archaic', and in need of Oedipalization" Balkan other. He makes a connection between *Signorelli* and *Herzegovina* via *Signor* and *Herr*, both meaning "Sir". *Trafoi*, apparently the location he received news of the suicide, is linked to *Boltraffio*, while *Bosnia* was where the conversation took place, and *Botticelli*, a logical final step:
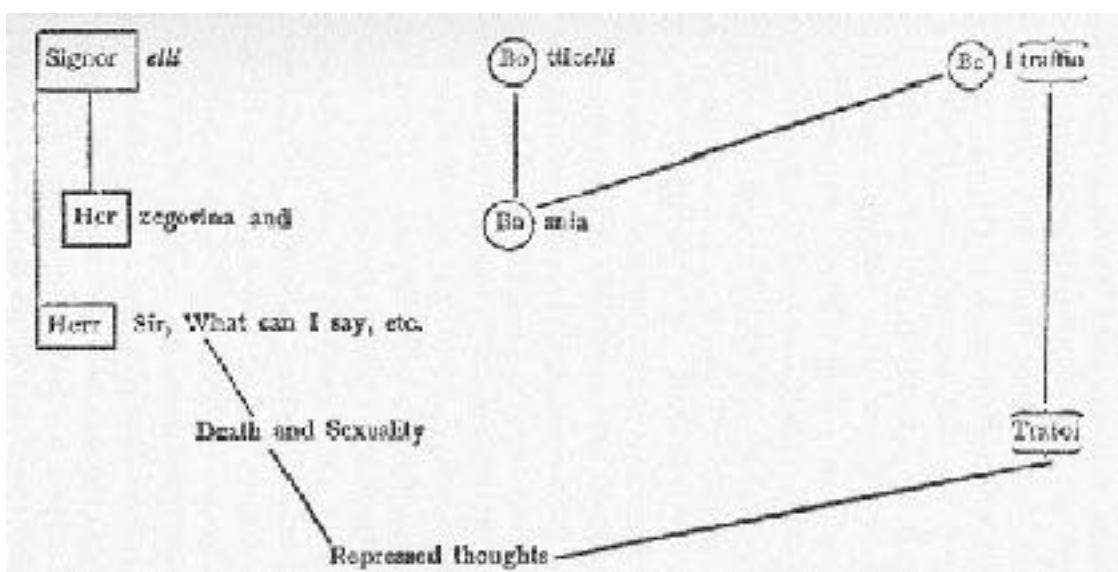

Fig. 11: Freud's Chemistry of Words

Yet Freud, in his analysis, also forgot to include the fact that he'd remembered seeing a picture of the painter Signorelli himself, found in the lower left corner of one of the painter's frescoes. The picture, a kind of signature, was therefore a third substitute to the forgotten name Signorelli. The "signature" can be interpreted as a reference to the Latin verb *signare* and this word, instead of Freud's *signore*, then leads us back to a simple analysis of the Signorelli parapraxis.[133] As would Freud's own name, *Sig*mund.

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[132] Dušan I. Bjelić, "Balkan Geography and the De-Orientalization of Freud", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 29.1 (2011): 36.

[133] "Signorelli parapraxis", *Wikipedia*, which cites Huub Engels, *Emil Kraepelins Traumsprache 1908-1926* (2006): 66-69, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signorelli_parapraxis. This is the best reference I could find.

The Bosnia-Herzegovina associations (*Bo* and *Herr*), that Freud himself introduced to bridge the gap between two failures of memory, are no longer necessary. As conscious as Freud is of his mind's movement through language, there are still slips he can't keep track of, voids he can't fill, proving by default his own hypothesis—that the unconscious thrives on the unreliably interchangeable structures of language. For Freud, the pun is also a subversive device whose tidiness enhances the illusion of self-mastery. So even when we don't believe a word he says, at least we can witness the stunning leaps, laps, lapses and lapsus in Freud's imaginative written accounts.[134]

aussi

The *quiproquo* wordplay methodology has its echo in Gregory Ulmer's coinage, the "puncept". In an anthology called *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, Ulmer illuminates the puncept at play in both Derrida's and Lacan's oeuvres, a Mallarméan/malleable use of the pun, shape-shifting across and shaping their ideas.[135] For a couple of *pat* instances that *tap* into this idea I'm trying to teethe/tease out, Lacan interchanges terms such as *dires* (sayings) and *désir* (desire), anagrams of each other, while Derrida champions the punning stunts in *Finnegans Wake* (read ahead for Derrida's *quiproquo* reading of Joyce via the Tower of Babel myth). At its core, the puncept is a methodology that "allows language to say what it knows, which allows the unconscious to show itself in the play of language".[136]

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[134] The "Signorelli" account first appears in 1901 in Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Vol. 5 of the Pelican Freud Library, trans. Alan Tyson, 1960 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 38-45.

[135] A separate though no less important example of punning that can shape and shift an oeuvre is embodied in one of Marcel Duchamp's pseudonyms, Rrose Sélavy. The name is a pun on the French phrase *Eros*, *c'est la vie*, which translates to English as "Eros, that's life". Duchamp signed written works with the name, and his cross-dressing alter ego allowed him to collaborate with Man Ray on a series of photographs. The pseudonym appeared in subsequent projects by other artists and writers, including in a collection of aphorisms, puns, and spoonerisms by the poet Robert Desnos.

[136] Gregory Ulmer, "The Puncept in Grammatology", in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, ed. Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 171-175.

