Semiotics and poetic practice in the work of three New Zealand poets

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Abstract

This PhD by exegesis and creative project examines the poetry of three contemporary New Zealand poets: Alistair Paterson, Alan Loney and Michele Leggott in the context of the relational axes, comprising syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. It addresses the question of what the relational axes can tell us about poetry which can then be used in practice. After due consideration of the implications of binary oppositions in the discourse and of features such as codes, the discussion considers Jakobson's insights into the relational axes and ideas that problematise understandings of the sign, such as Riffaterre's theory of representation and Derrida's elaboration of the originary nature of writing. The analysis accommodates theoretical evolution from structuralism to poststructuralism, postmodernism and assemblage theories.

Poetry is richly susceptible to semiotic analysis because of the way it highlights language. I describe examples of the interaction between the axes through techniques such as metonymy and metaphor. Work that features distinctive layout invites a discussion of how the use of page space may be conceptualised and what effects are gained by it. The idea of space being used to score music was made popular by Charles Olson and has been a justification for experimental typography, but this is just one possible function. I describe various functions for the use of space in the poetry discussed, and I argue that its use is paradigmatic as well as syntagmatic, since it often subverts the definition of the syntagm (which is singular and linear). I argue that the use of space constitutes an act of substitution for language.

I have encountered few attempts in the literature to systematically articulate the variety of effects which space can yield, and this is important work that I extend here. The appendix attempts a provisional taxonomy of the use of space, via reference to the analysis of poetry in chapters two, three and four. These instances are charted and grouped together to gain a better understanding of how space contributes to meaning, and to encourage the use of page space in suggestive and embodied ways. At the same time, I acknowledge that it is one avenue of many by which multiplicity of meaning can be achieved, and reflect on the way Michele Leggott's poetry, for example, has moved away from spatial experiments yet found other ways to attain multiplicity, often through an articulation of competing codes. My creative project responds to ideas in both the poetry analysed and the theoretical components, investigating formal structures as syntagmatic confines; the idea of the centre being outside structure; the place of written language (as opposed to speech); social context; selection and substitution in poems; spatial relations, misdirection and the unity of the whole. It does so in a variety of forms with an emphasis on hybrids.

Key words: semiotics; poetry; New Zealand; relational axes; space; Alistair Paterson; Alan Loney; Michele Leggott.

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Introduction: Semiotic terms and their application to poetic analysis

Roman Jakobson claims, 'poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics' (2000a: p. 31), and this raises important considerations about how poetry may be read and understood. The student of poetics can well afford to embrace linguistic discourse and linguistic tools in order to find ways into a more complete and nuanced understanding of poetic texts. Focussing on ideas made influential by Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in general linguistics*, and cognisant of their modification, revision and supplementation by a range of later theorists, I will explore the way the relational axes – syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations – function in the work of three New Zealand poets: Michele Leggott, Alan Loney and Alistair Paterson.

The ideas of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations introduced by Saussure still have potential to further the understanding of poetry. Any poet's work is dependent on making use of the possibilities of language to create effects. These axes are utilised variously and in subtle ways by the three poets mentioned, and an understanding of their functions helps inform the reading of that work and of contemporary poetry in general. Further, and allied to these considerations, I will consider how space itself can be conceptualised, as a poetic tool, and how the use of space may be understood, at least in part, in terms of the relational axes. This discussion conceptualises the use of space by poets as not only influencing the layout of poetry, but as a poetic element that actively intersects with language and meaning. I will argue that, at times, the use of space is an act of substitution for language.

Additionally, I am interested in placing my own creative practice as a poet into the framework of semiotic analysis. This exegesis will consider what insights into the composition of poetry may flow from a consideration of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations that can then be used in practice. The textual analysis I conduct will be supplemented by practice-led research, and my analysis of the poetry of Loney, Paterson and Leggott will draw on what I learn through writing my own manuscript of poetry, presented as the second part of this PhD thesis. My practice-led work has enabled me to examine poetry with the kind of attention to its technical detail that I bring to the composition of my own work. It has encouraged me to consider the works I discuss in terms of both their broader linguistic tendencies and achievements, drawing on the insights of various theorists, and in terms of the mechanics of individual poems and their unfolding developments as artefacts.

Having said this, it is worth noting that Johnathan Culler cautions against the proliferation of interpretations of texts, reminding us to question whether they do in fact aid understanding. He suggests that criticism should try to determine the conventions that make meanings possible, including the nature of codes (1975, p. 258; 1981, pp. ix, 37). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is salutary with regard to the purposes of criticism, cautioning that it should be 'resolutely neuter and practical. One should not mistake the grounds out of which word and self are reproduced with the business of the appreciation of the literary text' (2000, p. 480). Any interpretative act may constitute another (creative) cultural artefact, with its own biases, and I am mindful of this tendency. Rather than operating as a traditional literary critic, I am writing as a poet seeking examples of poetry which can inform practice. I am also sensitive to what the theoretical frameworks I am using are able to tell us about the 'singularity of a text' and the way different approaches to understanding a text may interrelate during reading (McQuillan 2001, pp. 86-87). This is especially important when it comes to an analysis of poetry which might be described as 'postlinear' (Perloff 1998, p. 166), poetry that moves beyond traditional, stanzaic form and reading habits. Such analysis, 'will almost certainly require a series of disparate but complementary forays into the concrete writerly practices of particular, relevant authors' (Reed 2004, n.p.).

The contemporary work which I will analyse is indeed relevant to such recent movements in poetry, especially in the New Zealand context, and engagement with it requires that much be said about the disruptive forces of poetry. Although semiotics is no longer at the centre of discussions of literature and practice, its tools are still of value. They enable one to suggest ways in which ideas and images are formed and arranged in the poems studied; to show how contemporary poets manipulate the relational axes and the techniques that the axes encompass; and to demonstrate how the different parts of the poem relate to the whole, as well as to various codes deployed in exemplary contemporary poems. Discussion of semiotic tools also necessitates engagement with the critics and theorists who have used and responded to them.

Outlining semiotic terms

Semiotics is the study of the sign. Saussure, who helped define terms with his seminal *Course in general linguistics*, first published in 1916, called it, 'a science which studies the role of

signs as part of social life' (2005, p. 15[1]). The sign is based on what may be understood as a dichotomy between *langue* and *parole* (language and speech). It is composed of a sound pattern (rather than a sound, since it may be heard in the mind alone) and a concept (or thought), which are like the two sides of a piece of paper (Saussure 2005, p. 111). Sound pattern and concept correspond with the idea of the signifier – that which signals – and the signified – the signification (Chandler 2007, p. 17; Saussure 2005, p. 67). Because of the role played by perception, linguistic signs are as much psychological as physiological, and Saussure places great emphasis on psychology in determining the place of semiotics in the wider scientific arena (2005, p. 16) – the sign itself is described as a psychological entity (2005, pp. 66-67).

Other scholars have placed greater stress on the material aspect of the sign. For example, CS Peirce argues that a sign must have a material aspect (such as the attributes of a printed letter), as well as a real connection to what it signifies (1991, pp. 141-142). According to Peirce, a sign can function as an icon (which references through resemblance to the referent), an index (which references through association with the referent) or a symbol (which references through the relationship between signs). An icon is significant even if its object has no existence; an index would lose its character if its object were absent, and a symbol loses its status if there is nothing present to interpret it (Peirce 1991, pp. 239-240). Peirce extends his logic of the sign, developing a triadic model comprising representamen (sign-vehicle), interpretant (translation) and object (referent). In this model, the interpretant has a wider function than its approximate counterpart of the Saussurean signified (Chandler 2007, pp. 30-33). The representamen stands for something in the mind; it evokes an equivalent or more developed sign in the mind, interpreting the first sign, and, in turn, this interpretant points to an object or idea, sometimes called the 'ground' of the representamen (Peirce 1998, p. 135). Where, for Saussure, the reading of the sign is implicit, for Peirce, the work of making meaning from the sign is explicitly addressed. Its use in textual analysis suggests that the movement from meaning to significance necessitates the interpretant functioning as another kind of sign explaining the text (Riffaterre 1978, p. 81)[2].

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[1] Saussure used the term 'semiology' (as did Roland Barthes), but I use 'semiotics' throughout, including paraphrases of these writers.

[2] Similarly, Hjelmslev's modification of schema norm and usage seeks a mediator between signifier and signified (Barthes 1968, pp. 17-18).

Such issues have wider implications than may first appear to be the case. Both the community and individual user are bound to their language, which is inherited from previous generations (Saussure 2005, pp. 71-72). I would suggest that what we inherit could include conventional literary genres such as poetry, and established ways of reading. According to Roland Barthes, a demand for semiotics is produced by the history of civilisation and the advent of mass communication, as society seeks to explain its own multiplicity of signifying media through a system which embraces all types of signs, including languages (1968, p. 9). A significant motivator for change in the relationships around language use lies with changes of need in a community, shifting economic imperatives and ideological adjustments, which may include social taboos on certain expressions or kinds of expressions (Barthes 1968, p. 32).

All forms of art engage with what is possible, in terms of representations of the world in which we live. Widespread acceptance of the arbitrary nature of the sign, as posited by Saussure, means that semiotics represents a challenge to the literal, and to the idea that we can represent the world (Chandler 2007, p. 123). Richard Rorty nuances any discussion of the arbitrary by reminding us of the difference between the world as it exists and the perceptions of the world made by the self. The idea of 'truth' is constructed in language, yet languages are complex patterns of signs that are all, to some extent, inherently limited in what they are able to express. In that sense, languages are not so much arbitrary as possessing a relative lack of choice (Rorty 1989, pp. 4-7).

Moving from language to literature, the literary formalists understood the evolution of literature as disrupting existing conventions and generating new ones (Rivkin et al. 2004a, p. 4), effectively mirroring that challenge to the literal. Similarly, Michael Riffaterre compares poetry with the sign and states, 'poetry says one thing and means something else' (1973, p. 229). Julia Kristeva takes a stronger line, arguing that poetry confronts order, the logic of language and even the idea of the State (1984, p. 80).

Certainly poems work by indirection, and are often not so much focused on shedding light on 'reality' as on creating new possible realities. This kind of assumption has both endured and developed, such as the understanding that a text – as opposed to the 'work', of which the text is just one instance – generates and subverts meaning at the same time (Johnson 2004, p. 341). However, we have to acknowledge that texts do not operate independently. We read them in relation to other texts and the codes that they have helped establish in us (just as we

read individual words in relation to their various, divergent meanings). Though a text has a degree of autonomy, it is possible to reflect on the systems and processes that give rise to it (Culler 1981, pp. 12, 37). Traditionally, the ‘thematic unity’ of a text is seen as helping create its sense of autonomy (Culler 1981, p. 4). This is part of the poem’s play, but so is disunity, as Culler comments on Johnson’s discussion of deconstruction as ‘a careful teasing out of warring forces of signification’ (1981, p. ix) illustrates. Such divergences and disunities will be seen at work in the analysis in chapters two, three and four, especially in relation to competing codes.

More generally, an exploration of semiotic issues promises to provide insights into particular cultures and periods. Thus, a semiotic reading of the poems of Loney, Paterson and Leggott not only offers the opportunity to better understand their works, it also offers ways of understanding how their work feeds back into the cultures and periods they reference and which helped produce them.

While the concept of the sign is an important bedrock to this discussion, I have identified two concepts from Saussure which have been under-utilised as tools for the analysis of poetry and which will form the core of my exegesis: syntagmatic and associative relations. The syntagm is a sequential lexical unit of two or more parts, including anything from compound nouns, to a phrase and whole sentences, lines or stanzas (Saussure 2005, pp. 121-122; Martin et al. 2006, pp. 196). Some of these come as ‘ready-made’ and idiomatic expressions over which the user seems to have little choice (Saussure 2005, pp. 122-123), often referred to as ‘fixed syntagms’. Syntagms occur singly, in sequences which fit together into sentences (Barthes 1968, p. 58).

Individual language users each possess their own storehouse of examples of similarities and differences between words and ideas which were termed associative relations by Saussure. Where the syntagmatic chain occurs *in praesentia* (in sequence), the associative occurs *in absentia*, as a group of memories. An associative group can include any number of elements, occurring in any order, i.e. it is non-linear (Saussure 2005, p. 122). Jakobson’s term for associative relations, the paradigmatic, is now more commonly used, and is the one I adopt.

For illustration of the relational axes, let’s look at the poem ‘Thrills (helpless)’ by Michele Leggott:

it’s   always   this

starts   it

a violin

violins

violins   wheeling   in

space

*

great   starts

going   up   taking   up

If you’ve got

leaving on your

mind –

(Leggott 1991, p. 11)

The word ‘it’s’ is already a syntagm, a contraction of two words. The phrase ‘it’s always’ is another lexical unit, a syntagm, and so on. But when we get to a violin wheeling, there is something illogical going on, since violins do not wheel. This metaphor is a paradigmatic usage.

In the second stanza, a fracture occurs after the second line’s ‘taking up’, breaking like a train of thought, as the text switches to what is really in mind. The isolation of the word ‘mind’ forces one to consider the role the human mind plays, in terms of switching references and trains of thought in general. Here, Leggott may be evoking jazz – *Georgia on my mind* – or the reference may be a more general one. In either case, the musical code begun with violins is extended.

The linearity of the syntagm implies that it occupies a horizontal axis, and, by contrast, the paradigmatic a vertical one. Barthes affirms the close connection between the syntagm and speech, explaining, ‘the spoken sentence is the very type of the syntagm’ (1968, p. 62). In contrast with speech, language may be seen as paradigmatic, since it encompasses all that is possible in language and not merely what an individual user is most likely to say. The

syntagmatic axis may be seen as largely concerned with form and the paradigmatic with content (Chandler 2007, p. 86), though this schema is complicated by the discussion below concerning the interweaving of the two axes. The syntagmatic is concerned with the positioning of words (Hawkes 1977, p. 26), and the paradigmatic with substitution, though the paradigmatic use of language in poetry must have some direct relationship with position on the page. The syntagmatic is concerned with combination and the paradigmatic with selection, or contrasts (Chandler 2007, pp. 83-84; Culler 1975, pp. 13-14). Additionally, combination may be seen as an external relation – concerning the way language is used in society – and selection as an internal one – based on individual eccentricity (Jakobson 1971, p. 44). An almost endless set of apparently binary terms can be made of this model, but it is the syntagmatic axis which determines meaning to the greatest extent (Hawkes 1977, p. 26).

Jakobson's research elucidates understandings of the relational axes. He has written extensively on the metonymic use of language, a technique of the syntagmatic chain (2000b: p. 56); even noting the 'bipolar structure of language' (1971, p. 70). His study of aphasia gives clinical evidence for a fundamental difference in the nature of metonymy and metaphor, the former being founded on combination and the latter on selection, two quite different attributes of thought. Aphasics are noted to have problems with either the element of combination or with selection, resulting in contiguity or similarity disorders (Jakobson 1971, pp. 56-67). Jakobson's evidence supports the idea that the syntagmatic and paradigmatic may represent separate mental capacities; in fact, Barthes summarises the relational axes as 'two forms of mental activity' (1968, p. 58). Ultimately, if they are two ways of thinking, they could be seen as two different ways of *writing*.

In poetry, the paradigmatic axis has much to do with the choices a poet makes around substitutions, all of which suggest the 'other' [3]; they are less logical and prescribed, and more intuitive, and the paradigmatic axis may well be less visible, because the relationships between words occur outside the immediate 'neighbourhood' of the text (Pettit 1977, p. 8). Cixous asserts that no invention in literature can occur without this sense of otherness, which she links to the unconscious (Cixous et al. 1986, pp. 84-85). Enhancing and complicating the discussion of otherness, Anthony Easthope states that the syntagmatic axis is dependent on

[3] Semioticians' use of the word 'substitution' probably stems from the commutation test, established in 1936 by Hjelmslev and Udall, which looks systematically at variations in the paradigmatic chain and how word choice effects what's signified (Barthes 1968, pp. 65-69).

the absence of alternatives which are necessarily omitted. While the syntagmatic chain is more consciously utilised, it is also partly determined by the otherness of the paradigmatic, and the Lacanian unconscious is a function of that 'other' (Easthope 1983, pp. 37-38). So, in different ways, both axes are reliant on omission and otherness to convey limited but – in poetry – suggestive meanings. This particular commonality between the two axes asserts their interrelatedness.

Barthes notes the essentially binary nature of discourse in the social sciences (1968, p. 12), and it is interesting to consider the extent to which the same may apply to poetry as a discourse. Such oppositions would seem indicative of human experience, especially if one accepts that the discernment of binary opposition is a child's 'first logical operation' (Hawkes 1977, p. 24). Culler notes the usefulness of binarism, since it helps us classify almost anything (1975, pp. 14-15). Binaries certainly have their place as a means of discussion, but as Derrida's critique of logocentrism and his concept of the différance show, binaries are arbitrary impositions, very often accompanied by evaluation frameworks that have political effects (1997, p. 44; see also Johnson 2004, p. 343)[4].

However, not all instances of binaries are oppositional. Though isolated for the purposes of discussion, the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes have rich inter-relations. Form is subject to paradigmatic choices and content to syntagmatic arrangement; and the contemplation of an alternative syntagm may be considered as a paradigmatic substitution (Chandler 2007, pp. 86-88); even the lexical is connotative (Perloff 1999, p. 288). One sees, for example, in reading metonymic passages, that the element of combination employed is sometimes such a strong 're-writing' of an image or idea that it points towards a type of otherness, and can seem more like a process of selection (which is paradigmatic), rather than combination. These assertions represent both a vital reiteration of Saussure's caution against dichotomy of relations (2005, pp. 127-128) and a useful tool for analysis of form and content. Productive use might yet be made of binaries as long as these warnings are kept in mind. Following Easthope (1983, p. 36), I take the position that the relational axes are at their most charged in poetry when working together, and I will test this in my own creative practice and in my analysis of the writings of Loney, Paterson and Leggott.

[4] This view of binary oppositions is also implicit in Cixous's writing (1986, pp. 63-72).