Another example is evident in Lacan's psychoanalytic concept of *jouissance* (bliss). Generally left untranslated to include the meaning of sexual orgasm, a *jouissance* drives the subject (similar to Freud's *the death drive*) to repeatedly attempt to transgress the prohibitions, or err against the law, imposed on his/her enjoyment—to go beyond the pleasure principle. But going beyond is also painful, and akin to Bataille's erotic philosophy, particularly as he refers to anguish ("when the bounds of the possible are over-reached, a recoil is inevitable"[137]), and as epitomised, here, in Lacan's mention (or "di-mention", an anglo-version of Derrida's *dit-mension*—another dimension opened up between the lines by "said" punning): "Who does not know from experience that it is possible not to want to ejaculate? Who does not know from experience knowing the recoil imposed on everyone, in so far as it involves terrible promises, by the approach of *jouissance* as such. Who does not know that one may not wish to think?"[138]

This last question places *jouissance* outside/beyond the Other (the Other being Lacan's definition of the unconscious, of language as symbolic structure), as Ulmer writes: "*Jouissance* refers, then, to a fourth sense, the four senses being sense, non-sense, common sense, and "*jouis*-sense"." The fifth sense (*jouis-sens* in French), "carries the insistence of desire in the chain of signifiers, productive of homonyms and puns".[139] This is the fifth dimension that homophonic translation flirts with, as di-mentioned earlier.

aussi

Mallarmé fondles the puncept in his *Crise de vers*, the crisis he also called a "liberation". He wrote of the "double state of speech" (or the "double state of the word" in most translations) and its place in the "the pure work" / "the book of verse" / "the Book of Books":

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[137] Bataille, *Eroticism*, 1962, trans. Mary Dalwood (London: Marion Boyars, 1987), 87.

[138] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Conceptions of Psychoanalysis*, 1973, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth, 1977), 234-235.

[139] Ulmer, "The Puncept in Grammatology", 175.

An order innate to the book of verse exists inherently or everywhere, eliminating chance; it's also necessary, to eliminate the author: now, any subject is fated to imply, among the fragments brought together, a strange certainty about its appropriate place in the volume. It is susceptible to this because any cry possesses an echo—motifs of the same type balance each other, stabilizing each other at a distance, and neither the sublime incoherence of a romantic page, nor the artificial unity that adds up to a block-book, can provide it.[140]

In other words, "the book" is imaginary, unconscious, the Other: "Everything becomes suspense, a fragmentary disposition with alternations and oppositions, all working toward the total rhythm of the white spaces, which would be the poem silenced; but it is translated to some extent by each pendant. I want to consider it an instinct …"[141]

A pendant is an artistic composition intended to match or complement another. Given its meaning of a match or parallel, the pendant is also the pun. And wordplay *is* instinctive, requiring the poet to cede to their unconscious or disappear and, as Mallarmé would have it (and as noted a number of times already), "cede the initiative to words, set in motion by the clash of their inequalities". In homophonic translation, the poet can also *seed* the initiative to words, set in *com*motion by the clash of their *e*qualities.[142]

or

Is mistranslation any different to "translation", or to "writing"? There seem to be too many issues with the word "translation" itself for it to hold. Do we need new categories

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[140] Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse", 208.

[141] Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse", 209.

[142] Incidentally, regarding puns: John Pollack, a former Clinton speechwriter and author of the book *The Pun Also Rises*, suggests that puns generally fell out of favour during the Enlightenment, when the form's reliance on imprecision and silliness was out of kilter with the prevailing spirit of sophistication and rational inquiry. See John Pollack, *The Pun Also Rises: How the Humble Pun Revolutionized Language, Changed History, and Made Wordplay More than Some Antics* (New York: Gotham, 2012).

to add to those above, do we need other words for translation, or is the word translation simply splitting itself the way language does?[143]

As outlined at the beginning of this assay, Mallarmé proposes "Transposition; Structure, another", a notion that allows words, "through the clash of their inequalities", to "light each other up through reciprocal reflections", and which "gives you the surprise of never having heard that fragment of ordinary eloquence before … bathed in a brand new atmosphere".[144] Transposition, in Rasula and McCaffery, "is not a simple transit but a dichotomous zone of interaction"—interaction between languages, between aurality and visuality, between the imperfections of signs.[145]

or

To cite Mallarmé's *Crise de vers* again, this time at greater length:

> Languages imperfect insofar as they are many; the absolute one is lacking: thought considered as writing without accessories, not even whispers, still *stills* immortal speech; the diversity, on earth, of idioms prevents anyone from proferring words that would otherwise be, when made uniquely, the material truth. This prohibition is explicitly devastating, in Nature (one bumps up against it with a smile), where nothing leads one to take oneself for God; but, at times, turned toward aesthetics, my own sense regrets that discourse fails to express

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[143] While I'm simultaneously deconstructing and reconstructing dichotomies of translation, I might as well construct a few separate categories for "mistranslation", or "versions":

1. Re-version — a re-membering of a poem, post-Orphic coming back together.
2. Subversion — an undermining, a re-fragmentation, a return to the Underworld.
3. Aversion — a version to rid one's self of prior influence through textual annihilation.
4. Diversion — a version to distract, deviate, divert: be the deviant, be the clinamen!
5. Inversion — an upside-down version, a Down Under conceit: a writing backwards through the original text.

[144] Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse", 208-210.