Jakobson's focus on metonymy occurs partly in reaction to what he sees as an over-emphasis by critics and linguists on metaphor. This is perhaps because metaphor is one of the most consistent and easily identified paradigmatic techniques. He is so conscious of this inclination that he speculates, somewhat whimsically, that the discourse itself may have a contiguity disorder (Jakobson 2000b, p. 59). His ideas have perhaps been influential, since in the work of later critics using these tools of analysis, such as Riffaterre, Culler and Easthope, explicit references to the syntagmatic chain are far more common. However, other explanations are valid, such as the idea that the syntagmatic chain is more easily demonstrated through logic, whereas the paradigmatic is idiosyncratic in its functions. The paradigmatic is often discussed in terms of its component features, such as metaphor and irony, with 'association' and the act of 'substitution' frequently used terms, but the literature shows relatively little engagement with the implications of the axis, or the ways in which the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic function together.

In Easthope's analysis of the Medieval ballad 'The three ravens', references to the syntagmatic chain are the more frequent. In discussing extracts from Shakespeare, Poe and Wordsworth, only the syntagmatic axis is mentioned explicitly, though the discussion of irony in relation to Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 and the sliding of signifiers point to the paradigmatic. Easthope's appraisal of Pound and Eliot similarly concerns syntagms and sliding signifiers, though the emergence of 'minor chains' and the loosening of the main syntagmatic chain are noted, concluding with a reference to Saussure's assertion that the paradigmatic calls to mind a plurality of alternate words (1983, pp. 88-150).

Riffaterre frequently analyses syntagms but scarcely mentions the paradigmatic, restricting this to a discussion of the 'paradigm of synonyms' (1978, p. 8). Culler's initial discussion of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in *Structuralist poetics – structuralism, linguistics and the study of literature* (1975) is barely deployed in his subsequent analyses of individual poems. However, he does consider the efforts to classify paradigms in relation to the non-linguistic sign of dress, and makes use of a quotation from Barthes which offers another useful definition of the paradigmatic – 'wherever there is syntagmatic incompatibility there is established a system of signifying oppositions, that is to say, a paradigm' (1975, p. 37) – but, overall, the relational axes are somewhat neglected.

The minimal discussion of the paradigmatic as a tool of poetic analysis perhaps reflects the poetry examined by the aforementioned critics and the eras which gave rise to them. It may be that poems which follow traditional forms, and work which shares the understanding that 'the poetic use of language involved placing together in sequence items which are phonologically or grammatically related' (Culler 1975, p. 56) will yield more compelling results for the syntagmatic, with topics such as symmetry and pattern likely to predominate over the disruptive force that is paradigmatic shift or change. Considering more recent developments in poetry, via New Zealand examples, will show that an old semiotic tool still has some work in it. The specific use of page space which characterises much of the work of the poets I analyse demands that space as an aspect of form be investigated for its visual and oral effects, as well as for the way it pushes the lexical into the imaginary.

Semiotic discourse on New Zealand poetry is limited. Paterson discusses semiotics in the introduction to his anthology *15 Contemporary New Zealand poets* (1980), and *The new poetry – considerations towards open form* (1981). Occasional references to semiotics and New Zealand poetry are made by Jack Ross and Tracey Slaughter in articles and reviews published in *Poetry New Zealand* (Ross 2000a; Slaughter 2003)[5]. John Needham is a rare commentator in this field. He considers the tools of analysis used by Jakobson, Culler and Riffaterre, but with considerable suspicion as to their usefulness. He suggests, for example, that Riffaterre's assertions about significance do not move sufficiently beyond Aristotelian universality, and that Culler ignores William Empson's writings on ambiguity, which for Needham underpins much semiotic discourse. He also argues that such critics ignore the dramatic effect of poems (Needham 1983, pp. 477-486). These claims about the broader analytic picture should be born in mind. Although I will focus on the relational axes, I will do so with frequent reference to other theoretical concerns, which are outlined in Chapter One.

Poetic techniques

Discussion of specific poetic techniques, in terms of which axis they belong to and how they inter-relate, is also requisite. Vico identified the four major tropes of metaphor, metonymy, irony and synecdoche in *The new science* in 1725 (1982, pp. 223-226). As well as being functions of language in general, each of these tropes is a timeless example of the techniques

[5] Texts by Keown and St Pierre explore semiotics in the prose of Patricia Grace and Janet Frame and are interesting examples, though they do not focus on poetry (Keown 2005; St Pierre 2011).

at the poet's disposal. Jakobson attempted to limit the tropes to just two in his interpretations of poetry: metaphor and metonymy, with irony subsumed in the former and synecdoche into the latter (1971, pp. 56-60), a view which has been influential.

The technique of metaphor involves a high degree of association through the writer's choice of words, images or analogical connections. The combination of referents is neither sequential nor, literally, entirely lexical. Hawkes quotes Vico: 'He [humanity] possesses an inherent "poetic wisdom" (*sapienza poetica*) which informs his responses to his environment and casts them in the form of a "metaphysics" of metaphor, symbol and myth'. But rather than embodying errors of facts they encode sophisticated forms of representation; myths, for example, are viewed as 'civil histories' (Hawkes 1977, p. 12). The myth might be seen as an extended metaphor. Through metaphor, one understands and experiences one thing in terms of another (Lakoff et al. 1980, p. 5). In literature, the reader must make an imaginative leap between the referents of a metaphor, though some resemblance must be present for the metaphor to make sense. But some metaphors become so familiar that they are no longer perceived as such by the user of language, and they become dead metaphors (Chandler 2007, p. 127), such as 'away with the faeries', which can be understood as 'fixed syntagms'; this fact alone indicates that transferral between the axes is possible.

When using similes, writers are successful to varying degrees at finding likened images which accord and resonate. The unfolding of the expression of a simile may be relatively syntagmatic, especially if the thing compared is close to its subject matter. Similes are, arguably, a less radical shift away from the logical than metaphor creates, because those similes that move too far from their subject matter are usually less satisfying and seem less plausible. Both metaphor and simile are correspondents of difference, and as rooted in human experience as the tendency towards binary opposition as a way of trying to understand, and to articulate that understanding.

An extended metaphor follows a syntagmatic programme as well as a paradigmatic one, since it requires a coherent set of connections across the extension. But the paradigmatic is still to the fore, with the sense of otherness suggested by the use of language important in invoking reader response. Free association is a technique that has facilitated a great deal of paradigmatic play in writing. It can seem a challenge to coherent narrative, as well as a rebuttal to meaning as the central preoccupation of literature. When a poet uses an established

structure, such as a Shakespearian sonnet, the extent of free association or scope for paradigmatic change in regard to form is reduced, though, of course, the constraint of form can create its own unique opportunities. Form, like language itself, partially determines content. Because in free verse poetry line breaks occur at any point the poet chooses, the paradigmatic potential of form is elevated. Perhaps free verse tends to be more content driven, or, as Charles Olson suggests, form is never more than an extension of content (1972, p. 338).

Bakhtin suggests problems in the flow-on effect of form on content, where 'the surface structure, determined by formal restrictions, may affect the deep image structure' (as cited in Ivanov 2003, 197-8). However, experience of practice shows that a restraint in one area of composition can create freedom in another. The writer, then, may be in a constant state of tension between concerns over form and content, perhaps wanting to shift either or both into original territory but aware that too heavy a preoccupation with any one isolated aspect may ruin the whole endeavour. Barthes discusses Levi-Strauss's theory that it is not content which is unconscious but forms and their symbolic function (1968, p. 25); one could even read 'normative' here for 'symbolic', at least where certain forms have become dominant, and have attained the status of a symbol, for example, that a sonnet symbolises poetry itself. This is a key idea for me in terms of the originating of new structures in poetry and their relation to the paradigmatic axis. Innovation must surely come from some sense of otherness, from departure, or difference, which compels change. One might ask whether it is possible that a new form could evolve from an old form while remaining with the same use of an axis. Paradigmatic features enable movement from an existing, syntagmatic structure towards something new. I will explore the link between the issue of form and content and the relational axes in my analysis.

Codes

Before saying more about the relational axes, I would like to comment on the concept of codes, which occurs frequently in textual analysis, as a way of trying to articulate the systems and processes mentioned above. Codes have many applications. Riffaterre uses the term 'code' in a variety of ways in his *Semiotics of poetry* (1978). Textual codes occur most often as systems of representation; for example, of a mirror (Riffaterre 1978, p. 38), of the concepts of loneliness and aridity (7) or of the inanimate (50). They can function as symbols of hidden meaning (10); as the means of transferal between references with a conceptual or word-based

factor in common (36, 54), or as the generation of idiolect (65). They can allude to the characteristics of a code (105); to the metaphoric code (136); to intertext as a prefabricated code (159); to a system modified to designate another system, such as a woman described by a landscape code (172); and to the statement of topic as code (187). Importantly, we learn that descriptive systems become codes by permutation of kernel words (66), which establish a topic that additional terms confirm; for example, ‘bark’ suggesting trees and followed by ‘branch’.

If a code is most commonly understood as a system of representation, a poem might occupy another level of representation, or its disruption. Eagleton notes Lotman’s understanding of a poem as a ‘system of systems’; its interactions including ‘collisions and disparities’, which conflict gives a poem its effects (2007, pp. 52-53), and which further explains the combative aspect of signification. In a general sense, the meaning of the word ‘code’ encompasses the passing on of laws and instructions, but also of secrecy, which nicely encapsulates reader expectations around such a specialised form as poetry[6]. While codes have their limitations, some of which will be discussed below, they are useful for articulating systems, and I will conduct my poetic analyses partly in these terms.

Page space

In creating the layout of a poem, the poet utilises the gaps between words and lines. This leads to the question of how the layout of a poem might best be described in terms of the relational axes. Spatial relations, as an aspect of form, are usually regarded as syntagmatic (Chandler 2007, p. 110). But it is worthwhile to interrogate differing uses of space, assuming that there is not only one use for space on the page, and their relationship to innovation. I will argue that innovations, including distinctive or original layouts are conceived in the paradigmatic axis and formalised in the syntagmatic.

The use of space is rarely discussed in any detail in literary criticism, though a variety of general observations about space have been made. It has been suggested that we interpret spaces by considering how they might be filled, or by giving them meaning as spaces (Culler 1975, p. 171); in so doing, we give a ‘signifying function’ to the materiality of the space that

[6] The French ‘paroles’, for instances of language, can also mean ‘password’.

makes up the page (Johnson 2004, 346). Further, Riffaterre notes that textual space may help organise linguistic elements such as symmetry and rhyme, making signs out of things which may not otherwise be meaningful (1978, p. 2).

It could be argued that uses of space constitute a kind of code, or meta-code, which, after all, helps articulate systems and processes, or might be said to have the characteristics of a code. That is, if such a discussion were articulated sufficiently. But commentary on page space has been a more frequent topic in the materiality of artists' books than in literary studies or theories of creative writing – to the detriment of the poet's and critic's understanding of the possible uses of space in poetry. Space has an impact on communication and modifies it (Carrión 1975, pp. 3-4). Johanna Drucker asserts that space is 'graphic, specific and produces meaning' (1998, p. 105). Just as words are maps for assigning order (Rivkin et al. 2004b, p. 54), space contributes to meaning. The visual can record process, 'or the simulation of movement', as well as making use of 'absent elements as visual presences' which contribute to meaning in a 'schematic mapping' (Drucker 1998, p. 103). I introduce some specific usages of space and associated critical understandings in chapters two, three and four.

Recent multi-disciplinary research between literary studies and psychology, using eye-tracking technology to analyse reading patterns, suggests that the use of space can increase the memory of a work, the range of possible meanings (or multiplicity) and the effectiveness of a poem. This has been measured by presenting readers with non-lineated or left-justified versions of poems, in contrast with originals which utilised space in unfamiliar ways, both within and around lines. Certain experimental poems were shown to cause changes in reading habits, from left/right and top/down conventions to scanning methods, as well as significantly altering the tendency for readers to fixate on words rather than space (Roberts et al. 2013, pp. 26-35).

Though the present research discusses visual elements of poetry written for the page, it is restricted to the type-written line and does not attempt to contextualise such works with visual and digital poetries. No doubt a discussion of these related topics would also provide insight into the use of space in poetry but is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that one recognises the important common ground with visual poetry, by which I mean works which combine images and text, and which has been described as 'neither and both a visual and a literary art' (Caldwell 2014, n.p.).

Spatial innovation in the line may form part of an attempt to direct a reader's access to associated ideas, such as in Paterson's double margin field form. Or it may be an elaborated enjambment across stanzas as a form of suspense in Loney's work (e.g. in *Sidetracks*, 1998, and *Missing parts*, 1992). Or it may include groups of lines which form comments on other lines in a kind of meta-language, as in Leggott's 'Tigers' (from *Swimmers, dancers*, 1991). While all poets use a variety of techniques, such as metonymy, metaphor and alliteration, to inform and enliven their work, an awareness of a corresponding spatial lexicon lends them another level of choice. Space may, for example, replace punctuation, stand in for language, or assist undecidability. These are all options that have the potential to increase the nuances of poetry.

A possible reason for the relative lack of spatial experiment even in much contemporary poetry relates to the ways in which space is so often used according to established conventions. The polarities up/down and left-right are susceptible to hierarchies. In particular the left/right function may well be interpreted or labelled as a known/unknown binary. Kress and van Leeuwen even suggest that these dichotomies are attended by associations of fear (1996, pp. 186-192)[7].

In practical terms, most poets orientate their work to the left hand margin, which is the 'known' of our practice; to venture far to the right, to begin there or to occupy that side of the page is to brook the unknown and to oppose convention. We all have our habits and to break them takes an effort of will during composition, and a corresponding effort later, during reading. Certainly the known/unknown factor is a significant one in poetic practice, with these spatial ideas being relatively unexplored in the discourse. A systematic examination of syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes in works by New Zealand poets is also absent from the literature, as is an examination of the use of space in examples of New Zealand poetry.

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[7] Chandler refers to Jakobson's argument that spatial signifiers are less hierarchical than aural ones, while also citing Saussure's assertion that visual signifiers can, 'exploit more than one dimension simultaneously'. Sequential syntagmatic relations are basically *before* and *after*. Spatial relations include a much wider range of positioning: above/below; in front/behind; close/distant; left/right; the compass points, and inside/outside. Sequences and axes are not neutral (Chandler 2007, pp. 110-112).

The poets

The poetry of Alistair Paterson, Alan Loney and Michele Leggott displays a consciousness of the processes involved in using language in aesthetic and experimental ways which, at the same time, is allied to the more common poetic concern around making meaning, or meanings. Paterson's first collection appeared in 1965. He originated the double margin field form in the late sixties (Caffin 1998, p. 481), and used it regularly and sometimes exclusively in his eight subsequent collections[8]. He was an influential editor of *Mate* and *Climate* in the 1970s, edited *Poetry New Zealand* for nearly twenty years and received the New Zealand Order of Merit Medal for services to literature in 2006.

Michele Leggott has published nine collections. She edited major retrospectives of Robyn Hyde's poetry, co-edited the influential anthology *Big smoke – New Zealand poems 1960-1975* (Auckland University Press, 2000) and was editor of *Landfall*, 1991-1993. She is Professor of Poetry at the University of Auckland, was New Zealand Poet Laureate from 2008-2009, was awarded the Member of New Zealand Order of Merit for services to poetry in 2009, and received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in 2013. Her long career has included a significant shift in the visual and aural balance of her work due to her loss of sight from the mid-1980s onwards, about which she writes openly.

Alan Loney's literary endeavours have been diverse. Much of his poetry was published in New Zealand between 1971 and 1998. He has published a memoir, and various edited volumes and writings on the book arts. He established Hawk Press in 1975[9], and ran Black Light Press (1987-1991), was co-director of the Holloway Press (1994-1998)[10], and founded the Book Arts Society in New Zealand and Electio Editions. He founded the journals *Parallax: a journal of post-modern literature and Art* (1982); *A brief description of the whole world* (1995), and *Verso – a magazine for the book as a work of art* (2014). Loney has lived in Melbourne since 1998. He received the Janet Frame Award in 2011.

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[8] The double margin form was used in parts of *Birds flying* (1973), *Cities and strangers* (1976), *The Toledo room* (1978) and *Summer on the Côte D'Azur* (2003), and throughout his long poems, *Qu'appelle* (1982), *Odysseus Rex* (1986) and *Incantations for warriors* (1987).

[9] It published thirty titles by Loney and others, including Ian Wedde, Martin Edmond, Bill Manhire, Elizabeth Smither, Anne Donovan and Graham Lindsay.

[10] He printed and designed twelve books by Robin Hyde, Kendrick Smithyman, Robert Creeley and others.

These poets share a tendency to write long poems, by which I mean any poem over two pages. Paterson writes book-length poems; Leggott's work, notably in *DIA* (1994) and *As far as I can see* (1999) is characterised by extended sequences; and Loney has written book-length sequences (e.g. *Dear Mondrian*, 1976) and collections of long sequences.

Such poems are often sequential or fragmentary; and, in many cases, their resulting multiplicity of style and content (and less commonly voice) might be said to satisfy some stylistics of the novel (Bakhtin 1981, p. 275). The long poem has been noted for its ability to extend the nineteenth century innovations of free verse, dramatic monologue and prose poem (Silliman 2011, n.p.). Silliman suggests that the long poem is 'an ideal form for thinking through questions of the frontier', meaning questions to do with poetry itself. He continues, 'these are, not coincidentally, also cosmological questions: where does the universe end? What stops it? What lies beyond? How do we reach past *all that is the case?*' (Silliman 2011, n.p.) Such questions may well drive the writing of poetry as experiment – and certainly they are qualities easily identified in these poets' work, where the frontier of language (and what can be done at the poetic frontier) is of paramount concern.

Although any poem may be analysed in semiotic terms, the long poem is suited to an exploration of semiotic potential in poetry, because its scope tends to produce greater varieties in the expression of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships. Also, in the hands of Paterson, Loney and Leggott, long poems tend to be more multivalent and indeterminate than their shorter works or, at least, manifest more examples of multivalency and indeterminacy within a single work, if for no other reason than because of their scope and ambition. In such poems there is room for more diverse code-making and for exploring the ways in which codes may fruitfully clash and cross-pollinate.