[145] Rasula and McCaffery, *Imagining Language*, 203.

objects by touches corresponding to them in shading or bearing, since they do exist among the many languages, and sometimes in one.[146]

Mallarmé's crisis didn't stop him from thinking that poetry had the answers. He expounds further that "*verse would not exist*" (his emphasis) but for this very untranslatability in Nature (as mentioned earlier, he makes the point that the signified and the signifier in language rarely match—*nuit* is a bright sound, *jour* is dark), and that poetry, "philosophically, makes up for language's deficiences, as a superior supplement". "[F]aced with the breaking up of classic literary rhythms … and their dispersion into articulated shivers close to instrumentation," Mallarmé heralds poetry's ability to *transpose* itself into new forms for new eras, "for an art of achieving the transposition into the Book of the symphony …"[147]

or

Is verse, or poetry, really any better than any other use of language in translating Nature? As representation, even if poetry can be symphonic? Poetry, despite its complex aural, visual, musical, multilingual capabilities, is still restricted by language; it's still a construct, fabrication, go-between, chimera, shadow. Perhaps poetry is just better at being a ghost, at shape-shifting, at being other …?

aussi

While Mallarmé gifts us the term "transposition", Derrida writes, in *Positions*, of how translation could do with another definition, a substitute: "In the limits to which it is possible, or at least *appears* possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another."[148]

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[146] Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse", 205.

[147] Mallarmé, "Crisis of Verse", 205-6 and 210.

[148] Derrida, *Positions*, 20.

In other words, the difference between signifier and signified always remains problematic and thereby so also does translation. "Transformation" as definition goes a step further than Mallarmé's "transposition" in relating the mutational aspects of writing.

aussi

Most conversations about translation evoke the story of the Tower of Babel from the Book of Genesis, a story that "is always in our interest … to reread closely."[149] In *The Ear of the Other*, Derrida writes of "the great challenge to translation", *Finnegans Wake*, for its multilingual punning methodology. In "The Puncept in Grammatology", Ulmer quotes both David Hayman and Umberto Eco, who identify the "principal lesson" of *Finnegans Wake*:

> "The *Wake* belongs to a class (not a genre) of works which invite the reader to perpetuate creation". Eco agrees: "The search for 'open' models capable of guaranteeing and founding the mutation and the growth and, finally, the vision of a universe founded on possibility, as contemporary philosophy and science suggest to the imagination, encounters perhaps its most provoking and violent representation—perhaps its anticipation—in *Finnegans Wake*".[150]

Derrida describes how a Babelian motif runs from one end of the book to the other (the book, of course, is circular, with the last sentence only being completed by the incomplete opening sentence). Derrida picks out the moment in *Finnegans Wake* when Yahweh interrupts the construction of the tower by the tribe of the Shems[151] to

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[149] Derrida, "Roundtable on Translation", 100. George Steiner's *After Babel*, most importantly, is a comprehensive study of translation which deals with the "Babel problem" of multiple languages. See Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[150] Ulmer, "The Puncept in Grammatology", 171.

[151] "The tribe of the Shems" is Derrida's terminology, not Joyce's. Derrida stresses that their name, *Shem*, already means "name" in Hebrew.

condemn humanity to a multiplicity of languages—"which is to say, to the necessary and impossible task of translation". In that moment in *Finnegans Wake*, the three words "*And he war*" appear.[152] "In what language is this written?" Derrida asks, then continues:

> despite the multiplicity of languages, cultural references, and condensations, English is indisputably the dominant language in *Finnegans Wake*—all these refractions and slippages are produced in English or through English, in the body of that language. French would translate the English as: *il-guerre* (he wars), he declares war. And that's indeed what happens: God declares war on the tribe of the Shems who want to make a name for themselves by raising the tower and imposing their tongue on the universe. But obviously the German word *war* influences the English word, so we also have: He was, he was the one who said, for example, "I am that I am", which is the definition of Yahweh. And then one also hears the ear, which is very present in the rest of the text. *One hears a thousand things through other languages* (my emphasis).[153]

Derrida describes how translation can't mark "the fact there are, in one linguistic system, perhaps several languages or tongues". So then, if it is always in our interest to re-read this story closely, the Tower of Babel is surely a reminder story of a reminder story, as humanity continually needs reminding of the plurality of languages and the plurality *within* languages. Babel is the name that God imposes on the tower and the Shems. Babel is itself the name of the father, therefore God is imposing his own name on the Shems, which, when they come to translate it, can "confusedly be understood as confusion". Derrida continues: "Babel equals Confusion. This is the paradigm of the situation in which there is a multiplicity of languages and in which translation is both necessary and impossible".

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[152] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), 258. It mustn't be forgotten that, despite its multilingual punning stunts, *Finnegans Wake* should also be viewed as being written in Irish English as a subversion of the hegemony of the English language.

[153] Derrida, "Roundtable on Translation", 98-99.

By imposing his untranslatable name which must be translated, God produces what Derrida calls a "disschemination", which has at least four senses: dissemination, deschematization, de-"Shemitizing", and derouting or diverting from a path (the word *chemin* meaning path or road); and which forces the Shems into a position of "Translate me and what is more don't translate me".[154]

or

BABBLE.

aussi

With so many double/treble/quadruple entendres in the story of the Tower of Babel, it would seem that translation, "necessary and impossible", is actually—always and already—mistranslation. According to Derrida, even the word for tongue is mistranslated. The Hebrew word signifies "lip", so the Shems in fact desire to impose their lip on the universe.[155]

or

Perhaps hoping to enact the inverse of the Shems—Brennan, Edwards and Tranter give the French Euroverse some Australian lip.

or

After such a babbling anecdote, it can now be argued that homophonic mistranslation attempts the inverse of translation (at the same time as a "literal" sound/phonetic translation), in that it teases out "several languages or tongues" already in the one linguistic system. Homophonic mistranslation attempts to subvert/invert the hierarchy of one language over another by transforming the sounds of one linguistic system (and

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[154] Derrida, "Roundtable on Translation", 102-103.