In order to explore these complex works, I combine in-depth textual analysis with a strong interest in the evolution of relevant literary and cultural theories, and extend these interests further into my own creative project. While the exploration of my topic – centred on the current potential of semiotics in literary analysis – necessarily begins with an engagement with structuralism, it is nuanced through a consideration of various more recent developments in poetry and the emergence and influence of poststructuralist and postmodernist ideas.

Chapter one of the exegesis outlines some issues connected to the sign and the relational axes which problematise both the use of language and the reading of texts. It includes consideration of further ideas from Jakobson and Riffaterre, and contextualises some of the analysis in the following chapters with a discussion of postmodernism and 'open form' poetry, relevant to much New Zealand work, especially from the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Chapter two analyses the poetry of Alistair Paterson and considers, in particular, his use of form and ways in which it assists themes associated with time. I have identified *Qu'appelle*, which makes exclusive use of his double margin form, and *Africa // Kabbo, Mantis and the porcupine's daughter*, which functions as a structural variant of it, as significant texts in his writing practice and likely to reflect fruitfully on the interchange between the relational axes.

Chapter three discusses poetry by Alan Loney in its sparse yet lyrical forms, focussing on experiments with lineation and space as well as prose poetry. Loney's *Sidetracks*, *Missing parts, The erasure tapes* and *Fragmenta nova* provide a variety of examples of voicing and postmodern self-referentiality.

Chapter four identifies a variety of experiments with form and content in Michele Leggott's poetry and changes in her approach to composition which nevertheless retain, if not enhance, the sense of multiplicity in her writing. Poems from Michele Leggott's collection *Swimmers, dancers* showcase spatial experiments, and her long poem 'so far' (from *Milk & honey*) takes a lyrical strategy which contrasts absorbingly with her earlier works.

The conclusion summarises the various effects of the relational axes and the use of page space employed by each poet, highlighting the differences between their approaches, and considering the implications for poetic practice. The Appendix lists instances of the uses of space identified in chapters two, three and four, and groups them towards a provisional taxonomy of space.

Chapter One: The relational axes, signs and signification – some problems and possibilities

Jakobson and the relational axes

In his paper 'Linguistics and Poetics' (originally presented in 1958), Jakobson looks frequently to poetry for examples of the potentiality of language, embracing the poetics of individual poets such as Vladimir Mayakovsky and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Jakobson argues that poetics and linguistics are too often separated because of the premise that the structure of poetic language is essentially different from that of other verbal structures. Though he seems to accept that poetic structure is more purposeful, he suggests that any verbal expression is also goal oriented; keeping these fields of study separate is justified only when poetics restricts linguistics (2000a, pp. 32-33). Further, Jakobson's description of the interrelationship between the axes emphasises the influence of the paradigmatic over the syntagmatic, since the axis of equivalence projects *into* the axis of combination, interrupting the 'business as usual' tendency of the syntagmatic. From the point of view of a practising poet, such insights into the functions of language are loaded with interest.

Jakobson considers poetry to be the most sophisticated form of literary utterance, but notes that, for linguists, what he calls, the 'poetic function' – the focus on the message for its own sake – cannot be understood in relation to poetry alone. The poetic function is the dominant one in verbal art, but it is subsidiary or accessory in other verbal functions. The poetic, 'by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects' (2000a, p. 36), so linguistics must look more widely than the limits of poetry. Further, students of poetry should be aware that what poetry can say about the sign is incomplete; yet the tools of semiotic analysis and a better understanding of the way the relational axes function can benefit us in the reading and writing of poetry. For this reason, I will not attempt to explicate different models of the sign in any general or comprehensive way but refer to them in relevant contexts where they illuminate my discussion of the interplay between the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic axes.

Jakobson ponders what features are inherent in any piece of poetry, and cites the two basic modes of verbal expression: selection and combination. Selection is based on 'equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and antisynonymity', and combination (a sequence) on contiguity. He suggests, 'The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from

the axis of selection into the axis of combination' (2000a, p. 38). This view corresponds with the interworking of the syntagm with the paradigm noted above and affirms the idea that there is a movement between the two axes implicit in the creation of poetic texts. Charting these movements can provide a powerful understanding of the mechanics of poetic practice.

As noted above, Jakobson comments extensively on the use of metonymy. He contends that the achievements of certain writers who utilise this technique are underrated, mainly because the literature on metonymy is scant compared with the literature on metaphor (2000a, p. 51)[11]. Jakobson explains why there is less attention given to metonymy than metaphor since, where metaphor is concerned, 'similarity in meaning connects the symbols of a metalanguage with the language referred to' (2000b, p. 59). When using a metalanguage to analyse tropes, the researcher is implicitly in command of more resources with which to handle metaphor, since the method adopted is already itself made metaphorical by the employment of that metalanguage. Conversely, metonymy can seem to defy interpretation, being based on a different principle, i.e. on linguistic and conceptual variations associated with the specific referent, rather than on similarities between discrete objects or concepts. The ties that link Romanticism with metaphor are easily recognised, Jakobson claims, whereas, the connections between metonymy and realism tend to go unnoticed. Additionally, poetry privileges the sign, and prose favours contiguity, with tropes and figures studied mainly as poetic devices. Similarities are innate to poetry, such as the parallelism of lines and repeated rhyming sounds. There are times, as suggested above, when the similarity between metonymy and metaphor, in terms of their both being kinds of substitution, problematise the idea that they do indeed always form a dichotomy.

Riffaterre and significance

Riffaterre's *Semiotics of Poetry* offers an in-depth analysis of mainly nineteenth and twentieth century French symbolist poetry, identifying tropes of language and discussing the concept of significance, as opposed to meaning. Together with his essay on Wordsworth's 'Yew-Trees', his work forms an invaluable model for analysis of poetry. For Riffaterre, poems may include two types of discourse: the descriptive and the symbolic (1973, p. 229). The first is associated with consonance and the second with dissonance ('rationalised as imagination'), which I would frame as syntagmatic and paradigmatic, respectively. Riffaterre

[11] Barthes later made a similar comment (1968, p. 61).

challenges the assumption that poetic texts are referential, and argues that 'representation is a verbal construct in which meaning is achieved by reference from words to words, not to things' (1973, p. 230). In discussing place names, for example, he argues that their meaning, 'flows entirely from syntax', giving the example that Glaramara must be understood as a hill in Wordsworth's poem amidst the 'index of verisimilitude', as well as contributing to the poem's sound of waters structure (1973, p. 232).

The difference between literary and non-literary utterance is a matter of significance (in the linguistic rather than the axiological sense), because even in poetry – with its uses of metaphor, ambiguity and polysemy – it is assumed that there is still a relation between words and things, and naming something makes it 'significant and attention–compelling' (1973, p. 238). The names in Wordsworth's poem are given 'suggestive historical associations,' including the example of an archaic spelling, to lend credence. Riffaterre argues that the poem would not benefit from more philological information and that the richness of its associations makes the poem self-sufficient. Even when such names are forgotten, he suggests, the text will remain evocative: historical interpretation is unnecessary since the associations work from the text outwards, rather than the other way around. Ultimately, though, the argument is incomplete since, even if a work remains evocative, it will be differently evocative at a future time. Riffaterre's argument does not support his assertion that additional knowledge of a time and place makes no difference to one's response to a poem, but he may be right to the extent that a poem neither needs nor depends upon such additional knowledge. His approach has something in common with New Criticism, which neglected historical and cultural background in privileging only the immediate content of the text.

The quality of *literariness* that a text is able to convey is essential to Riffaterre. He sees Wordsworth's poem as an exemplar, where the sequence of largely metonymic relations consolidates and expands the 'reality' of the tree and its attributes into a code, including a strong sense of time traversed. Often, this is achieved by movement from the 'kernel' word towards further related words, emphasised by the 'stylistic structure' (1973, pp. 234-235)[12]. The success of the style is not assessed by the relationship of each variant to an external referent but through its capacity to forge a series of relationships between words, 'duplicating the grammatical sequence with a string of semantic associations', and confirming its codes.

[12] The concept of the 'kernel subject word' is also noted by Jakobson (1971, p. 64).

Literary description relates to its subject matter as 'metalanguage to language.' Our interpretations are not based on judgments of whether or not there is a consistent view of 'reality', but whether words are compatible or not, 'along the syntagm' (1973, p. 236). One can say, then, that coherence is a syntagmatic trope.

To give an example of his view of significance, Riffaterre identifies thematic structures within Wordsworth's poem, such as the sound of waters structure, which could be said to reinforce meaning internal to the text. They correlate with images earlier in the poem, in terms of fluid forms or movements:

> Huge trunks! And each particular trunk a growth
> Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
> Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved

This component is itself strengthened by the spectator/ object structure, a defining element of the genre. The main effect is to place the reader as a *listener* in the scene when it comes to the overt reference to sound, largely because the descriptions of the waters are not actually visual:

> With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
> United worship; or in mute repose
> To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
> Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

These sounds at the conclusion of Wordsworth's 'Yew Trees' are said to be meaningless, and that is part of the poem's significance. The impression of sensation is all important, and an important part of what descriptive poetry is all about (1973, pp. 253-256). Perhaps the word 'meaningless' overstates the case, since an internal coherence is certainly present. However, Riffaterre writes about meaning within the poem, in opposition to the idea that the external referent *determines* its meaning.

Riffaterre notes the way the language of poetry shifts backwards and forwards between a lexicon which seems to foster its own domain (including its own grammar) and the use of common speech, dependant on aesthetic fashions. Fundamentally, 'poetry expresses concepts and things by indirection,' he suggests. What determines how the genre of poetry is perceived is the way in which the text carries meaning (1978, p. 1). He describes literature as, 'a

dialectic between text and reader,' but stresses that poetry is inseparable from text; if it is not, we cannot distinguish it from other writings, since, 'the reader's perception of what is poetic is based wholly upon reference to texts' (1978, p. 22).

Significance, for Riffaterre, is the formal unity of a poem, including any examples of indirection (1978, pp. 1-2). To attain this significance, the reader has to first traverse the 'mimesis' of the poem – for example, Wordsworth's simultaneous harnessing and disruption of the conventional idea that his poem gives an account of real experience in the real world. The reader's decoding of such poetic features as humour and irony relies on the fact that the reader is capable of detecting these (and perhaps unable to ignore them, such is the text's control over the qualities generated). Uncertainties may include an ungrammatical element, which helps allow variation of tone, and is part of the paradigmatic axis.

Riffaterre shows that a single word which brings unity to the poem could be absent and merely inferred (1978, p. 3). This absence correlates with the definition Riffaterre offers of the proper domain of semiotics as a, 'transfer of a sign from one level of discourse to another', often from a low signifying level to a more developed one (1978, p. 4). He reiterates that obstacles which seem to threaten meaning on first reading are often clues to the way semiotics works in the text, which ultimately determines its significance.

He comments on the way a poem releases the reader from concerns about, 'what language does to reality', because readers have to leap that hurdle to read the poem's message. Riffaterre describes one example of poetic misdirection as causing the reader to be sent to a landscape which seems real, but is, 'a stage set for special effects' (1978, pp. 6-7). This is a helpful metaphor for the working out of the play of poetry – and, on a broader level, perhaps even of language in general. There is a strong link between playfulness in poetry and a poet's awareness of semiotic potential, including the ability to establish and manipulate codes.

Riffaterre expands his arguments about codes when he explains that because a sign is something which necessarily relates to something else, every component of the network that makes up the poem must relate back to the code which it has established. When the poem achieves this kind of unity, it is as if it constitutes a single sign (1978, pp. 11-12). The idea leads to the claim that the significance of the poem now becomes something greater or other than its constituent parts, a concept that Riffaterre introduced earlier with the assertion that

significance is established by the relationships between the different elements of a text which they could not have had separately or outside it (1973, p. 253). At the same time, the succession of representations imposed on the reader is continually threatening to push meaning towards a text, 'not present in the linearity' (1978, p. 12). The significance is now, 'shaped like a doughnut'. The reader tries to bridge the gap of obscurity – partly fed by a sense of the originality of the poem, and, because this has not been possible inside the poem, one has to do so, '*outside the text*' [my italics]. The real message of the poem has little to do with the immediate denotations of the language used, and, 'everything to do with the way the given twists the mimetic codes out of shape by substituting its own structures for their structures' (1978, pp. 11-12). In this clash of concerns, he observes that the mimetic element, however problematised it may be, takes up most of the space in the poem, yet the matrix – or the structure of the given – could be summed up in a word, which could be present, or absent but inferred.

Sometimes a poem may be devoid of any message and constitute a pure experiment of grammar or words. Mimesis is illusory, existing only for the sake of the word play. Riffaterre makes the bold and brave statement that poetry is 'more of a game than anything else'. Embellishing this argument, he contends that the joke is in itself a literary form and one much under-appreciated. He argues that literature must be permitted to say nothing if it so chooses, 'no longer the doughnut around its hole, but the doughnut as a hole' (1978, pp. 13-17). This idea has been influential through postmodernism and LANGUAGE poetry, and the latter's attempt to 'disrupt sense-making' (Disney 2014, n.p.). These movements constitute a challenge to assumptions about meaning and the expectation many readers have of being able to build a reasonably coherent narrative from whatever they read, even poetry. Yet playfulness and the full range of semiotic potential in language is surely an important part of the attraction of poetry, which celebrates words as sounds, as well as their affective and aesthetic qualities. And in poems that are purely an experiment in language both the relational axes are likely to need to function together to make that experiment work.

In summary, then, Jakobson's assertion that poetics is integral to linguistics helps give justification to my thesis and his consideration of specific poetic techniques, such as metonymy, foregrounds many of my discussions of poetry. Riffaterre's thesis concerning the primacy of the concept of significance over the need for a referent is one which I will explore in my own analysis, especially in relation to Leggott. His ability to note the unpredictable

nature of poetry, as well as its power as a sign system (in the ‘transfer of a sign from one level of discourse to another’) are especially useful principles to keep in mind when encountering the problematic nature of many poetic texts, and does so with some specific reference to the syntagm. His examination of codes within a text sheds much light on poetic practice, and might be applied even to contemporary poems which treat codes in a different way. More modern examples than those given by Riffaterre might reveal that codes frequently compete with each other, or accommodate Culler’s warning that there may be no discrete codes (1988, p. 230).

One should note that any cultural artefact, like language itself, functions within the contexts of the society which produced it, within its tastes and ideologies. Bakhtin’s caution concerning the sign might be remembered for any analysis of language or its functions, including the literary function: ‘linguistic connections have nothing in common with ideological values’ (as cited in Ivanov 2003, p. 197). He reminds us that Saussure did not comment explicitly on ideology. Similar cautions are made by Culler and Catherine Belsey regarding the relentless pursuit of the sign, and the forms of criticism it might engender, to the detriment of meaning derived from wider contexts (Culler 1981, p. xi; Belsey 1980, pp. 1-36). The context of a poem must include the expectations of readership and era, in other words, of genre memory.

Postmodernism and ‘open form’

During the latter part of the twentieth century, the period in which a number of the poems I analyse were composed, ideas about postmodernism and ‘open form’ were prevalent, and, for this reason, I would like to introduce a range of key ideas about postmodernism relevant to the practice of the poets to be discussed. Peter Barry contends that some of the features of postmodernism noted by *The Penguin dictionary of literary terms and literary theory*, which include eclecticism, aleatory writing, parody and pastiche, are already observable in modernism (Barry 2009, p. 80). The Penguin dictionary includes other features which Barry does not discuss, such as revolts against authority and signification and the relativism brought about by the proliferation of literary theories in the latter part of the twentieth century (which seem to come from Jameson’s *Postmodernism, or, the cultural capital of late capitalism*, 1991). It is plain that the term ‘postmodernism’ is a contentious one.

Part of the problem is that we may still be living in the postmodern era (Cuddon 1998, pp. 689-690; Dix 2011, pp. 327-329) – or the era of late capitalism, as Jameson would have it – so that any rational assessment of the relevance of the term is clouded by current immersion in experience. Marjorie Perloff expresses doubts as to whether the 'modern' era that postmodernism supposedly followed truly existed. She argues that no new form of poetry supplants a previous one in a radical way but is the evolution of something set in motion some time before. She quotes from Roger Cardinal's theory of a three-stage cycle of poetry over the last 150 years. In this schema, poetry first dealt with mysteries; next, it chose to do so deliberately. In the third phase, corresponding with postmodernism, poetry developed a sensibility 'prepared to occupy itself with the gestures of mystery and defer clarification of the content of mystery' (Perloff 1999, 28-31). This sense of mystery and of questions being unanswered certainly evokes the mood of postmodernism. Perloff's understanding of that mood is embellished by Jeremy Hawthorn's idea that modernism uses the fragment in a way that laments loss of faith and authority, whereas postmodernism employs it with delighted freedom. Other recognisable features of postmodernism include the collapsing of distinctions between high and low culture, as well as self-conscious intertextuality and collage-like effects (Barry 2009, pp. 80-81; Dix 2011, p. 328).

In New Zealand, a growing recognition of postmodernism in poetry has been evident in the introductions to large scale New Zealand poetry anthologies which endorse many of its features, without always using the term itself. Mark Williams likens reading through poetry from 1972-1986 to experiencing an eccentric musical composition in which 'discordances are more in evidence than design' (1987a, p. 32). By 1989, Harvey McQueen argues that poetry reflects a changing pluralistic society (1989, pp. 15-18). The editors of the 1997 Oxford Anthology claim that New Zealand poetry is not heading in any single, discernible direction, but rather adapts influences from 'high culture and low culture, salon and street, literary and oral', to its own ends; they also give an example of LANGUAGE poetry in the work of Janet Frame to illustrate the point that literary evolution is not linear (Bornholdt et al. pp. xxiii-xiv)[13]. In 2009, Andrew Johnston and Robyn Marsack would celebrate poetry which is, 'pulling in snatches of talk, of pop, of jazz, of chant, along with echoes of the classics and

[13] This accords with points made by Perloff, above.

even, from time to time, a burst of pure white noise', and which incorporates 'anti-poetry' (2008, p. 11). Each of these references reflects on at least one of the characteristics of postmodernism described above.