[155] Derrida, "Roundtable on Translation", 101.

its many tongues) into sounds from another linguistic system (and its many tongues). (Remember, in both Edwards and Tranter, we're reading an Australian English, replete with its many colloquial tongues, subverting the mother tongue first of all, while also subverting the literary French.) In a homophonic mistranslation, every word becomes a little tongue looping between languages—a complex interaction of soundplay, a methodology seen and heard in *Finnegans Wake*.

or

Fig. 12: *Ouroboros*, by Theodoros Pelecanos

As Random Cloud writes of *Wake*, linking the pun to an erotic multiplicity, and to an everlasting destruction of singularity in language: "James Joyce conceived of *Finnegans Wake* as a circe, a simultanus short-circuit of all myth (Every Thing Equally and Immediately Remote), an indefinitely wyrm-edened book—in a word, an apoca*lapse*".[156]

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[156] Random Cloud, "Fearful Assymetry", in *The Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship*, ed. Neil Fraistat and Julia Flanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 164. Note the puns, and in particular the word "simultanus", its "*or*-play", its homo-erotic tail and its desire, like any pun, to have it both ways, simultaneously.

aussi

Remember, a "fluke" is a tremotode worm, a parasite.[157] Writhing round. Much like this assay's pushing of buttons / brushing off Putins / bushy put-ons.

or

With its tail between its legs, the tower of Babel, allegorically, is a phallic symbol brought down by a declaration of non-independence, of plurality and multiplicity—by, simultaneously, a circulation and a "disschemination".

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[157] Edwards, "Double Talk".

VII

In an interview with *Poetry International Web*, Chris Edwards writes/speaks about the reasons he returned to poetry after twenty years underground, not publishing any poetry, undergoing his own *crise de vers.* He cites Hélène Cixous' writings on phallocentrism as a vital influence in his poetic revival, and at length:

> Hélène Cixous's essay (or polemic, or manifesto) "The Laugh of the Medusa" revived, or revised, my interest in poetry in the early 1990s. "Nearly the entire history of writing," she wrote, "is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is the effect, the support and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallocentric tradition. It is indeed that same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallocentrism." "There have," however, "been poets who would go to any lengths to slip something by at odds with tradition … But only the poets—not the novelists, allies of representationalism. Because poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: women, or as Hoffman would say, fairies." Cixous called for volcanic upheaval, seeing in women and poets alike a "capacity to depropriate unselfishly", producing "a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos tirelessly traversed by Eros, an immense astral space not organised around any one sun that's any more of a star than the others."[158]

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[158] Edwards, "Interview with Chris Edwards".

Fig. 13: *Head of Medusa*, by Caravaggio

aussi

Jacques Rancière describes the crisis in verse at the end of nineteenth century, the dispersing of the French alexandrine: "The poet no longer has a model, celestial or human, to imitate. Henceforth, it is by the mere 'dialectic of verse' that he will be able to revivify the seal of the idea, by forging together, according to an essential rhythm, 'many scattered veins of ore, unknown and floating.'"[159]

While there were no poetic models worth imitating, because the models had grown stale (needing "disschemination"), there was a renewed need for "forgery" (Mallarmé uses the English word)—to forge together new forms.

Considering these Australian "versions" of *Un Coup de dés*, perhaps now, in the twenty-first century, after all the fragmentation of the twentieth, there is a growing desire for a return to form—to rejoin with rejoinders the "cosmos tirelessly traversed by Eros"—

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[159] Jacques Rancière, quoting from *Mallarmé's critical prose poem* "Solemnity", in *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2011), 11.

aware that there could only be such a reunion with form if it were interconnected *and* fragmented. As Edwards can visualise:

> I like the idea of treating Australian poems, including Ern Malley's, not as dot-like entities (e.g. lyrics) or sites of authorial self-presence (meaning in isolation), but as string-like (there's that lyre again) interwoven filaments—nodes, if you like, in a worldwide network of sociocultural webs (meaning as oscillation and experimental flux).[160]

At the heart of this statement are the impossible, the invisible, and the plural—the many ineffables that the poem seeks to mine and forge into new forms that oscillate between the decidable and the undecidable, between the known and the unknown, between and beyond borders, between ears. As Rancière concludes, quoting Mallarmé's *La musique et les lettres*: "Poetry is meditation, doubt transformed into hyperbole and that which 'projects, to a great forbidden and thunderous height, our conscious lack of what, up there, gleams'. One can say that this projection is a deception (*superchèrie*) or forgery. But the forgery is also the work done by a goldsmith in 'sowing doubt with rubies'."[161]

<div align="center">

or

</div>

A homophonic translation hyperbolises the doubt of "our conscious lack of what, up there, gleams", and "our unconscious lock on what, down here, gleans". Homophony hangs on the split dualities of words, highlighting the signifier, dispersing the signified, while collapsing the ground beneath both. Where Mallarmé's chains of suggestion intertwine and coalesce, increasing in power as we trace them across his oeuvre, a mistranslation's network of suggestion spreads across platforms, across eras, and erotically, across multiple authors.

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[160] Edwards, "Interview with Chris Edwards".