Now often associated with postmodernism, although deriving from early- and mid-twentieth century ideas, the concept of open form poetry was popular in the 1970s and 1980s. It was very much a reflection of the influence of American poetics, discussed in the New Zealand context by C.K. Stead and Alistair Paterson. Stead asserts that open poetic forms seek to absorb life and to become almost indistinguishable from it, 'to collapse conceptual distinctions'. This approach includes 'an openness to experience as it occurs,' and the idea that poetry is a quality rather than a form (1981, pp. 148-149).

Paterson identifies an open attitude on the part of the poet which trusts the reader's creativity when reading. This includes 'an assumption of uncertainty', which appreciates the fact that final distinctions cannot be made. Paterson uses the term 'open form' interchangeably with 'postmodernism', indicating how he connects his approach to poetry with the contemporary zeitgeist (1981, pp. 23-26), and it is certainly easy to see the overlap of concepts.

A popular idea associated with open form poetry is that space in poetry can be used to score the musicality of words, much as a composer scores music. It was developed by American poet Charles Olson (in 'Projective Verse', first published in *Poetry New York*, vol. 3, 1950), who drew on the earlier ideas of Ezra Pound and others. Olson's influence is acknowledged in the New Zealand context by Alistair Paterson, Alan Loney and C.K. Stead (Paterson 1981, pp. 30-31; Loney 1992a, pp. 92-98; Stead 1981, p. 153) – poets who have all experimented with page space. The idea of scoring words like music is in some ways a curious proposition. I have found numerous examples of intriguing uses of space in the work of these three poets, but such examples do not always closely connect with the idea of scoring music. This brings up a difficulty that has already been acknowledged in the literature – that the link or relationship between the visual and aural effects in a poem is uncertain. For example, Drucker notes, in pondering Apollinaire's famous visual poem 'Il Pleut' (*Calligrammes*, 1918), the difficulty of deciding at what point the visual produces an aural effect (1998, p. 106).

Broadening the focus, Niall Lucy reminds us that it is not only semioticians who understand signs in daily life, all members of a culture do so (2001, p. 4). Culture was in crucial respects a limited subject in ages where the image of God ruled (Lucy 2001, p. 14), just as Derrida's assertion that the era of the sign, with its definitive signified, shares the epoch of divinity (1997, pp. 13-15). Lucy suggests that semiotics should be informed by a much wider structure that includes critiques of difference and oppositions. This wider perspective is in many respects similar to Lotman's idea of the 'collisions and disparities' which give a poem its effects. In any case, the influence of semiotics has, to a significant extent, been absorbed within the field of cultural studies (Lucy 2001, pp. 4, 25).

References to cultural studies and a wide cultural banner bring to mind assemblage theory as one possible holistic framework within which semiotics might come to dwell. Even a conventional structuralist understanding may see literature as an 'assemblage of signs', as Rivkin and Ryan write in discussing Barthes (Rivkin et al. 2004b, p. 54). But assemblage is a broader subject than the sign. Little quotes Bryant's view that though assemblages may be fully comprised of bodies, 'there are no assemblages composed entirely of signs and utterances' (as cited in Little D 2012, n.p.). While this idea reminds us of the Saussurean understanding that signs must be contextualised no less than language users, it takes an understanding of 'context' much further[14]. Assemblage accommodates the poem as the 'system of systems' and the, at times, opposing significations that deconstruction highlights.

It is evident that the discussion of the undecidability, indeterminacy, and disruptive, or subversive tendencies of texts with regard to meaning raised in this exegesis are broadly consistent across a variety of literary theories, beginning with an acknowledgement that literature itself forces the issue of indeterminacy of meaning, largely because of, 'the undecidable nature of figurative language' (Culler 1981, 35-36). These ideas find their apogee in assemblage theory's resistance to definition, and to the celebration of context. In this paradigm, diversity is paramount, illustrated by the idea that 'there are only multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single *assemblage*, operating in the same *assemblage*: packs in masses and masses in packs' (Deleuze et al. 1988, p. 34). It suggests a kind of radical relativism, which nonetheless embraces rather than pushes away the indeterminacy of poetry and its attendant sense of otherness. This acceptance of poetic indeterminacy encompasses

[14] Opposed to the Saussurean sign, Deleuze and Guatarri's semiotics is a fusion of Peirce's and Hjelmslev's triads, where content is not a signified and expression is not a signifier, but both are variables of an assemblage (Semetsky 2005, p. 242).

the idea that the concept of a code is too limited and unstable to comprehend the whole, 'since a code is the condition of possibility for all explanation' (Deleuze et al. 1988, p. 77). However, insofar as spatial relations may constitute a code, I would like to introduce an idea through which one might frame an understanding of the use of space in a poem. Culler draws attention to the fact that linguistics has been more influenced than it generally cares to admit by writing than by speech. Linguists tend to group aspects of speech, such as pauses, exclamations and silences, into the category of 'paralinguistic features'. But the discussion of such features does not always make a distinction between, for example, the lengths of a silence[15]. This means that much is absent from the discussion of any resulting codification (Culler 1988, pp. 217-221).

Culler suggests that the marginal cases, such as silences and exclamations, may be better placed at the centre of a linguistics of writing than at the edge (1988, pp. 221-230). The codified systems that usually claim priority and finality are privileged examples of a generalised pattern (Culler 1988, pp. 221, 225). In fact, 'language seems not so much a system of signs, each joining a signifier to its signified, as an infinite pattern of echoes and repetitions'. The reader decides which pattern to pursue and which has significance (Culler 1988, p. 224). This idea of patterning sits well with the idea of text as a form of assemblage. I suggest that the use of space, like silence, has been marginalised in the semiotic discourses that appraise literature and has a larger role to play than we have so far cared to acknowledge.

[15] Another example might be the omission of materiality from literary discussions (Stuart 2009, pp. 3-4), though any distinction between book and text at least acknowledges the difference that materiality constitutes.

Chapter Two: Alistair Paterson and visual form[16]

Alistair Paterson's double margin field form is a distinctive structure and one which, through its use of spatial relations, suggests a particularly significant discussion of the relational axes. The form certainly makes a poem attractive on the page. But what other effects does it have? The reading of *Qu'appelle* which begins this chapter necessitates an engagement with the ways in which this visual form combines its ideas, with how the form interacts with its content, and to what extent it may be an expression or enactment of that content. Is the double margin an attempt to score music in poetry, as discussed above? Its distinctive use of space facilitates a manipulation of time in the poem that might make such an objective possible. In fact, it performs a variety of functions, impressive in their range.

The poem begins:

It is summer
& time is caught
                                        frozen
as the whip-lash of trees
                  hesitates, halts, arrests itself
the sun stands still:
                         she is going shopping
or to work (she walks, takes a bus
or rides a bicycle)
                      & it is today or tomorrow
maybe the day before yesterday
the present
                    silence
                                          now.
(Paterson 1982, p. 1[17])

The reader is given a season and offered an image for time. The abrupt switch of margins to 'frozen' breaks the phrase and the likeliest next syntagm and creates a distinct change of mood, which echoes movement or anticipates what is described. This use of space enacts and dramatises content, together with a nice oxymoronic effect between 'summer' and 'frozen', which helps recycle the cliché of 'caught frozen'. We then encounter an action: 'the whip-

[16] Portions of analysis from this and later chapters appeared in 'The line: recent experiments in New Zealand and Australia' (Bullock 2017).
[17] References to *Qu'appelle* will be made by page number only for the rest of this section.

lash of trees', rather than the description of place that one might have expected. This action suggests that life is tough. The shift to the second margin enacts movement (and content), and its halting.

The double margin helps separate out different thoughts or suggest changes of direction – it creates departures, which are more obviously signalled with this use of space than a mere line break might do, such as 'hesitates, halts, arrests itself' coming back to 'the sun stands still'. The word 'hesitates' functions briefly as a kernel word, and is confirmed by 'halts' and 'arrests itself', a more sequential, syntagmatic sequence. This syntagm lends credence to the fact that, after the barrage, even the sun can seem to stand still. The line is followed by a full colon, as if this tumultuous stage were set solely for the character that appears. A woman – an unnamed 'she' – is going shopping, but immediately another explanation is offered, so there are two possible reasons for her actions, with three possible modes of transport. The interpretation is a matter of the reader's choice, and corresponds with Paterson's theories about the reader's creativity being active, mentioned above.

The text compounds the list of unknowns by saying that it is today *or tomorrow*, it could even be the day before yesterday, or the present. This doubt is unexpected, since the poem has begun by exhibiting at least some degree of narrative; the writing plays with narrative linearity. The new idea that it could be today or tomorrow is not isolated in a separate stanza but attached to this one, to inform it throughout, and to introduce the idea of the contemporaneity of time. The flexibility of the double margin and the possibilities of the relational axes is already evident.

The words 'the present' occurring on a line on its own constitutes an assertion on the part of the text, as if it alone answers the questions, possibly giving the reader less choice[18]. But the idea of the present does link with the other periods described, to help evoke contemporaneity. The movement to the word 'silence' is a paradigmatic shift. It emphasises the present, and the eternity of the moment and, importantly, suggests the silence of death (which will be experienced in the present when it happens). The word 'now' is a further assertion that this moment is all that there is. The use of space here is strongly transitionary, reiterative in some ways, but taking new directions as well.

[18] Paterson also stresses the importance of the present and the idea of becoming, as well as the irrelevance of the future, in an interview (J. Webb, unpublished interview, 27 November 2014, p. 2).

Uncertainty is caused by omitted information. The omitted points to something central but absent from the text, an example of Riffaterre's idea discussed above (see also Derrida 2001, p. 352). Paterson disrupts the expectations of the reader in what initially seems like a narrative sequence (beginning with the innocuous, 'It is summer'). The triad line break that ends the stanza reminds the student of poetry of William Carlos Williams' broken line experiments, albeit adapted here with larger breaks and merged with Paterson's double margin. The uncertainty regarding time might be likened to the prose works of Samuel Beckett, where the normative elements of fiction, such as plot and descriptive characterisation, are sacrificed or made unstable, disrupting the reader's expectations and understanding. Such intertextual hints accord well with Bakhtin's theory that genre memory is a key aspect of utterance. Is it possible that a poet absorbs all these elements? Yes, indeed. But it is questionable whether they are all used consciously; some may be evoked in an individual reader only, but the principles of 'open form' allow diverse interpretations, just as postmodernism celebrates the intertext.

The question of conscious usage finds a parallel in language use generally. Saussure claims that language is not a function of the speaker, who absorbs it passively, with premeditation only occurring when one attempts to study language as a subject (2005, p. 14). Similarly, writing techniques are internalised, which the poet may have thought about consciously at times, but which can only be used in combination at an intuitive and creative level. Bakhtin comments on efforts to bridge the gaps of composition, 'there is no continuous transition, and no connection at all, between the linguistic forms of the elements of an utterance and the forms of its whole. *Only by a leap* can we move from syntax to questions of composition' (my italics, as cited in Ivanov, 202). Paterson's syntax is relatively straightforward, even bare. He employs personification and metaphor in relation to time, the trees and the sun. There is one adjective, caught up in the metaphor and no adverbs. The language is simple, yet it disturbs and evokes. The openness of the writing – in terms of what is left out – means that the reader is compelled to be an active participant in constructing meaning from the text, and can fill in the narrative gaps in their own way. The use of intertext and the omission of various possible 'centres' of the text indeed suggest the otherness that Cixous championed.

The phrase 'She is caught' which begins the second stanza, isolated from the rest of the syntagm: 'with her head thrown back', suggests her frozen in time, as in a portrait, and parallels the first stanza's use of 'caught'. Another triad from Paterson has a slightly different effect:

bends
is bruised
broken. (1)

This use of page space evokes time stretched out. It is visually enacted on the page, across the seasons mentioned a few lines before, towards autumn, in a falling rhythm. It connects and reinforces ideas (and codes) already established, but in a physical, embodied manner (and in a subtly different way to the example listed above of '& time is caught // frozen'). Berry discusses Drucker's characterisation of enactment as a kind of visual performance of content (2002, p. 59), a phenomenon which finds an example here.

The paradigmatic element moves into the realm of imagination, as the voice posits that if the subject of the poem (at this stage) were not more sensible of her own limitations, she would claim:

this centre of calm
is the earth at its apogee –
when it hangs
poised

waiting for something to happen. (2)

Suspense is enacted by the use of space after 'hangs'. The moment as an enduring and freeing place to abide is an ideal, even if the postmodern condition resists and frustrates it (Jameson 1991, pp. xii, 18-21).

The second section (sections are separated by asterisks throughout), is comprised solely of the interjection, 'The bomb has fallen on Washington / therefore . . .' It invokes the imagination, a 'what if' that should scare us. The space after 'therefore' suggests that we do not know what the word implies, and have not yet formulated a response. The silence of the incomplete line and unresolved idea evokes unknowing. Space as silence is another significant contribution to meaning, since, in silence, we wonder what has been left unsaid, what might have been. It is analogous to a character saying nothing when we expect a speech: that silence means something, but is just the kind of paralinguistic feature that Culler mentioned can be neglected in analysis. Space has been called, 'the music of the unsung poetry' (Carrión 1975, p. 3), and we will encounter other more musical uses of it.

The next stanza opens, ‘Let me begin an accounting’, as if prompted by that imagined scenario of a bomb falling on Washington. One wonders what kind of accounting this is: factual, imaginative or ethical? It describes days,

> mindless & without feeling
> from
> little country towns (2)

The space after feeling enacts the spaciousness and relative calm of the place. The generality seeks out specific, habitual detail such as, ‘those early morning deliveries / (milk, bread & the newspapers)’ to create balance. These events occur from dawn till ‘the world’s end’, a phrase which generates some irony and complexity after the previous stanza. The fragment of the long poem needs the whole to give it context, connection and a fullness of connotations. The fragmentary phrases equate to the fragments of the day. Later in the poem, it appears that the ‘she’ initially discussed is a sex worker, but the reader cannot be absolutely sure whether this is not another character.

After just two pages of the text one notices, as well as the diverse uses of space within the double margin, that the major paradigmatic shifts are occurring, in terms of space, from left to right. This movement is no doubt in line with the reading and writing habits of English; it also reflects the left/right, known/unknown dichotomy in the hierarchy mentioned earlier. There is but one exception at the end of the second page:

> accident & event
>
> an empty highway (2)

This is the only example in the poem of a movement other than left to right being used for a significant shift in place, time or idea (other than discrete stanza sections). This use of parallelism in the poem’s spatial layout is a shapely and musical variation of pattern.

The text tells us, ‘Disorder surrounds her’, but it surrounds everyone: ‘all over the city / is confusion, life’ – life itself is confusion: the postmodern condition. She follows the past as well as the present, encountering books in Sydney, and ‘the beginnings of things – / footprints out of East Africa’ (3). The text voices a preoccupation with origins that partly

drives Paterson's later collection *Africa // Kabbo, Mantis and the porcupine's daughter*. The text is enlivened by details emerging from the book arcade, as the particulars balance its more general ideas. These details include descriptions of Shackleton's journeys and mention of Frank Worsley's childhood (Worsley was the captain of the *Endurance* which made the Trans-Atlantic Expedition, 1914-16, and a dedicatee of this volume). All these accidents and events comprise 'what is possible - / & what happens //whether it's possible or not' (4). This last line suggests that the voice of poetry need not be limited by a prior conception of 'reality', just as the events of life sometimes move beyond imagining. The text moves beyond representation.

Wellington is also in ruins, the Beehive reduced to rubble. The shifts that the second margin affords help the text develop the theme of contemporaneity:

> Cabinet is in session
> caucus debates the leadership –
>   Beethoven stares at a window
> & seeing nothing creates
>   lightning
> creates
>   a red weal across living flesh
> sounds that excite
> the cupidity of the innocent:
>   school teachers & shopkeepers (4)

The second margin again enacts the change of direction spatially, and ideas lying in the same stanza are conflated in intriguing ways, for example, with the switch in focus to Beethoven. His music is created out of the nothing that he sees. The movement between 'creates' and 'lightning' has a demonstrable effect and reconnects the text with the present, since his music endures across time, and through those who enjoy it. Stockhausen and Shostakovich are invoked in similar ways, juxtaposed in the second margin with a reference to bombs falling on Dresden; it is the same reality as the imagined bombs falling on Washington and Wellington, and the text reminds us of this potential commonality. But it immediately switches back to the left-hand margin which narrates the 'she' of the text licking Dransfield's moustache – the first mention of Australian poet Michael Dransfield (the text's other dedicatee). Through its dedicatees, the text indicates the importance of influence, as well as referencing the thinking process, and attempts to evoke idiolect.

The paradigmatic link to the next stanza is the thought of a journey, which recounts Worsley's life at sea – the voice of the poem obviously identifies with the explorer, and seems to evoke nostalgia for that era and lifestyle. The connection between stanzas is sometimes tenuous, relying heavily on faint echoes of earlier sections. In these cases, the layout might be said to have become syntagmatic, though it began paradigmatically: what is repeated and re-used becomes an established norm, no longer shifting as dramatically in terms of the paradigmatic, and perhaps moving less effectively.

Alternatively, one could say that the paradigmatic, rather than the syntagmatic, is becoming fractured. Paterson himself cautions 'that there is a point beyond which poetry written in open form begins to cease operating effectively, commences to fall apart as poetic (and therefore aesthetic) experience' (1981, p. 44). It is on this basis that he feels poetry should be assessed (rather than traditional formal concepts), but he gives an additional clue as to the ruling modus operandi, in the 'logic of imagination' (Paterson 1981, p. 28). It is true, in most cases at least, that these movements are imaginatively suggestive.

The thread of future catastrophe is maintained by short stanzas which function as interjections to the main 'action' narrated in the present (7). The interspersing of references to current political and social issues have more resonance than the imagined catastrophes, even though they are inevitably dated, because they capture a particular time and specific associated concerns. The lines: 'The papers proclaim / oil might be rationed', coming just after the news of the death of the Shah, gives a current reader a strong sense of irony in looking back, since the issue of climate change and the effects of oil consumption are still so current and so fraught. In this sense, Riffaterre's contention that historical perspective adds little to one's perception of a text appears to be contradicted. History acts as another paradigmatic shift here in its creation of irony.

As we return again to Wellington, we follow ordinary people:

> hopeless & impossible journeys
> which in their own & obvious way
> are no less difficult
> than Shackleton's & Worsley's (8)

In this reiteration of the epic in the mundane, we are reminded of the ambition of the long poem, as well as the links between peoples of all times. All these individuals 'follow the sun', which links rich and poor alike, and is reinforced as the stanza details the ordinariness of buying and selling.

The coldness of the 'she' of the poem 'working on' Dransfield once more suggests a sex worker, potentially complicating her previous appearances in the text. The juxtapositions of stanzas continue as the text leaps from the physical connection between the woman and Dransfield and thoughts about Dransfield's unwritten poems to the need to bail water in Worsley's expedition:

& what will happen next.

*
'Having
bailed the water out (10)

Has the paradigmatic become fractured, since it struggles to maintain logical connectivity? Has a discordant juxtaposition taken over as the main strategy? On re-reading, one finds a subtle link between the line which breaks off from Dransfield, to the bailing of water many years earlier, as bailing is forced to become a metaphor by the lack of apparent explanation of the link between the two sections (10). This represents another strange yet very specific use of space, which contributes to meaning in a fresh way, that of the creation of metaphor.

At times, the diction is like prose broken up into double margined lines (11), insufficient to sustain a sense of the 'poetic'. Other sections are especially effective in the way they use the second margin, for example, when the sailors' caps are, 'echoing / that incurable romanticism / they carry locked in their heads' (11). The use of space sometimes assists our understanding of perceived distance, for example, Worsley as a child:

climbs & stares out
over the cold sea
dreaming of tall ships (15)

The changes of direction wrought by the use of space assists the telling of different passages of the narrative thread. Once again we see the double margin used for departures and additions of thought:

In Tehran
the 52 American hostages
                    are celebrating Christmas
they have been prisoners
for more than a year
                    & apart from the nativity
(& being alive)
                have no cause for celebration. (15-16)

The postmodern predicament is again evident in lines which consider ownership of memory: ‘if they “belong” to anyone at all’ (17). This attitude questions a number of other fundamentals which might be taken as given. For example, in another passage imagining Dransfield, the parenthetical ‘if thinking is what it’s called’ (18-19) questions even our thought processes.

Time and place are sometimes conflated to the extent that a character from the past interacts in the modern world – such as Moses haranguing the multitude in Civic Square in the present (18). This strategy is appealing for its imaginary qualities and its ability to juxtapose norms and mores. But when ideas are conflated with references to Moses, Krishna or Shakespeare, rather than events, the effect seems less successful, as the historical references lack specificity. Similar problems occur with the use of apparently specific terms, such as ‘particular’, in ‘she was a particular woman / & he a particular man’, (19) which belie the fact that no detailed characteristics of these characters are provided. The strategy has a literal quality to it which rings true, yet is unsatisfying poetically even if intended ironically.

‘Meanwhile’, we return to Worsley, the association stretched to breaking point by a convention more familiar to the comic western, and undoubtedly ironic. But an interesting variation of the use of the double margin awaits the reader. Extracts from Worsley’s diary are notated across the double margin, and read fluidly as poetry. Some of the descriptions which follow these quotations are prosaic in comparison – far more so than the diary entries themselves – as if to emphasise that the euphony of poetry may occur when unexpected, and in almost any situation (20).

Another example of the double margin helping turn the prose of one of Worsley's diary entries into poetry reads:

Worsley had to crouch low
                                        in order to bring
the horizon closer
'As the lateness of the hour
                                    & the mist,' he says
'made for poor observation
I resolved on attempting
                                    a meridian altitude.'   (23)

The word 'bring' rings out musically, and recalls Jen Crawford's metaphor of the use of page space being like echo location (2016, n.p.). The space before 'the horizon closer' seems to draw it nearer (23). The found line '"& the mist," he says' has a distinct euphony, and by breaking the relatively formal language into some of its component parts our attention is drawn to its poetic qualities, despite the archaisms; a phrase such as 'a meridian altitude' is celebrated for its inherent and slightly heroic, poetic attitude. The isolating of other fragments such as 'while the sky' on a line in the second margin helps the reader enjoy sound qualities which might otherwise go unnoticed. One reviewer notes the 'lyric regularity' of the work, its incantatory effects and 'quiet harmonies' (Broughton 1984, pp. 484-486)[19].

Yet in other ways the disparities of the poem create dissonance. Another reference to 'she' brings together earlier female characters into an image of the woman who lives in Remuera (and about whom we are earlier told that she believes in Santa Claus and votes National, a jibe that makes the text's politics clear). She now lives in 'Parnell or Remuera', and like the ambiguity of time and place of the first page of the poem, this uncertainty is unsettling, as the poem's codes of reference are disrupted (21). The ambiguity of the third person used in this way creates paradigmatic links between characters, intentionally or otherwise.

The coming together of disparate details again occurs as the human condition itself creates confusion:

metal grinds on metal
                        atoms, molecules, worlds
arch/ swirl glide

[19] Unfortunately, Broughton was unable to identify any new formal features and claimed that there were none.

in galactic confusion
creating
forests of crystal
the abrupt
pain of still moments
bleeding at the roadside
bringing –
'blank long hours'
that stretch (endlessly)
across September . . . (24-25)

Though the word 'galactic' seems mere hyperbole, it is assisted by the phrase 'forests of crystal', which suggests another and different mind trying to establish and describe a moment. Dusk falls on the general population of the suburbs of Wellington, any one of whom may be simply 'waiting for something to happen'. And on the more specific descriptions of the inhabitants of Auckland the same sense of expectation rests: '& a scatter of light . . . / it touches the stars', evoking a need to reach out towards a better or more significant life. The space on the page assists one's grasp of the movement of light towards the sky.

Paterson's uses of page space may be seen as both harmonic and disruptive expressions of the potential of the relational axes. Such experimentation incorporates subtle understandings of the role played by space on the page and the numerous ways in which it assists the text. These include subtle arrangements of ideas, time and movement; the designation of different voicings in Paterson's novelistic technique; an impression of the internal emotional world of a character, and the production of musicality.

Paterson's double margin form has subsequently been used by other poets, including New Zealanders C.K. Stead, Vivienne Joseph and Michele Leggott. What was once a new form becomes, when named and established, a kind of fixed, structural syntagm, and further innovation around such a form becomes possible as the technique is shared. Leggott's 'Merylyn or tile slide or Melete' from *Swimmers, dancers*, for example, extends the multi-voicing possibilities of the form, and makes a bridge towards her poem 'Tigers' (discussed below).

Africa // Kabbo, Mantis and the porcupine's daughter [20]

Paterson's *Africa// Kabbo, Mantis and the Porcupine's Daughter* is a kind of origin story. It takes its theme from the the /Xam-Ka!ei branch of the San people – also known colloquially as the 'First at Sitting People', described in Neil Bennun's book, *The Broken String* – and their belief that events in time are contemporaneous. This enables the text to range freely between depictions of the South African tribe's life and events in Europe, the Americas and New Zealand, across huge timespans. The strategy accommodates literary references, which often fold into portraits of the literary figures whom the text 'visits'.

Paterson does not use his trademark double margin form here, but the regular use of indents has similar effects, with variations on attempts to separate out ideas. The indented lines sometimes act as secondary clauses, which fill out the story, giving specific examples, but they can also lend new direction and changes of rhythm, as we will see.

After an introductory stanza which evokes a dreaming story that embraces all creatures as dreamers, the text introduces Kabbo, an African tribesman. He has dreamed himself into being, and is embarked on a journey with his ancestors (Paterson 2008, p. 8[21]). The next section (sections are again separated by asterisks) asserts that our ancestors are living, but also offers the paradoxical reflection that what was past seems never to have happened (9).

> to discover what might
>   have been missed, hasn't
>
> been noticed – trying to
>   remember what history's
>
> about, & even to write it
>   to remember that . . . (10)

The enjambment at the end of the first line of the above extract retains the sense of excitement about discovery, and the same technique used after the next line creates doubt around what is asserted. In the fourth line, enjambment is used to reinforce the idea of remembrance; these broken phrases manipulate and stretch the syntagms, intertwining ideas.

[20] Some of the analysis in this section appeared in 'Warp and weft: aesthetics of the poem as an artefact of experiences in time' (Bullock et al 2016).

[21] References to *Africa* will be made by page number only for the rest of this section.

After returning to the African tribesmen in the third section, Paterson cuts to a journey by train through Auckland suburbs. The transition is signalled quite overtly by the use of ellipses at the end of the third section, but the content which follows is radically different. Nevertheless, the poetry suggests a parallel of time, i.e. the African tribesman's sense of the continuous presence of the past is adopted by the contemporary western dweller. The content of this Auckland section confirms the journey code, and it becomes evident that the idea of the future dwelling place of African spirits could include almost any time and locale, establishing contemporaneity as both a theme and a code (10-11).

The challenge of representing contemporaneity is met in part by use of the present tense in historical flashbacks, but also by transitions between sections which are paradigmatic in nature. They operate via an association of meaning, which responds to the philosophical and spiritual beliefs of the First at Sitting People; these strategies reflect Paterson's comment in the Foreword about those beliefs:

> that animals, people and their spirits, the past and present, coexist with each other, the idea that reality comes from within as much as from without and consists of a weaving together of a matrix of disjointed everyday events and complex relationships – resonated with me. (7)

In turn, he weaves together 'disjointed everyday events' to create a sense of unity across time and place, of contemporaneity, using the possibilities of the relational axes to do so.

The poem comments on uncertainties around different African tribal theories. These ideas soon become like memories forgotten and the voice switches to something else, mimicking the disjunctive nature of thinking, reinforcing the author's use and acceptance of free association (the paradigmatic), and again echoing the beliefs of the First at Sitting People with regard to parallel time frames and the fragmentary nature of events (12). The now frequent use of the second person in the poem involves the reader in these processes more fully, as we see demonstrated, 'how concerned Paterson is to emphasise the continuity of human experience' (Ross 2008, p. 101). One could also say that fragmentation has become so common in the poem as to constitute a kind of meta-code. This conscious use of paradigm-led form belies what seem like thought patterns swaying randomly across the landscapes visualised; the approach becomes the established practice of the poem, repeated and eventually expected by the reader, hence becoming a structural, syntagmatic norm.

Each issue and concern that the text raises suggests the re-evaluation of beliefs and knowledge. When it returns to the topic of reading about the Bushmen, and mentions an aspect of the story that one might feel responsible for, the reader is conscious that a referent lies outside the current frame of the narrative, since one cannot be sure what responsibility the text is suggesting (13). This recalls Derrida's idea of the centre being exterior to structure (2001, p. 352). The idea of absence helps define the information that *is* included, and forces readers to look for possible connections. They must build their own favoured link between ideas, which again evokes Paterson's comment about the reader's creativity being active in open form poetry (1981, p. 23).

The sometimes heavy use of ellipses, and the continuation between some parts, is predictable in a syntagmatic, pre-conceived sense. In other sections, however, the paradigmatic link between strophes is subtle and, as stated above, illustrative of the ideas generated early on in the book. Evocations of Africa glissade to reflections on readings about place and of origin stories, such as the elders agreeing they should throw the sun up into the sky for it to warm the earth (15). The voice of the text now connects these stories with the creative process, as it imagines the tribesman, Kabbo, pondering his group's history – another example of the contemporaneity code (14-15). It merges two worlds by jumping from Kabbo imagining something in the thicket behind him to Paterson aged twelve on tidal flats watching gulls overhead (17). These juxtapositions of imagined and actual past events have the effect of lessening perceived differences between them. However, since difference helps us create order and attribute meaning, we might say that there is something nonsensical and disordering about the way this paradigmatic trope merges time and place in the poem, yet this non-sense is part of its otherness.

The poem articulates some problems of contemporary societies – such as pollution – pulling the reader back to the present. The writing is then dialogic and with prose stylistics that might confound a Bakhtinian view of poetry, in its novelistic scope. Again, the 'disjointed everyday events' the text narrates tug us away from logical continuity as the sequence of what seem like thoughts moves from bodies in the east river, to a nearby gallery, to Goya and then:

> You arrive in Venice
> at the Doge's palace

& discover it's still there:
   Mrs Hudson, Baker Street. (18)

It is a huge associative leap to the character of Mrs Hudson in Baker Street, connection maintained only by the theme of arrival. It could be argued that it is possible to have breaks or ruptures between paradigmatic associations which are so great that they halt any sense of connection between the ideas and images. Paterson plays here with the location of that 'point beyond which poetry written in open form begins to cease operating effectively' (1981, p. 44) and its relationship with the 'logic of imagination' (1981, p. 28).

Finally, we return to Auckland, with a piece of hardboard as the link with the art world, together with thoughts of what might be painted on it. Fragmentation is again in the ascendancy. The writing hardly stands still long enough for meaning to be judged. Ross points out that 'the disparate pieces of Paterson's mosaic lack resolution and completeness', but that that is the point being made with regard to the mass of 'necessary relationships' in modern life (2008, pp. 106-107), indicating another aspect of Paterson's concern with the contemporary zeitgeist. Denys Trussell suggests in relationship to this long poem that the 'necessary glue' that holds our disparate experiences together is 'a kind of dreaming', founded on 'archetypal human experience' (2011, p. 31), an idea which usefully connects with its premise.

The relationships between the sections build, as if there is a collective agreement from the protagonists of the various scenes to resist logic and make alternative semantic alliances. The text compares tourists around the world and notes in their desire to talk with fellow travellers a:

need to feel they're known
to someone, that they have
a place, belong somewhere
      aren't alone (18)

Though the tone of this stanza, together with the ongoing intratextuality, recalls the First at Sitting People (and reflects on universality), further comparison is then made with the Romans building walls around Colchester (in the present tense), because they feel alone and threatened. It is no surprise when, a couple of stanzas later, the paradigmatic scope of the text takes in a letter from Jose Rodriguez Feo to Wallace Stevens to the effect that someone

should write about the effect of climate on the imagination (19). The discussion breaks off with a sudden gesture because the ferry is running late across the Auckland harbour; fragmentation is again to the fore. The Auckland reference alerts the reader to 'real' time, but the text then leaps to the era of Gautama, the Buddha. The connections now elicited are deeply spiritual, rendered in simple language, concerning Gautama's relationship with his father. The indented lines are dialogic:

> He looks at it –
>   looks at the world
> around him, remembers
>   as a child watching
> his father at work – what
>   his father did to begin
> the new season's planting – (20)

The text conflates experiences, while maintaining a relentless energy in its changes of settings and points of view. These are the movements of dramatis personae, often historical and from a variety of eras, evoking the poem's preoccupation with contemporaneity. The sense of 'reality' in life comes under scrutiny, and it is noted that the word 'reality' is treated with direct suspicion, 'as if / it were a crime inspired / by a police metaphor' (23). The shaman, too, is pondered (and addressed), along with the voice that seems to come from the space between the stars; this is an originary story. A certain authority is given to the text by the names the poet uses (24-25), especially those of contemporary politicians; this tendency upholds the contention that proper names lend special credence to a poem (Riffaterre 1973, p. 233). I would suggest that they also make the paradigmatic association that brings them together seem syntagmatic and logical, a kind of thematic verisimilitude.

The paradigmatic shifts are particularly profound and resonant where they leap the greatest distance, for example, from the story of a Quagga woman who feeds pieces of her own liver to her children (and loses a piece to the he-Dog's family), to the oak tree next door (in Auckland) springing into leaf. Ideology does not escape reference either, as the juxtaposing strophes of the poem venture into political criticism with reference to American foreign policy:

> America of course
>   has the best of intentions

its executive
        has the best of intentions –
is doing all it can, trying
        to save the world . . .

*
We tell lies
We do it for the most common
of reasons (29)

The effect of this juxtaposition of stanzas, brought about by the use of space, has more power than overt criticism, as the reader is free to make a connection between official policy and the telling of lies, allowing the irony to form, a very distinctive effect for the use of space in the poem.

The tendency of poetry to compel the greatest effort in terms of reader response directly consolidates the theme of interconnectedness that the poem espouses. The fact of one thing reminding the authorial voice of another is an intrinsic aspect of *Africa*'s paradigmatic structure, for example, waiting in the Gare du Nord for a telephone call that does not come is a trigger to recollecting a visit to Government House in Auckland and remembering the Wairau massacre. Direct use of the word 'remembering' is subtly potent, since it begins to suggest that the poet was present at the event – which is impossible – but again having the important effect of fusing time. The paradigmatic axis of invention finds consolidation in the transferral to the syntagmatic axis of recorded and realistic sounding information, in accordance with the view that, 'The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination' (Jakobson 2000, p. 38). Of course, information only needs to 'sound' realistic and be poetically persuasive for the poem to be convincing.

Recollections assert Africa as a place of beginning (also mentioned in *Qu'appelle*, above), and move on to talk about the novice dancing with the shaman. There is a sense here of the poet's voice being identified with that of the novice and Kabbo as the shaman: the former learns of the ways of the San people (with the idea that time and place can be contemporaneous); and Kabbo, in repeatedly intruding himself into the poet's imagination, helps lead him through examples of this interconnectedness. It is as if the character of Kabbo has a role in determining the structure of the work. His presence encourages multi-voicing

and helps produce further examples of the contemporaneity code. The shaman is described as fearful of the potency he inhabits, that using this power wrongly might harm the people he means to serve (30-31). Later, apprentice and shaman enter a cave to make paintings together. The western word 'apprentice' points up the contrast of roles with the tribal 'shaman', and works to fuse cultural referents through the similarity of these terms.