[161] Rancière, *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren*, 22.

or

"[E]very word or letter I looked at was suggestive, and it wasn't always easy to remain faithful to all of them at once …"[162]

or

Un Coup de dés becomes exactly what its oscillating, borderline-polygamous poetics designed it to become: an ALSO-MACHINE, generating genomes, liminal looms, fantastical phantasms, altered alternatives, *other* others, *aussi* Aussies.

aussi

For all Mallarmé's spouting of the *oeuvre pure*, the "search for the One Book all poets are attempting to write", he may well have spawned *the One Poem all books are attempting to write*. *Un Coup de dés* and its musical imagery, its vast landscape visuals and blank spaces on the page, its seductively (mis)translatable gutter-talk, its untouchable lack of meaning locked into correspondence with the Other, its (mis)rendered thought—and, above all, its *multi-nefarious* "and/or" poetics, its self-positioning as confused Master—have created some of the most perfect preconditions for a mistranslation storm. Infinitely reproducible, a shipwreck for endless spelunking, a spectre to haunt the haunted, the mobile to hang over the skyline and join the constellations. Storm clouds on the horizon. This is its great modernist haunting, shimmering:

"CONSIDERED A LOST CAUSE AMID CIRCUMSTANTANTIAL /
EVERLASTING INTESTINAL SPASMS //

WOULD OFFER YOU UP A LIKE SHIPWRECK …"[163]

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[162] Edwards, "Double Talk".

[163] Edwards, "A Fluke", 43.

... on these impenetrable shorelines Down Under.

or

The best modern literature, says Kristeva, explores the place of the abject, a place where boundaries crumble, where we are confronted with an archaic space before such linguistic binaries as self and other, subject and object. The transcendent and sublime, for Kristeva, are simply our attempts at covering over the breakdowns (and subsequent reassertion of boundaries) associated with the abject: "On close inspection, all literature is probably a version of the apocalypse that seems to me rooted, no matter what its sociohistorical conditions might be, on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject".[164]

Literature spelunks the cave, the lack, the want, that language is structured around. Kristeva elevates poetry and certain experimental forms of fiction because of their willingness to play with and break apart grammar, metaphor and meaning—because they "compel language to come nearest to the human enigma, to the place where it kills, thinks, and experiences jouissance all at the same time. A language of abjection of which the writer is both subject[165] and victim, witness and topple. Toppling into what? Into nothing ..."[166]

A literature of the void, I would say, but not Mallarmé's. I'm thinking of Edwards' [N]EVER [N]EVER. In its "double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject", rigadoon with *Un Coup de dés*, "A Fluke" exhibits the

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[164] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 207.

[165] To clarify, through these various theories—some from the philosophies of deconstruction and some from science and psychoanalysis and elsewhere—I'm not arguing that subjectivity can be erased and I'm not advocating for the erasure of the other; quite the opposite, in fact. I'm arguing that the techniques used in experimental mistranslations can be used to subvert hegemonic structures within literature and the world. See my coda, part VIII, for a treatment of the political implications of these literary strategies regarding Australia.

[166] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 206.

"laughter of the apocalypse".[167] Edwards' skilled homophonic mistranslation—its surface play, subjective but ambivalent attitude, its suspended exclamations, its absurdity, its gushing forth of the unconscious, the repressed, suppressed pleasure—lays bear the fact that language is at once contingent, arbitrary and limned with the abject fear of loss. Or, as Kristeva writes: "Not a language of the desiring exchange of messages or objects that are transmitted in a social contract of communication and desire beyond want, but a language of want, of the fear that edges up to it and runs along its edges".[168]

<div align="center">**or**</div>

<div align="center">An apoca*lapse* lapping/laughing at Australian beaches.</div>

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[167] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 204.

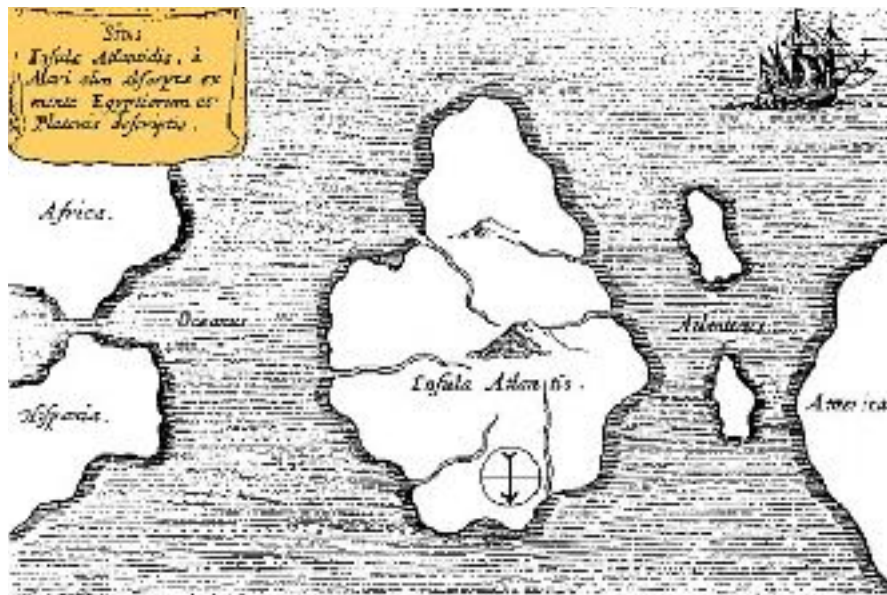[168] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 38.

VIII

Fig .14: Map of the "lost" island of Atlantis, by Athanasius Kircher

Australia is still in the shadow of the image it has always had. Lost in antipodal space, we have hardly diverged from that perspective in which antiquity first beheld our hemisphere, its "other", millenia ago. Only its shadow lengthens as evening falls across the land. It is as though we are endlessly absorbed by it, into it. Whence that wasted prospect in our eyes. Our deserts, desolation, desertion. That country constantly reflecting on its own revolving.[169] —Paul Foss

Plato's Atlantis—that mythical antipodean land of abundance and treasures, that piece of "*pure invention*" that European colonial expansion eventually invaded and conquered —turned out to be "Australia", a country populated not by a great white race who would

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[169] Paul Foss, "Theatrum Nondum Cognitorum", in *Foreign Bodies Papers*, eds. Peter Botsman, Chris Burns and Peter Hutchings (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 1981), 17.

create huge trade, but by races of Aborigines who had lived on and knew intimately the multiple landscapes of the continent. Yet, since it was "discovered", a discourse of the void and its related imagery resounds through our colonial literature, from the early explorers who described *Terra Australis* as a wasteland,[170] to the "whitewashing" of Australian history, as if the first Australians could simply be banished into the void from whence they appeared.[171] The dispossession of the first Australians "underwote the development of the nation" and over two hundred years would pass before Australia's highest court, the High Court of Australia, rejected the fiction that when Australia was discovered it was *terra nullius*—nobody's land—and recognised that Indigenous peoples have native title: land rights that existed before the British invaded and which can still exist today.[172]

We still mostly live on the coast facing out. In the early twenty-first century our shores are still symbolic barriers.[173] Despite being, since 1788, a land of migrants, the entire country has recently been excised from the migration zone so that asylum seekers can

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[170] Paul Foss writes: "From William Jansz of the *Duyfken* (1606) to Cook of the Endeavour (1770), and beyond, the antipodal simulacrum is draped over the country like a shroud. It is still hear here, haunting the present with its echoes". For descriptive quotes of the "wasteland" that Australia's "discoverers" encounted, see Foss, "Theatrum Nondum Cognitorum", 31-33.

[171] For an example of the ongoing revisionism of Australian history regarding the dispossession of Indigenous land, see Robert Manne ed., *Whitewash: On Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History* (Collingwood: Black Inc., 2003). For an excellent essay on the two conflicting narratives of Indigenous dispossession in Australian history (native title versus the stolen generations), see Bain Attwood, "Unsettling pasts: reconciliation and history in settler Australia", *Postcolonial Studies* 8.3 (2015): 243-259, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13688790500231012.

[172] See "Mabo v Queensland", No. 2, HCA 23, 175 CLR 1 (June 3, 1992).

[173] Successive governments have adopted a somewhat anti-immigration catch-cry, "Turn back the boats!" The lives of many refugees, or "boat people", risking the boat trip to Australia have been notionally saved (but also rerouted—to offshore processing centres or back to their countries of origin, often risking persecution), but the loud and manipulative rhetoric has only increased the sense that Australia is zealously protective of its borders, callously indifferent to those claiming asylum. Former immigration minister Scott Morrison, for example, instructed Border Protection staff in 2013 to replace the phrase "asylum seeker" with "illegal maritime arrival" and "client" with "detainee". See Tom Clark, "Calling a boat person a spade: Australia's asylum seeker rhetoric", *The Conversation*, October 22, 2013, http://theconversation.com/calling-a-boat-person-a-spade-australias-asylum-seeker-rhetoric-19367.

be "processed offshore".[174] Completely surrounded by water, and now excised from the migration zone, Australia is literally an is-land, an isolate, as Foss writes: "Even with that island called "continent"; the terror of isolation merely grows in proportion to the size of its inner space. Big or little, islands die from the inwards out".[175]

aussi

Australia's body politic often privileges an unimpeachable sense of nationalism through a celebration of a distorted idea/ideal of the true or real Australia.[176] To advance any criticism of Australia is to become, somehow, and in some circles, "unAustralian". In a country where racism is rooted in the police force,[177] where Indigenous Australians die in custody, and asylum seekers are tortured in offshore prison camps, where Indigenous sporting heros are simultaneously cheered and jeered,[178] where sharks lurk in more headlines than in shipwrecks, where mining the reefs and the outback for natural resources is more important than preserving those resources, where explorers Burke and Wills died, discovering little more than what they expected to find, and where the mirage of coastal living gives way to the driest continent in the world—it's

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[174] Melissa Phillips, "Out of sight, out of mind: Excising Australia from the migration zone", *The Conversation*, May 17, 2013, http://theconversation.com/out-of-sight-out-of-mind-excising-australia-from-the-migration-zone-14387.

[175] Foss, "Theatrum Nondum Cognitorum", 35.

[176] Before he was ousted as prime minister of Australia, Tony Abbott of the Liberal Party opined "that everyone has got to be on Team Australia". It was broadly debated in the media what he meant exactly, whether it was anti-terrorist rhetoric, scaremongering, or something even more insidious to be applied to "everyday Australians". See Anne Summers, "Tony Abbott's Team Australia entrenches inequality", *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 23, 2014, http://www.smh.com.au/comment/tony-abbotts-team-australia-entrenches-inequality-20140821-106sdk.html.

[177] Most recently, in August 2015, the Australian Border Force police unit set up the ominously named "Operation Fortitude", an operation that would have seen police stop people on the streets of Melbourne for random visa checks (a process that would have relied on racial profiling) had there not been a huge public protest.

[178] In 2015, AFL star Adam Goodes of the Sydney Swans was widely booed by opposing fans for miming an aboriginal war dance on the field, while NRL star Jonathon Thurston was universally lauded for winning the premiership for his team the North Queensland Cowboys.

important to reflect on the political implications of poetry such as that discussed in this essay: poetry generated by paranomasia—by the difference and sameness in words; a poetry of multiplicity that questions truth, mastery, authority, and symbolic structures by trespassing over and through them, under*mining* them; poetry that "offers you up" a serious parody, *serio ludere*, a paradox in terms; a poetry of *un*reason, that transgresses boundaries.