The potential danger to the tribe is likened to that of the eland, hunted by meerkats. The comparisons continue and the reader perhaps becomes less and less aware of the technique of fusing time and cultures as the poem progresses, 'convinced' by its attitude. The idea that what we have come from is part of us is another basic message of the poem. From exploring various cultural antecedents (including Africa), the text makes a paradigmatic switch to an unrealised dream of racing yachts in the Waitemata harbour. This scene is pictured from the staff room of the Auckland University English Department. The poem's voice associates itself with this group and perhaps discloses another unrealised dream in the process, of working in such company[22]. This position is associated with freedom in the text and the next shift sees the English leaving India and a reference to Mountbatten, suggesting an air of privilege or of privilege ended (34-35). Again, the writing delves through memories, and the way in which one historical act follows another historical or contemporary act helps maintain the poem's intensity.

The transition between sections again uses ellipses, but the level of interconnectedness assumes a new depth. From thoughts of Herman Melville's Ahab following the whale and the accompanying idea that an unseen force pursues Ahab, we journey to the musical world of Mendelssohn, who is observed by the tribesman /Kaggen. Synecdoche is employed in the naming of the tribesman, who might also be 'Mantis'. Mantis travels across oceans on this journey, just as Franklyn crosses the Atlantic looking for the Northwest Passage. The text even considers the way we latch on to famous names, 'as if doing this makes us real' (43), and as an alternative to disappearing (44). We might even want to become all of these people, and the text lists several famous English writers; but naming them 'makes for a dubious kind of validity' (44). It is as if we are looking for some kind of approbation, like the connection between tourists, or for a sense of ancestorship.

[22] Paterson's *Incantations for warriors* hints strongly at a difficult relationship with academia, yet one which seems drawn to its privileges.

Interestingly, the text's next sequence considers the theme of the apprentice in the cave with the shaman mentioned above, another form of contemporaneity which shows an associative connection with literary ancestors (44). In the following pages, characters are frequently co-joined. Even animal and human life share extra dimensions. The story of the loss of Mantis' shoe is narrated over several pages with departures and comparisons with Greece, Auckland and a drug-smuggler with a conspicuous missing shoe at Denpassar airport, and other frequent examples of the journey code. Mantis fears he is being followed by someone. He consults the porcupine who he believes to be his adopted daughter. He calls to the eland to eat honey placed in a stone for its enjoyment, but this is not a hunting lure. The magnificent creature appears, 'as the world / opens up before it'. The bushman rejoices. He feeds the animal, 'because the eland is a person;' it is Kwammang-a, his own son, in possession of the missing shoe (51).

The next transition from this resolved situation is to thanking a fellow poet who has sent the author books: Aucklander Jack Ross; again, the progress of the text is fragmentary. Yet this very specific detail helps anchor the poem back in the present. Thoughts of /Kaggen and Ross then come together, and the text turns to a discussion of beauty, via images of Ramayana and Shiva, which refers directly to Ross's book of travels in India (52-53). The text returns to the eland, and a new concern of /Kaggen's, which is paralleled by a glimpse of EM Forster writing a book and considering the title 'A passage to India' , as the text maintains its relentless movement. Exactly who is signified by the second person, in 'You keep moving' (54), is unclear (perhaps the self). European travels are indicated, before returning to Ross, this time in Auckland, presumably having returned from travelling, and once more reflecting a more familiar context.

The following pages include changes of time and situation, mini dramas and a renewed sense of the work as a novel in miniature, with its tangents and overlaps. The British leaving India is again alluded to, together with /Kaggen's need to speak with his shaman, which ties in obliquely with the voice of the poem. The origin story is reiterated with reference to people relaxing poolside with drinks in Palm Springs: 'Africa's there / in their veins,' (68) recalling earlier passages and effectively bringing together all three major codes or meta-codes of the poem: contemporaneity, the journey and fragmentation.

Behaviour is characterised by fear, which is contagious. The fusing of characters and situations over time starts to exhibit a vulnerable, confusing quality, as if this might be why

humanity doesn't understand itself. Human actions are presented as attempts at communication (70). Unlikely connections are repeated – meerkats and Governor Grey – as the disjunctive again becomes a syntagmatic structural norm. At the same time, the work is building towards a crescendo. A final flurry of images and inclusive ideas crosses the page, before a kind of symphonic pause, in reference to an explorer in the Pacific. This sequence includes a mihi (welcome) from the tangata whenua (people of the land) of Aotearoa New Zealand. Something unnamed is anticipated, which is pondered in the garden, where the eland is present. The voice of the poem notes things we rarely mention, alluding to its own artifice and what has been read, as well as the /Xam-Ka!ei story of 'the man who shot the rain', discussed in Bennun's book and in Paterson's foreword (76, 7). This strategy has the (storytelling) effect of leaving the reader wanting more. The text refers to the reader in parenthesis: 'you'll have read it', to strengthen the sense of a shared understanding. Perhaps such a breaking of the fourth wall also breaks the plane of the relational axes.

The claim is made that, 'it makes sense – all of it', implying that the things connected by the sections of the poem cohere; contemporaneity is achieved. The statement 'You ask the shaman for direction' links voices and personas (77). The second person is now used consistently as 'you' look for the Rainbull, at the shaman's suggestion – once more alluding to the man who shot the rain. This creature might tell us 'something about / The Porcupine's Daughter', as well as other new characters and the age-old concern of where we have come from and where we're going (78). The topic is visited more substantially than in *Qu'appelle*, though the earlier work has more tonal variation than *Africa*. Yet, *Africa* has forged its own frame for imagining the origins and state of the world, a new frame which moves from fragmentation and a sense of dissonance connected with it to an acceptance of fragmentation. In this sense, postmodernist ideas are integrated.

The ambiguity created by the theme of the contemporaneity of time in Paterson's work signals otherness. To achieve it, he makes particular use of the otherness of the paradigmatic axis, especially in relation to innovations of form, forms which are undoubtedly in accord with both content and overall strategy. The double margin – in the case of *Qu'appelle* – and the indented lines – in the case of *Africa* – enable a multiplicity of voicing which help evoke more than one time period, if not in parallel, then quickly echoing each other. Obviously, the use of space is more marked in *Qu'appelle*, and yields numerous effects (see Appendix). But in both poems a novelistic approach in the long poem is evident and the reading of the poetry

is both informed by and enhances understanding of the relational axes in a way that suggests a range of techniques which a poet might consider using.

Chapter Three: Alan Loney and postmodernism[23]

The question of what constituted Loney's legacy was raised in a review of *The erasure tapes* (1994) by Bill Sewell, who feels that Loney's championing of postmodernism in poetry is his true legacy, but doubts whether it is worth doing (1995, p. 21). This suspicion of postmodernism is fascinating, and it is worthwhile to consider its implications for Loney's poetry, if it does indeed reflect this paradigm. Critical responses to Loney were mixed. He gained the approbation of major American literary figure Robert Creeley and won a New Zealand Book Award for *Dear Mondrian* (Hawk Press, 1976). He received praise from reviewers such as Michael Harlow, John Geraets, Alan Brunton and Roger Horrocks, as well as Creeley. Lawrence Jones was positive about the significance of Loney, as both a printer and as a poet[24]. But some reviewers complained about the difficulty of his poetry, even if they were basically sympathetic or fair-minded, for example, Janet Wilson and Sewell; others, such as Trevor James and John Hale, were unsympathetic. Questions raised by reviewers and critics during this period provide a good basis for discussion and re-appraisal of issues relevant to this exegesis.

Jones praises the openness found in Loney's postmodernist practice (further features of which are listed below), including those of structure, subject, experience, language register, style and tradition. Jones also complicates Loney's relationship with postmodernism in a useful way, suggesting that the very era that made possible the plethora of references which such a poet uses, in its catholicism, enables a vast array of art forms and means of production which might hamper or compete with some of the works produced by a poet/printer like Loney (2002, pp. 141-142). This issue is closely related to the problem raised by Jameson, that, 'postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process' (1991, p. x). Although Loney may have refused inclusion in any kind of movement in poetry (Williams 1987b, p. 79), his identification with postmodernism is evident in the subtitle to the journal he founded in 1982: *Parallax: a journal of post-modern literature and art*.

Though Loney acknowledges that the anthology *Naked poetry – recent American poetry in open forms* (1969) helped open doors of perception in his writing, the impact of Charles Olson's *The Maximus poems* was more dramatic, and Loney asserts the usefulness of the

[23] Much of this chapter appeared as 'The Loney edition' (Bullock 2016).

[24] 'In any analysis . . . he would have to be an important figure', writes Jones in conclusion (2002, p. 143).

spatial relationships allied to musicality in Olson's work (Wood 2016, n.p.; Loney 1992b, p. 96). *Naked poetry* is also referenced in *15 Contemporary New Zealand poets*, edited by Paterson (1980), an anthology assembled to showcase 'open form' poetry in New Zealand. Loney is represented by an extensive selection from *Dear Mondrian*, Paterson claiming that Loney's work exemplified the principles of open form poetry more than that of any other New Zealand poet.

'A lee side to every word' [25] – the fragment and self-consciousness

Loney's descriptions of his works and the works themselves affirm many of the tendencies of postmodernism and openness described in Chapter one[26]. Loney repeatedly professes the necessity of sequence and fragment in his poetry. He resists writing 'perfect individual poems', in preference for those which reflect the 'unfinished and unfinishable business' of writing (Loney 1992, dust jacket). Notebooks are a feature of his output, and are justified by the idea that all writing is 'still its own and specific occasion' (Loney 1998, p. v). Many works have a strong biographical element, but 'a life still living is not a life that can be told', suggesting that here, too, what is told is told 'in parts' (Loney 1994, p. 5). Each of these postures is a celebration of the fragment.

The unknowingness of the writer when engaging in the writing process is also lauded: 'Most of the time / I hardly know, putting one word after another, /what on earth I am doing' (Loney 1996, p. 32). There is a similar, mocking self-examination to lines like 'Am I following sound principles of autobiographical practice' (Loney 1994, p. 44). He resists the idea of 'standards of excellence', asserting that any material has potential for poetry and suggests that the writer has something like a duty to reveal the subjectivity of 'a consciousness which is factually already drenched in the world' (Loney 1979, p. 4). As well as questioning the authority of the canon, these comments invoke the idea of creating a 'second-order language,' which utilises, 'even the inner language which is ruled by imagination' (Barthes 1968, p. 11). A concern with originality, singularity and avoiding the seemingly pointless material reproductions of the postmodern or late capitalist world are further important preoccupations in Loney's writing (1994, p. 46).

[25] Loney 1994, p. 42.

[26] Loney's openness extended to crafts in general; he wrote reviews about practices as diverse as pottery, textiles and weaving when editing *New Zealand crafts* (1988-90).

Intriguingly, Sewell feels that Loney's poetry may have gone beyond postmodernism in a quest to escape its limitations. Though Sewell does not elaborate on this comment, it shows some generosity. Sewell claims that it is only fair to assess a poet by what he or she sets out to do, and discusses the suspicion of purpose among Loney's contemporaries as a facet of postmodernism. But Sewell fails to recognise that the idea of purpose verges on the intentional fallacy. What a poet sets out to do might not be the same thing as what is achieved. We already know that Loney opposes 'standards of excellence', and the assessment of whether or not a poet has achieved their purpose is potentially unknowable. More usefully, Sewell identifies several features of postmodern poetry, taken largely from Wystan Curnow's article 'Post-modernism in poetry and the visual arts' (published in *Parallax*), which, he argues, Loney's work from *Dear Mondrian* onwards exemplifies: 'exploded' typography; fractured syntax, and abrupt universal/ particular and subjective/objective transitions. He adds two other features from Stead: the by now familiar use of fragments and the attempt to score speech patterns[27]. Sewell speculates that it is Loney's interest in typography that led to many such experiments (1995, p. 20), which is an entirely reasonable supposition given the materiality of space in letterpress printing, noted by Loney himself (in Wood 2016, n.p.) [28]. However, Sewell is suspicious of the idea that experimental typography could represent sound more meaningfully than other techniques[29].

Sewell complains that Loney's poetry is 'elusive' and demands that the reader work 'very hard'. There are of course hidden assumptions about difficulty since it is almost always assumed that difficulty is negative. Paterson merely asserts that they are more difficult 'on first acquaintance' (1980, p. xvii). The fact that Loney's poetry often features typographical experiments may in itself form part of the difficulty for readers expecting a poem to be laid out over a single page with conventional line and stanza breaks[30]. Loney gives his own answer to the issues around difficulty when he writes: 'The call of nothing, and the call of what is difficult, have been irresistible' (1994, p. 43).

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[27] This opinion about scoring music on the page is shared by Paterson (1981, pp. 30-31).

[28] Horrocks also identifies the physicality of Loney's work in this regard (1999, p. 159).

[29] A reservation shared by other reviewers of the time, for example, in John Needham's review of *The new poetry: considerations towards open form* by Alistair Paterson (1983b, p. 115).

[30] Paterson's reflections on Basil Dowling's complaint in *Landfall* in 1979 about the eccentricities (including visual) of recent British and New Zealand poetry being in danger of estranging the 'common reader' gives a strong impression of the conservative mindset of some readers; Dowling eschews the 'singularity' of such poetry (Paterson 1980, pp. 9-10; Dowling 1979).

In a review of *Shorter poems 1963-1977* (1979), James argues that the desire for linguistic novelty creates a shift in Loney's writing from the importance of place 'toward the text and its possible meaning'. Though this is an accurate reading in the sense that the poems do move away from place towards problems of language, it is a position decried by the reviewer, who wishes that the significance of place as topic was consistent across the whole collection. Yet the example he gives of 'strangled and truncated' language is a use of demotic speech employing phonetic spelling that is entirely convincing in its capture of working class idiom among elderly men (James 1980, p. 196). Lines from other poems are criticised by James for their failure to advance 'meaning'[31]. Wilson is more sympathetic in reviewing *The erasure tapes*, noting without qualm its postmodern aesthetic and praising the way the three sections of the book, comprising poetry, prose poetry and double column poetry, are juxtaposed to suggest a dialogue with each other. However, she has some reservations about obscurity of meaning in the eponymous prose poem (Wilson 1995, p. 71). Sewell's preoccupation with accessibility is, I think, another way of talking about meaning. Both comments suggest that it has taken time for the postmodern aesthetic to gain acceptance. Perloff describes in one postmodern text, Ed Dorn's *Gunslinger*, the way in which meaning is 'endlessly deferred, endlessly called into question'[32], and it is clearly this tendency that is disquieting for some readers.

Sidetracks

Looking at an excerpt from Loney's sequence of poems collected as *Sidetracks – Notebooks 1976-1991*[33] will help outline techniques he employs which reveal a conscious handling of language and a distinct interface between the relational axes. The title of the first section, 'to become the one that becomes one' relates directly to the quote from Keats given before it: 'After all there is certainly something real in the world', dated 1818. Keats' words invite observation. Loney's title hints at internal reflection. But they are two aspects of the one search of the writer's, after something 'real', or 'true'. Loney's date is 1976, and this small detail alone reinforces the sense of continuity in the human endeavour. The poem begins:

[31] Loney's riposte to James asserts that the reviewer has 'declined to accept his portion of the accessibility function' (1980, p. 402).
[32] Along the way she notes the use of 'puns, paragrams, homonyms, portmanteau words, archaisms, nonsense words, parody, tunes – these are spliced together with countless variations so to produce a 'map' of locations' (1989, p. xvi). Loney describes Ed Dorn as a poet he was led to by Olson (in Wood 2016, n.p.).
[33] This volume was a companion to *Missing parts: poems 1977-1990* (1992).

or some
absolute

fidelity

to whose
language

no titles

tho I am
hung up
on juxta-

position

as, how
am I ever

as I do

going to
recognise him (Loney 1998, 2)

The conjunctive ‘or’ clearly relates the text to the aforementioned title and epigram. The word ‘language’ occurring alone recommends it as another kind of title, and is a clue to Loney’s true subject: language itself. The text starts playing with what language can do and what it suggests, with incomplete clauses. For example, after ‘no titles’ we expect completion with something like ‘no titles can satisfy’, but the phrase is left dangling. He breaks the word ‘juxtaposition’, perhaps to enjoy the sound of ‘juxta’ (which we don’t usually hear), which emphasises ‘position’ in its own right. Further, the potential polysemy that the use of the word ‘position’ may suggest includes the word ‘superposition’, from the study of physics, where a wave function caused by overlapping waves is obtained by adding together the functions for the two separate waves (Young et al. 1996, p. 622). The definition is intriguing given Loney’s apparent strategy to dislocate the linear in the poem. Though the paradigmatic link with the word ‘superposition’ may seem far-fetched it is just this kind of ability to suggest alternative readings that an adventurous use of space in poetry can entertain.

Loney's use of broken phrases, which stretches and clips the progress of syntagms, suggests a trust in language and its apprehension and use by the reader to forge new connections, arriving at a variant so pronounced that it can be considered paradigmatic, as well as syntagmatic. Experiences and wordings are not linear, and Loney perhaps views the accumulation of his data – of short lines, descriptions, philosophical reflections and references – as the whole which constitutes his collected knowledge, together with the inference that life is composed of small parts. Loney, like Paterson, invites active participation by the reader in the building of the poem.

The idea of recognition relates back to the epigram, but the 'as I do' is more ambiguous. It suggests either that the poet already does recognise the very thing he says he is searching for, or that this kind of questioning to find the right becoming of oneself (or a certain fidelity in writing) is characteristic of his poetry as enquiry. One gains the impression that what can be found may always be suspect, along the lines that we can only take in a truth that we already know in part, but which can never be known in full.