In "Living On: Borderlines", Derrida writes of the inability of "the institution"—in his case, the university—to accept the undecidable in language and in translation. He could just as easily be talking about the nation state: "What this institution cannot bear is for anyone to tamper with language, meaning both the national language and, paradoxically, an ideal translatability that neutralizes this national language. *Nationalism* and *universalism*. What this institution cannot bear is a transformation that leaves intact neither of these two complementary poles".[179]

or

What Australia sometimes cannot bear—what there seems little room for—is difference, ambiguity, the other. Australia is subaltern (with its own sub-categories of the subaltern within) not so much because it is Down Under, or because its vastness and isolation in the south is mistaken for an Abyss, but because Australia carries on the project of the West.

Both Mallarmé and Derrida defy the Master. In Mallarmé's case, he ditched his "Book of Books", of which only fragments survive, and, late in his writings, fragmented his verse —in Derrida's words, he opened up the "space of writing". The result was *Un Coup de dés*, a poem that attempts the impossible: to find a form that renders thought and chance into language. It demonstrated a kind of mastery that Mallarmé's poem simultaneously wishes to shake off, as in the metaphor that reverberates through the poem: the Master shaking his fist at the impossibility of abolishing chance. Derrida goes one step further in his continual wandering away from writing, from "the father" who cannot be questioned. Via the puncept and citational methodologies, his deconstructive

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[179] Derrida, "Roundtable on Translation", 93-94.

writings wander away from writing (as authorial representor of truth). Debunking categories and genres, his writings waver and blur the lines between literature and philosophy.

or

Altering the project, inverting the master—"UNCONSTITUTIONAL"—the methods of *or*-play and forgery employed by Brennan, Edwards and Tranter present a riposte to the canon, to authorial representations of language. Their mistranslations also open up the terrain that Australian poetry might traverse by drawing our attention to the shaky nature—the unstable meanings and interchangeable structures—of language, the illicit affairs of writing as representation, the chaos of multiple tongues, rather than settling on the singular, or the ideal.

Language is unstable. Borders between languages, even within a language, are unstable and permeable. Homophony breathes the "literal". Mistranslation offers changeability and transformation. Its implications are for a poetry that is open in form but not formless, diverse in character, and continually malleable. When thought of as transformation, mistranslation is both reverential and disrespectful. It is an upending and a re-reading, and offers alternative ways to think at the crossroads of multiple languages.

aussi

Australian poet Peter Minter recommends a radical revision of approaches to reading our local poetic traditions. Instead of a single authorial nation or nationality through which to view Australian poetry, Minter proposes an "archipelagic map": "Rather than 'the Land' and its monocultural aesthetic, we might imagine a polyphony of terrestrial islands, archipelagos of *habitus* and poethical emergence".[180] Each island in Minter's vision becomes …

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[180] Peter Minter, "Archipelagos of sense: thinking about a decolonised Australian poetics", *Southerly* 73.1 (2013): 160.

an outcrop of sensibility amidst oceans of inscrutability, or what … Édouard Glissant termed the *chaos-monde*. A crucial stage in the emergence of a poetics of relation, the *chaos-monde* (chaos world) is the liberation of the world from representability: "the way Chaos itself goes around is the opposite of what is ordinarily understood by 'chaotic' and … it opens a new phenomenon: Relation, or totality in evolution, whose order is continually in flux and this disorder one can imagine forever". The whole world is an archipelago, representability cohering at the edges of ever shifting shores.[181]

In terms of the aesthetic potential of an archipelagic model, Minter leaves this open-ended, preferring to outline the cultural and psychogeographical implications, but I think it is clear how *Un Coup de dés* and its *chaos-monde*, its scattered fragments in flux and relation, has created an archipelagic map that appeals to Australian poets seeking otherness and indeterminacy and a map for rebellion.

or

The poem as *echo*pelago.

aussi

Foss describes maps as "stratagems for the abolition of distance … They constitute vanishing lines, escape machines, a beacon of fascination", which could also describe "A Fluke", "Musicopoematographoscope", or "Desmond's Coupé". Foss goes on: "maps may be an empty simulation, as in the most beautiful imaginings of Plato … which, even if … not meant as reality, certainly had the effect of sending countless men in search of new lands over the ages and contributed to the way in which they were shaped". A third and final description of maps by Foss is relevant here, in terms of a metaphor for poems: "what they refer to or give bearing to is not territory as a fixed substance, but territory

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[181] Minter, "Archipelagos of sense", 156. For more on Glissant's *chaos-monde*, see Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

as fluid field".[182] And so we come full circle, tail in mouth (or cheek), to Brownian Motion.

or

In the fluid field of the page, archipelagos emerge, scattered fragments swerve, invisible filaments waver, various and other histories echo, words intertextualise, disappear and reappear slightly altered, othered (yet in relation to one another for their very being there).

or

How much can the poem-map be explored? Thinking of the poem as an exploration sounds innocent enough, but exploration has its problems or limitations, particularly in the Australian postcolonial context (in which colonial exploration by white Europeans is not only recent history, but celebrated history), and therefore by extension in the context of rewritings and appropriation by/of Australian writers. These connotations (of the word exploration—that of men in power infiltrating a supposed *terra nullius* that is not *terra nullius*) serve as warning to those seeking power, control, and especially domination, in the intertextual exploration and appropriation of another's writing. Defy Mallarmé's Master, sure, but beware of becoming the master.

aussi

Speaking of the "erotics" of language, particularly of the highly libinal nature of language-tampering, but also of the oscillation-dissolution of the "I" into the "other" into the "them" (re "Themparks"), one can thereby also too rapidly dissolve certain political them(e)atics at stake in appropriation: perhaps most notably in the current context regarding "sexuality" and "race".

Almost all the rewritings I've examined in this thesis are men-rewriting-men-rewriting-men, which at the very least exhibits a homo*social* lineage, of an a-sexualised-material-

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[182] Foss, "Theatrum Nondum Cognitorum", 22-23.

able-to-be-resampled-without-any-prohibition-but-custom-and-copyright. But in some of these cases, the explicit homo*sexuality* of these specific men is clearly at stake, and clearly has a political resonance: not least in the case of Rimbaud and Verlaine and Ashbery and Farrell in my "Themparks" essay, but also for Edwards in this essay. But this then may suggest that even such samplings also operate some covert elisions: for instance, is "women's poetry" able to be re-cited by men today with the same effect? Or vice-versa? I'd say absolutely to the latter, as there is a feminist context to the rewriting of "men's literature", an upending or dispersion of a patriarchal hegemony. But hetero men rewriting/over-writing/appropriating women's poetry...? That's another fettle of kitsch, so to speak. As I've tried to establish in this thesis, there are many excellent queer displacements that exist, in regards to appropiation in literature. However, I don't mean to gloss over the fact that all writers, regardless of sexual orientation or desire, have ethical responsibilities.

aussi

Ditto for race and colonial issues, as I've implied already in this coda. I'm thinking now of the American poet Kenneth Goldsmith's 2015 reading at Brown University in which Goldsmith spent thirty minutes reading the autopsy report of Michael Brown, a young African-American man recently killed by police.[183] This "poetry" reading was absolutely a kind of literary appropriation, and one that was presented as if verbatim, as if the autopsy report was being entirely re-contextualised (a technique he employs across his oeuvre) to highlight (through the mundanity of the language structures appropriated) the mundanity in this case of the mounting deaths of black African-Americans at the hands of mostly white police. The heart's in the right place, but when Goldsmith ended the reading with a description of Brown's genitalia, it became clear that he had deliberately edited the autopsy for shock value, thus representing (and perhaps repeating) a blatant accentuation of white domination (and fetishisation) of black bodies. One could argue (and Goldsmith has, convincingly to some) that this was the point (he did in fact introduce his reading as being of a poem called "The Body of

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[183] Jillian Steinhauer, "Kenneth Goldsmith Remixes Michael Brown Autopsy Report as Poetry", *Hyperallergic*, March 16, 2015, http://hyperallergic.com/190954/kenneth-goldsmith-remixes-michael-brown-autopsy-report-as-poetry/.

Michael Brown"[184]), but he was subsequently criticised (perhaps rightfully so), and arguably attacked, by African-Americans and non-Anglo and Anglo Americans alike, for his performance's allegedly illicit appropriations (of the injustices) of black experience in contemporary America for further white self-aggrandisement.[185]

or

The problem of the limits of appropriability is clearly then a major and intense and ongoing international discussion, and one that will continue. In most situations, the limits are not so much a question of taste as power. The abject in Edwards works because it is directed at his own queer subjectivity in the face of traditional literary power structures, whereas the abject in Goldsmith merely apes, so to speak, his white privilege, even as he employs an extreme style of appropriation to challenge traditional literary forms.

So while I've been advocating for certain boundaries/borders of the imagination, traditional and aesthetic and emotional, to be breached, there are always social and cultural boundaries/borders that need to be treated with ethical respect. Going beyond can be painful to certain others (to re-echo Bataille's erotic philosophy, as he refers to anguish): "when the bounds of the possible are over-reached, a recoil is inevitable". In other words, sometimes the defiance of the master may under certain circumstances require stringent self-limitation in the appropriation of others' texts. There are symbolic barriers that need dissolving, and others that need shoring up, so to speak.

And here I return to the pun as subversive device, whose tidiness enhances the illusion of mastery at the same time as undoing it. At its core, the puncept is a methodology that, to bring back Ulmer, "allows language to say what it knows, which allows the

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[184] Alison Flood, "US poet defends reading of Michael Brown autopsy report as a poem", *The Guardian*, March 18, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/17/michael-brown-autopsy-report-poem-kenneth-goldsmith.

[185] See CAConrad, "Kenneth Goldsmith Says He Is an Outlaw", *Poetry Foundation*, June 1, 2015, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2015/06/kenneth-goldsmith-says-he-is-an-outlaw/. Here, thirty poets of multiple cultural, racial and sexual orientations, often minorities, strongly object to Goldsmith's appropriation of the deceased and black body of Michael Brown.

unconscious to show itself in the play of language", and thus and most often reveal authorial intent.

aussi

Plato's Republic never actually existed, yet the utopic Atlantis myth he instigated (as a literal Antipodes, an "opposite earth") still persists on Australian shores, and the colony still generally thinks of its centre as void. Its being void is a furphy and delusion, of course—abundant life and Dreamtime tracks resonate like filaments through the "outback". To overturn our anxious Anglo-colonial readings and our Eurovisions—any unease we might have about the legitimacy of antipodean takes on cultural internationalism—and, furthermore, to alleviate the stress of repressing unpleasant colonial truths, Australian poetry could do more than simply breathe the *littoral*, however utopic that might seem; Australian poetry should breathe the littoral *and* the void, the never never—what we think is impossible—by ceding the initiative to words *and* space. Engaging the materiality of words and the space of the page in the composition of poems helps to unearth the untenability of the logocentric and phallocentric distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, between the ideal and the material, the singular and the multiple. Using an inverse logic, misprision removes the prison, danger undoes the dungeon. Art is chance.

or

For Australian poetry to create notions (archipelagos, say, as opposed to a single nation) of itself, from out of (or within) the *terra nullius* myth that has been perpetuated—we must invert and disperse the hemispheres. We must simultaneously reflect (not reject!) the abject—in order to transform, in order to live—as well as look within (into the never).

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