The jolting transition from, 'how am I ever' to 'as I do' mimics speech, and the 'second-order language' referred to by Barthes, with a particular speech that gives a breathless rhythm to the lines. The alternative function of the 'as I do' line is an example of Riffaterre's transferral of a sign from one level of discourse to another. Like Paterson, Loney's style here is sometimes reminiscent of Beckett's poetic prose, with its constant contradictions and departures. The next section reads:

old woman
struggles on to the bus

hands, to the driver
a ticket

and says,
Now (Loney 1998, p. 2)

The clipped syntax yields some fascinating effects, by making the language work hard. The comma after 'hands', forces the reader to 'look' at her hands, without the text needing to describe them at all. The text uses this form of space as punctuation as a sign which does the

work of description, with the reader's mind as the agent to fill in the gaps. Such a particular use of word placement and punctuation brings to mind Culler's comments about paralinguistics and what it can tell us about meaning. This extreme is surely a paradigmatic original, its directness springing from a deliberately sparing and open form. Yet the effect occurs in the midst of otherwise simple, syntagmatic chains, so that again we see the two axes working together. Curiously, from observations of a third person, Loney arrives, like Paterson in *Qu'appelle*, at an impression of the present. The present acts as a kind of consolation in some later works, as we will see. In this case, the woman may well have said 'Now' out loud, meaning something like, 'Now I can get on with things', but, with her speech truncated in the poem, the moment is under scrutiny. This represents a curious convergence with Paterson's subject matter[34]. After a section break, that 'Now' is juxtaposed with quotations of advertising and street signs, so that it functions as a bridge to what is noticed next by the poet.

The poet is on the bus, too, and at the same time as observing the signs that the bus passes, he asks the question 'how will I know / when I'm there' – but without a question mark (Loney 1998, p. 3). This once more alludes to the preoccupation of the introductory headings, but, in this context, makes us ponder our knowledge of the everyday – the bus is 'familiar' – and how we acquire knowledge of processes and bus stops, ticketing and timing, without even realising that we do.

I will leave off discussion of *Sidetracks* to consider some of Loney's work which moves beyond the notebook method. Apart from noting the upbeat ending to 'An alphabet book', Sewell's positive appraisal of Loney's poetry is reserved for earlier poems, such as 'Lyre suite', which throws aside its 'postmodernist baggage' to engage in lyricism; the 'very spare but profoundly moving sequence "Squeezing the bones"' (both from *Missing parts*, 1992), and the use of demotic language in *Shorter poems* (the same poems criticised by James). However, Sewell suspects that a poem like 'Squeezing the bones' might constitute 'occasional poetry' to Loney rather than his true legacy. Geraets thinks that 'Squeezing the bones' exhibits traditional, representative qualities (1992, p. 494). Let us look closely at this poem, one of the most compelling of the earlier works, written in 1978, which exhibits far more diversity of technique than those overviews suggest.

[34] Loney's poem was written a few years earlier than Paterson's, but published later.

‘Squeezing the bones’

This poem also explores the semiotic potential of language by testing the ability of the word as a sign, together with the use of space, to refer to multiple contexts at once, in what Horrocks calls, ‘the constant pressure applied to language’ (1999, p. 158). I suggest that this extreme multiplicity of purpose is another postmodern trope. For example, we do not know whether the reference to a Kalahari flute player in the first page of ‘Squeezing the bones’ provides context or contrast:

> I don’t
> remember
>
> my father’s
> music
>
> why should I
>
> (*Kalahari flute-player* (Loney 1992, p. 10)[35]

Fracturing the natural syntax of the first phrase allows for the opposite of its meaning, i.e. for remembering as well as forgetting and, reading the lines in this way, the last line is just such a remembering. The poem proclaims memory and forgetting all at once, in a gesture at the strange admixture that constitutes the human mind. The use of broken phrases exploits the flexibility of the syntagm. The suspension after line three helps the reader consider the father figure and all that it might suggest, but there is a sense of obstinacy and resistance to that figure in ‘why should I’. The flute player’s introduction could read as a stage direction, and the absence of a closing bracket helps us to dwell on the musician.

The reflections become even more profound as the coming of night becomes a metaphor for death:

> the night’s
> black
>
> comes, apparently
> down

[35] References to *Missing parts* will be made by page number only for the rest of this section.

I am haunted
the way anything is
in garish light on the horizon
by one

drop

of idiot tenderness (11)

Isolation of the word ‘drop’ is effective in its heaviness: it falls down, as the several downward movements of lines enact content. The idea of being haunted by an act of tenderness is an unexpected paradigmatic shift forward from the description of the night. This is the shattering of day, of expectations, of a life; and the choice of ‘garish’ emphasises the jolt. The oxymoronic ‘idiot tenderness’ suggests that the voice has good reason not to be tender. But the elegance of this lyric fragment facilitates that tenderness, as well as effortlessly containing some of the bleaker tones which came before and remain with it.

cancer filling the large bowel
nerve ends crushed in the lower spine

His quiet ‘christ’ a wish
he didn’t have to so present himself

Why not, with the sun up, birds
and traffic active, this afternoon
going, in such largesse, to sleep, and
not waking

Instead, he is more

and more acquainted

with his spit
in a yellow plastic bucket
beside the bed (12)

The impending death is treated laconically at times, and the lack of a capital letter for ‘christ’ shows that either the subject, or the voice of the poem, is not religious. The seriousness of the situation is hidden, or the text sees past it. Why not, on this sunny day, sleep and never wake. But even this idea is lightened by the lack of a question mark: it is not a serious question.

Contradiction is achieved by isolating the phrase 'Instead, he is more' from the rest of the syntagm, so that the possibility of something greater, either in this life or afterwards is present, as well as the realities of illness and of knowing the body's excreta more intimately than ever. The son has realised that the father is more than he previously knew, more real and complex. The switch to a concrete representation in the last three lines helps convey grounded experience.

The phrase 'who is it, speaks' which begins the next page probably refers, intertextually, to Samuel Beckett's 'What does it matter who is speaking', from *Texts for nothing*, and by implication, Foucault's famous discussion of it in 'What is an author?'

> who is it, speaks. Where is there
>   another option
> I want to hold him in my arms
> I want to batter his face past
>   recognition
> I am on the edge of a freedom
>   I am yours (13)

The contradictions of humanity are in sharp focus, but are paralleled by traces of authorship. The last two lines are productively open, since we do not know if the voice might become free from his father's influence, or belongs to him in a new way, through forgiveness and acceptance, or both. Perhaps the voice is now more itself than before.

> his hand swipes at a fly
>
> 'it's not your turn yet' (14)

Is the voice speaking to the fly, himself or the son? This juxtaposition of phrases does much work, but its signification is in doubt; mystery is preserved, the traits of postmodern technique in evidence in a complex ambiguity and in the possible intertextual allusion to 'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods', from *King Lear* (Shakespeare 1996, p. 139). The gap between the two lines is paradigmatic in the way it allows the development from one idea to another to take place with the minimum of language. The reader leaps across the space to create the narrative; the space invites involvement; it orders the juxtaposed material,

contributing to possible meanings, and is, in that sense, an act of substitution for language, like the break and bracket before the Kalahari flute player. What is most distinctive is that space allows the reader time to build connections: thinking time.

The next example is a contrasting one, in terms of how the poem makes use of time.

> hewenttohospitaltodie
>
> Andthatswhathedid (15)

The arrow-shaped layout tends to speed up reading and slide the eye towards the second of these two lines prematurely: we read the two lines almost simultaneously. The inevitability of death crowds and pervades the page. It's all a blur here as the *scriptio continua* suggests, and as death, the final 'reality', scrambles meaning. The text hints that language is a form which, like the body, will inevitably perish. These two lines occupy a whole page, and the space around them helps emphasise the lack of space within them.

> there wasn't time enough
> for our talking
>
> the more we talked
> the less it mattered
>
> what it came to was
> 'I love you'
> 'I love you'
>
> 'Hey, don't squeeze the bones' (16)

The first four lines of this stanza convey contradiction. What is important is brought into sharp relief by the omission of any description of an embrace before the final line, which is a delight of economy. The reader has room to inhabit the poem, to feel a bodily connection through the movements that space gives expression to, creating affect. This usage is similar to the example described above which allows the reader time to build connections, but is here more felt than thought.

In the next section, the breaking of the word ‘moulder’ across stanzas is another semiotic tease, giving us ‘mould’: the structure from which something might be formed (including us), as well as the idea of decay and of lingering (17). There is an intensity to the semiotics here, a sense that Loney takes things to their logical (or illogical) conclusion, but without their becoming ludicrous.

> picking up
> the casket, its handle
> not quite big enough
> for a good grip
>
> nearly surprised
> into tears (18)

The enjambment after ‘picking up’ evokes cleaning up after a messy situation. Conflating the casket with the handle suggests that the casket is not big enough (even if it is in fact larger than usual), and that the protagonist thought a great deal of the person whose remains lie within. The ordinariness of thought, that the handle is on the small side and the need to get a good grip, highlights the grief; it is this ordinariness that threatens to spark tears and which, in poetic terms, conveys a sense of lived experience.

Flying home after the funeral, the son muses: ‘By now the furnace / will be clean.’ The use of the word ‘clean’ is alarming, and permits the idea that the world would be glad to be rid of us. The text includes apparently inconsequential yet significant detail. The voice is still thinking about the father: ‘Everywhere, small windows //And the song he sang to me’. The windows connect us back to the image of the coffin, from inside which there is no view. Though views are restricted aboard the plane, there is more to see. Quoting the song the father sang gives an impression of how the son might like to remember him most, in a contented moment from childhood (19).

In the final page of the poem, the voice tells the father about the Navajo Indians who left one false stitch in an otherwise perfect rug to remind themselves that they are not gods. The story is passed on like an heirloom blanket; the son gives the father peace of mind and allows him to leave this life. The father’s final words, ‘Is that so, / yeah that’s what I needed’, are moving

in their simplicity (20). The celebration of imperfection in the Navajo story echoes Loney's understandings of the writing of poetry: that we only deal with imperfect and incomplete representation.

'The erasure tapes'

Geraets calls attention to the poem 'Crystal fountain', interested in whatever progression might be made by Loney in his writing from this point onwards, and perhaps moving towards what Geraets calls a 'reflexive and inner alertness' (1992, p. 494). This phrase again evokes the idea of a 'second-order language', and makes the concept seem predictive of the need to represent inner consciousness in the postmodern era. Sewell points out that 'Crystal fountain' makes consistent use of an *in medias res* strategy. Stanzas begin part way through a phrase and end with a fullstop, usually within the first line. The phrases are grouped into sentences, with fullstops occurring anywhere but at the end of the line; the very last phrases of each poem in the sequence have no fullstops. Obviously, this technique is another take on the fragment, as well as providing further examples of fractured syntax.

Loney uses this *in medias res* strategy again in his next book, *The erasure tapes*, in the eponymous prose poem, a sequence of 13 full pages. The clipped characteristics of 'Crystal fountain' expand, not just into lyricism but into fuller and freer associations. 'The erasure tapes' shares many of the preoccupations of 'Crystal fountain', such as the relationship between the book and the word, and tenets and techniques of postmodernism. Whereas in 'Crystal fountain', the phrases are broken into jolting statements, for example, 'Publicity exposure shifts at / random lens' (Loney 1992b, p. 44), which have the character of a newspaper heading, 'The erasure tapes' flows with energetic and often musical transitions.

The pleasure of 'The erasure tapes' is, in part, its difficulty. There is euphony and variation of rhythm in phrases such as, 'He fell for whatever hex, sui generis, was waved at him' (Loney 1994, p. 35)[36]. Even the smallest sentence fragments please the ear, such as 'ore of a sort', (35) with the assonance of the 'oh' sounds eliding into the alliteration of the 'arr'; it is rustic or pompous, depending how you 'hear' the phrase. The vowel-chiming fragment 'Snip lint' after 'Fill in the dress' (35) is similarly pleasurable.

[36] Reference to *The erasure tapes* will be made by page number only for the rest of this section.

The associative freedom offers possibilities which can be explored with each reading:

> In love meant more than it should. As if there is something, finally, semantic in sound. The mind is, in some way, all these things. I can sew a button, but not a shirt. What years wood-working, and what made. (35)

The subject is, in part, the mind and its connections – the mind is, in some way, all these things – ranging over the universal and the particular, the subjective to the objective, collapsing distinctions. The text reflects the mind's activity by combining feelings of love, sound, semantics, and what the voice of the poem is preoccupied with next, such as sewing a button, and other kinds of crafts. In this sense, the work is an example of an interior monologue with a wealth of departures and associations but with an extremely terse diction. The fragmentary 'speech' evokes the incomplete whole. The ideas are pressed together, sentence by sentence. They are less organised than they might be – there is no line here to control reading (Hartman 1980, p. 13).

The compact nature of sentences might thwart some readers, since so much is compressed here: 'Who, on art's burlesque, lives the simple life, is not out to get a tan' (35). The word 'who' helps the sentence function as statement and question; it connects with the final clause and makes the others into colourful tangents. (Loney routinely dispenses with the question mark.) There is an easy economy in phrases such as, 'brought to book' (40), 'He learned to lour than talk' (42), and 'It's come later than earlier, now than then' (47).

Another of the poem's major techniques is allusion to biography, such as, 'The bed took three of us for years, two top, one tail' (35). The concision of 'two top, one tail' shows that this prose has learnt all it needs to have learnt from poetry, and the allusion is easy to grasp. The text cites hours spent on a rocking horse, sucking sherbet, playing with spinning tops, making a wooden pencil case with a sliding lid and sitting in little chairs while a grownup points with a stick. Even playing the music for a dance, but not dancing (other poems reveal the speaker as a drummer early in life), of being unable to celebrate in this sociable way, is something with which many of us might identify: it has an accessible quality. The reference to McCahon's gate series of paintings making the narrator 'weep like a child' (44) might be evocative for many New Zealanders.

Awareness in Loney's poetry often concerns the two sides of a truth or the possibility that a thing exists or does not. In earlier examples, Loney employs enjambment to set up parallel possibilities. There are more here: 'These are, and are not, the words of the ancestors' (35). This line proposes both continuity as a positive force and awareness of an unavoidable connection between the past and the present. Such duality is as implicit to one's understanding of life as uncertainty itself: 'I'd like to know, and won't' (41). Odd juxtapositions of words such as 'pig/god' suggest everything and nothing (43). Within this relativism, an idea like, 'No thing's on a par with any other thing' (38), helps persuade us that the particularity a poet is able to communicate is enough to constitute a literary experience, as subjective perception struggles with the idea of the objective world.

The text evokes a troubled relationship with a father and the past in general:

> Were we indeed persecuted by them back then. Not choler, but melancholy. If only we could fuck the dead hard enough, maybe they'd bring us back to life. We shape them, they shape us. (37)

Memory, and the understandings associated with it, lacks objectivity, and the influence of the act of recalling changes it. Such difficulties are further illustrated by the fact that the voice of the poem which cannot escape the past cannot think of a scream of delight without thinking of a scream of terror (42). The awkward biography is ever-present; the text says of the mother, 'she knows the / plausible rogue' (41)[37].

'Nothing will remain unpublished' (42) **– the Loney 'edition'**

References to the book, words, sentences and type pervade the poem, often with disrupted syntax, for example, 'For was read is' (38), which is a bold conflating of time through grammar, conjuring a continuous present and the idea that what is read causes things to be. Printing is portrayed as a universal act; print reshapes people (41), printing is dancing (43). These kinds of metaphors are consistent with those in many of Loney's poems, for example, the paragram 'Book it up' (from 'Crystal fountain'), for 'Look it up' (1992b, p. 41).

[37] This painful familial situation probably relates to incidents such as the one in which, as a child, Loney rescued his mother from a possible suicide attempt (Blundell 2008, n.p.).

‘The erasure tapes’ twice makes reference to editions. Firstly, memory has curious effects: ‘I am made into numberless delible editions’ (37). Secondly, in reference to the father, the text muses:

> In an edition, how does the book become singular. I owe my start in writing to him whose works I have in her typescript, and of which I am probably the only reader. This is not a reproduction of anything. (46)

The Loney ‘edition’ acknowledges both parents as antecedents in the struggle towards selfhood, alongside the vagaries of memory; the erasure in question may well be that of incomplete memory. The voice of the text wants an edition that is not a reproduction. Here again we see the postmodern concern with reproduction, nicely nuanced by the fact that the book is also a metaphor for the self. This postmodern concern finds a parallel with the idea of the originary and the way the era of late capitalism in the West has dispensed with the concept of the godhead figure but has, arguably, failed to replace it with anything but materialism. Even the idea that it should be replaced shows the preponderance for an originary explanation of all situations that runs in parallel with the era of the sign, as Derrida outlined it (1997, pp. 7-20).

The openness of the writing, and the balance of subjective musing and precise objective detail in this particular use of the prose poem fragment, are the means by which Loney achieves his ‘edition’. The edition, too, is a fragment, i.e. one possible incarnation of a text. In postmodern terms, ‘the alienation of the subject is displaced by the latter’s fragmentation’ (Jameson 1991, p. 14). The voice of the poem accepts that:

> Much known won’t be written, by choice. I liked the magician best who didn’t use a wand. Can I make a book that can’t be read. Summer’s tar on the soles of your feet. (43)

The reference to a magician is another powerful memory with universal appeal. The question about the book again concerns singularity. The idea is juxtaposed with the image of summer’s tar, another specific memory and a form of writing on the body. The letterpress artist’s craft is strongly embodied in sentences such as: ‘Bathe in what font will type you out of the text’ (41). Loney’s writing both asserts and denies the book. The problematics of language reflect the world, via this individual consciousness.

The work is distinctive as a piece of prose poetry, its style bearing little discernible relation to influential works in English that Loney might have encountered by this time, such as Seamus Heaney's *Stations* (1975), which focusses on terse narratives; or Charles Simic's *The world doesn't end – prose poems* (1989), which, despite a surreal playfulness that is distinct from Baudlaire's surrealism, is still primarily concerned with narrative. Mark Strand's *The monument* (1978), with its emphasis on undecidability, comes closest to Loney's mode but is not nearly as closely focussed on the construction of an internal monologue as Loney's. Loney once again takes up the challenge of lineation in *Fragmenta nova*, and does so in ways which offer further examples of the relational axes and, in particular, spatial relations.

Fragmenta nova

In the long poem, 'wind', Loney uses spaces within lines to create a mimesis of the staccato effect of wind gusts, for example:

```
will not hold
        upright                  a small
knot of cloud   opens
polite speech
                returned
to its wild current
                looking for repair

writing alive           its clear
        mute directions                   (Loney 2005, p. 63[38])
```

A person's body or some object cannot be held up straight in the wind. A knot of cloud, drifting or swirling (away from the line of the poem) invites polite speech, probably about the weather, so the mundane as well as the elemental is suggested. But we soon return to the wildness of the weather itself which is perhaps a metaphor for the endeavour of writing as well as a stimulus for it. The interesting metonym of 'current' conflates wind and cloud with the river and flow of life. The direction of writing, in contrast with that of the elements, is 'mute', suggesting a sense of powerlessness or limitation, as the wind disturbs human movements. The disjunctions created by the paradigmatic use of space suggest a lessening of

[38] References to *Fragmenta nova* will be made by page number only for the rest of this section.

coherence. Yet, the text can be read in quite a modulated rhythm, and it exhibits self-consciousness about the writing process (the poem eventually concludes, ‘howl out your pain / at the poem’s / end’, 71).

aiming   at a half-moon
half obscured
one glance
& glancing blow’s enough
thru short vowels
drawn together
at the mouth
giving up   all aim
all intent   (63)

The voice aims at the half-moon, but it is unclear in what sense; a glancing look and short vowels are enough to communicate, and the process of speaking is highlighted with the concision of ‘glancing blow’s enough’. In some ways, speaking is less controlled here, and we get a sense of some tension between speaking and writing, which is especially relevant to semiotics, as well as a physical progression of objects through the use of space across the ‘line’.

sending   a message   from
compass point
to point
there’ll be no
introductions
how do you   refer
to the breath   of taking
time to be
always   late   (63)

In speaking about the moon, we send messages based on compass points, mathematical and impersonal, with no human ‘introductions’ or pleasantries, such as the polite speech mentioned in the first stanza. The writing moves back to the personal element of the breath itself and the slow mystery of someone who is always late; so that a paradigmatic shift and a syntagmatic return are felt. It is as if there is a connection here between breath and moving slowly, that a considered breath or action results in lateness; or that pure being-ness and the demands of the modern world, its schedules and appointments, are incompatible. The

paragram, ‘breath   of taking’ conjures ‘breathtaking’, evoking joy at life. The disruption of the poetic line is a sculpted approach, and one which is more varied than Paterson’s, though it gives a less coherent appearance to the page.

So far, the poem has contrasted simple experiences, such as breathing, looking at the moon, and interacting with others, with writing. This continues into the fourth stanza:

> writing   writes it down
>   its parallel   to the surface
> won’t be
>   maintained
> even
>   to the child’s eyes   in front
>   of its face
> where I   almost
>   recede (64)

The parallel which writing forms with the life that it represents does not seem to be a sustainable one. Life is synonymous with ‘the surface’ here. Even the child can see that writing is not life, not the thing experienced by the senses, in which the ‘I’ diminishes, in a free and potentially freeing movement.

> this is for you
>   will not be qualified
>   by any name
>   or all names
> the smallest kindnesses
>   have drifted in
>   upon you
> it’s all
>   for you (64)

A dedication to New Zealand poet Michael Harlow underscores the title of the poem, and the voice of the poem probably refers to the dedication again here. Lines two and three of the stanza create doubt, however, and line four denies a universal dedication. The ‘you’ on which kindnesses have been bestowed might be the voice of the poem, so that the closing lines suggest that the poet writes for himself; this recalls the idea of truths already realised in *Sidetracks*, discussed above. The experimental quality of the layout in this stanza masks the

fact that there is comparatively little significant new content here. Structure has become syntagmatic. The next stanza laments:

pretty words   all in a row
dead speech
          passed on
                    by the dead
the last exhalation
          propels
what noise
          into the air   there's no
last word (64)

The preoccupation with language and the burden of the past echoes 'The erasure tapes'. There is a beginning, unavoidably, and no end to writing. The phrase 'all in a row' is distinctly ironic, and one ponders Jakobson's sublimation of irony into metaphor. The fact that speech is passed on by the dead may mean that the voice considers itself part of this group, emphasised by the enjambment following 'the last exhalation'. Or the voice might suggest a contrast with the dead, if the distinction between speech and writing that the poem has set up holds good. The use of 'what noise' is redolent of 'white noise'. The element of contradiction in the final assertion is Beckettian in its shifting despair.

offering   address
          to court   conveying
scent to the hounds
          opening   the mouth
to swallow earth's longing
          what is mourned   each
profound   empty gesture
changing
                    your address (65)

This Beckettian atmosphere pervades the continuation of the text. The archaic 'address' evokes the court, a code which is developed by the hounds. But the desire to speak opposes earth's longing, presumably for unspoken communication, for being-ness. What is mourned in this loss further changes the mode of speech. The double meaning of 'address', for place of dwelling suggests some further loss of the feeling of being in the right place. The next stanza makes a departure into newer territory:

the book of dreams
burns   the dark
does not care
flames’ gust
darkens   everything
the same
shall I show you
something you have
never seen before   (65)

Dreams suggest a quite different reality, that darkens like flames. As with a number of the stanzas there is a volta-like shift, pivoting on the word ‘everything’. The rhetorical question of something not seen before is unrealised. The spatial caesurae continue to give emphasis to words and phrases, but are more pleasing to the eye and economical of space than the isolating of single words on a line. The ‘shall I’ of what first seems a rhetorical question is as much a personal poetic quandary (which echoes *Sidetracks*, and is shared by the poem ‘cloud’ which follows ‘wind’: “how will he get / from word / to art,” 76). Again, the sculpted quality of lines suggests breathlessness with a different rhythm to the *Sidetracks* example, and perhaps confusion or despair. Again, the form helps enact content.

violence   without
limit
is set about   I will
apply myself
glistening   on water
as small flashing
spectra   flushed
with absence   this night of
a wakeful solitude   (65)

The structure of lines two and three offer up some new possibilities, however. The voice will apply itself and immediately dives into metaphor to suggest excitement at the task. The enthusiasm is tempered by the reference to absence, and perhaps, to some extent, by the last line. Consistently, the voice mines the writing and thinking processes as principle content, revealing idiolect. It tests the limits and boundaries of a relatively small selection of language, and what those words can achieve, pared back to essentials and stretched by space; again, language is under pressure, which here is partly the process of attenuation. There is less a sense of semiotic fullness at work here as of semiotic minimum, which justifies the

several comparisons with Beckett. The tendency to assert the opposite of a statement (a Beckettian commonplace, comparable to the example, 'I don't / remember', from 'Squeezing the bones') can be seen in the first line of the next stanza, as the isolated word 'possible' may assert 'readiness':

no readiness possible
sea's elastic edges
filling an unfillable
emptiness
the world light
as a balloon
the flux you are

a beginning that can
never begin (66)

The sea is a metaphor for the elasticity of language and even for the flexibility found in an attempt to communicate. The world is as light as a balloon and that state of flux is ours. The enjambment of the last two lines affirms the opposite of beginning: 'a beginning that can'. Language, then, contains its opposite implicitly, and it is this discussion, rather than the distinction between speech and language which now assumes centrality in the poem; uncertainty is implicit here.

this elemental appliance
will stoke or buffet
you
this useless machine made
of words
will stick like
slurry
this bellows will crank up
all your cries (66)

The text returns to the wind, which, paradoxically, might 'stoke' – an alluring metonym – or 'buffet' the addressed. Language is pictured as a machine at the wind's mercy. The phrase 'stick like slurry' is another curious and contradictory metonym, maintaining the sense of uncertainty in the poem. The machine is pictured as being motivated by so much 'hot air', the boring stuff of speech. The wind will stimulate all our cries, and continue to disturb us:

it's wind   will knock
          the wind from you
billowing in the dress
          lungs lifting
                    wings   to another
          moment   gull's
raucous competition
          expelling all thought
                    of wind   (66)

The struggling breath foregrounds resurgence, as lungs lift towards the implied metaphor of wings – again space is used for economy (no need to write 'lungs lifting *like* wings') and there is a further (opposite, like a breathing-in) tendency to be taken 'to another / moment,' as the reality of gulls' cries changes our thoughts. The reiteration of wind in this stanza sets up references to musical performance in the next:

preparing   is   preparing
          itself   it plays no
                    instrumental
          result   the whole   lovely
                    ensemble   a cylinder
a slab   a flax-bush
                    dark turbulence
          of the storm
leading nowhere   (67)

The wind itself does not play music, but is used for it. The word 'instrumental' elides with 'result' to set up other possibilities, when we might have expected 'instrumental role'. The cylinder – perhaps a reference to the first recording method – is listed with both a slab and a flax-bush (which is perhaps the wind's instrument) as equally likely vehicles for music. The conclusion is negative, with the storm leading nowhere. The adjective 'dark' seems somewhat unnecessary, unless intended ironically and to compound the sense of the contradictory.

if deft   at last
          then empty   gulls
pigeons   with damaged feet
          how they fly
their dear accents
          however fleet

unable to shake off
their disembodied
shadow (67)

Fewer indents are used in the last lines of this stanza, enacting the sense of the pigeons being unable to shake off their shadows, a deft variation in the use of space to help communicate meaning and enact content. In turn, it leads to:

indeterminate archive's
condition its tendency
to be abandoned
before the scenery's
painted its murmur
unwilling to speak to show
anything else but an infinitely
patient
signature (67)

We might still see pigeons here, picking at language. The phrase 'infinitely patient signature' is elegantly lyrical, and a pleasant alternate structure to Paterson's 'bends // is bruised // broken' discussed above. There is a sense of what I will call a syntagmatic return here in the movements relating to the use of space. In the next stanza, too, the syntagmatic use of space is again a movement back, a return, to the self (68).

what can I know outside
of her splendour
is it working
wielding a weapon
striking up
an implemental
reconfiguration
of the beloved
she will not reply (68)

The grounding of the last line is particularly striking as a syntagmatic return. The weapon is almost certainly a pen, so that we come back to the possibility of writing, and the lament of its absence. The lament has a halting rhythm, with a lyrical quality to individual phrases, highlighted and yet in some way impeded by their isolation. However, the text emphasises the shortcomings of words and a fixation on them, words which are semantically and spatially 'against the wall':

bearing in conversation gracefully
turn this way & that
café as echo-chamber
spoon against cup
words
against the wall
won't give
the answer
to any question (68)

The words sound out within the café space described (also recalling Crawford's echo location metaphor). But they give no answers, which is a novel way of emphasising perceived limitations of language – are they not merely sounds echoing? The stanza closes with a triad, but it is rather less remarkable for its sense of movement than other examples.

even due congratulations
deflect from small stature
the horizon in
that close
the infinite beyond
brought home
to roost beside you
with tears an ever-
renewable resource (69)

The staccato rhythm evokes a fitful process of remembering, acting out that idea. The return to 'deflect' is an extremely sharp one, a leveller of ego, to the infinity of nature.

a formal speech of thanks
for the fantasy
of a lost language
all the alluring methods
the early evening
yellow moon
emblem
for one's lost
memory (69)

The pause after the second use of 'lost' is resonant. Central here is the human condition, rather than nature itself, which is denied full force (as we would expect of the postmodern condition). There are haiku-like fragments here, though the text stops short of a classic

Japanese haiku's attempt to capture the unmediated moment in nature (Loney cites Japanese writing as one influence among many, in Wood 2016, n.p.). Language may be used as a metaphor for something else unexplained. The structure of the stanza communicates movement, and advances the poem.

set instruction   lie
          with yr head towards
                    any direction
to be read   exact
          for it's most resistant
                    to being read
          the word

never broaching
          the air   (69)

The word itself resists being read, or has been enjoined to resist, like the self not wanting to be guided by any directive. It echoes in the air, unable to be tied down. The writing highlights the limitations of reading, also consistent in Loney's work generally[39]; he even enjoins us not to read (1992, p. 39). The enjambment after the penultimate line means that the word is never broaching anything and enacts the implied movement of sense. Loney develops this idea with:

the convolutions
          of stories
                    come to nothing
in the quiet breath
          the almost   ordinariness
of being thrust
          into the world
itself a mere
          puff   of breath   (70)

The isolation of the word 'mere' evokes Heidegger's mere and only thing and Dillard's 'mere writing' (1971, p. 21; 1990, p. 17), and the way that each thing has to contend for existence. The cliché 'thrust into the world' is unpacked by the word 'mere', and stylistically justified.

[39] He notes being slow to read as a child and that 'to this day I would be surprised if I had read any more than ten novels in my life' (see Wood 2016, n.p); reading is described as 'just hard slog' (Loney 2016, p. 13).

The syntagmatic return to ‘puff’ is brought about by the rather sedate phrase ‘of breath’, as if the voice is out of breath. This is, in turn:

> tainted by exposure
>   what is mourned
> the evidential   delusion
>   of one long thin
>   bright patch
> on the water
>   flushed with absence
>   the absolute   joy
> of meeting   (71)

The suspension of ‘one long thin’ is effective, the monosyllables seeming to write across gaps. The concept of joy is achieved by contrast with absence; the joy of meeting is in contrast to the lack of engagement between people mentioned in the first stanza. The poem continues to move between a mimesis of wind to a representation of voice:

> the turn   how designate
>   the fragment   outside
>   of writing
> what is it moves
>   the pages will   all
> disintegrate
>   howl out your pain
> at the poem’s
>   end   (71)

The word ‘all’ is rarely justified, but in terms of the finality of objects decomposing it is useful as a confirmation, with its slow steady rhythm in the spondaic ‘will // all’. The stanza makes self-conscious reference to the fragment, complicated by the placement of ‘outside’, making ownership of it uncertain. The final lines beg the question, why so much pain, when the limitations of the writing process were so clearly articulated throughout. Perhaps part of the answer is that the end of the poem is an end to the possibility of a new way of communicating, which is somehow less prone to the shortcomings of conversation or speech. The line here represents the fragmentary nature of speech and of postmodern existence.

Complaints about Loney’s difficulty or obscurity may reflect nostalgia for a time when a more structured and defined conception of what constituted poetry prevailed. Commentators

such as Sewell and Needham recognise that the experimental or postmodern does not have to be 'successful' to be valid; they note some of its advantages, despite perceived drawbacks. To his supporters, it is no wonder that Loney was seen as exemplifying open form. His poetry has its tendrils out, recognising different registers of language – and not just the elegant or overtly musical phrase. It encapsulates many of the features of postmodernism discussed above, especially the eclectic, the opposing of signification, the celebration of the fragment, and of mystery and uncertainty, use of fractured syntax and abrupt transitions, and an invitation to the reader to engage creatively with the poem.

But no writer represents all elements of a paradigm consistently. It should be observed that some features that have been identified with postmodernism are not present in Loney's poetry – for example, aleatory writing is not much in evidence, and although there is a hint of self-parody, the idea of pastiche is a stretch, since he is generally too serious for that. The collapsing of high and low cultures is doubtful; Loney's writing could be described as high modernist as well as postmodernist in taste, with its touches of austerity – for example, in the reference to encountering difficult classical music as an early and influential experience (1994, p. 38). But to address Sewell's main contention, I would argue that if Loney was a champion of postmodernism, it was well worth the effort. The openness of his poetry and its awareness of the semiotic potential of language is impressive.

Some poets have ignored pleas such as James' contention that, 'If we believe poetry to have a vital role in our society then we must prevent its being open to the charge that it is a private word-game of little relevance to 'real life' (1980, p. 199). In Loney's case, what is striking is that when he uses autobiographical tropes he stops short of indulging in such 'a private word-game', but rather makes these tropes the basis for describing and evoking the uncertainty that topics such as memory and identity suggest in the era of late capitalism. Despite the incompleteness of Loney's fragments of narrative and internal monologue, they build into a satisfying whole, suggesting and evoking a complex life and a consciousness, and reflecting the difficulties of our age.

Chapter Four: Michele Leggott and multiplicity[40]

As suggested in chapter one, Michele Leggott's poetry facilitates a discussion of ideas about representation, especially when it comes to the use of codes as a way of understanding how poetry works. Her poetry harnesses the semiotic potential of language to suggest multiple possible meanings and to enjoy language for its playfulness and elegance. Her *oeuvre* encompasses a wide variety of formal and spatial experiments and is characterised by a mastery of the effects of both relational axes, as well as a manipulation of page space which enhances and complements the content generated.

Let's now return to Leggott's poem 'Thrills (helpless)', discussed in the introduction. The second page of the poem reads:

or they go

breaching the dawn

foam feet first

hear it?

can you sing it?

do you

remember?

(helpless

the windows are open (Leggott 1991, p. 12)

'Foam feet first,' evokes the sea and perhaps a first walk in it. The spaces between the words 'can you', 'sing it' and 'do you' compel one to 'listen' intensely with the inner ear (sub-vocalisation). The text itself asks if one can sing, but the poem soon finds more subtle and compelling ways to suggest singing. The use of 'helpless' with just one bracket is a paradigmatic shift which matches the change of direction in the content. The idea of the

[40] Parts of this chapter appeared as 'Semiotics and poetry – why the relational axes might yet increase our understanding of poetic practice' (Bullock 2015).

windows being open is a sign of both freedom and danger. The layout encourages deviation from left/right and top/down reading habits, so that a scanning of words is possible, of the kind observed above (Roberts et al 2013, pp. 32-35), giving, for example, 'can you / do you / sing it?'

pick him up in the dark

he didn't always know

the trick

of a sleepy head

on your shoulder

little movie

wide page (13)

The spaces around so many of the individual words suggest that one sing the lines, or that they are being sung in the voice of the poem.

lign aloes align

paradise shoots

zingiber promise in a lotus pool

ibis kiss this coast

see the sun go round

rages of day decline

swim, moon – (Leggott 1991, p. 14)

The poem makes this reader sing. After the child is picked up in the dark, probably following a nightmare suggested by the dangers of the open window, the spaces imply a soothing tone of voice. The line 'lign aloes align' is particularly harmonious in its vowel sounds, and the soft letter *ens* lends comfort. The word 'zingiber' (both a kind of ginger and its Latin name)

suggests the exotic, the stuff of children's songs and fantasy. Musicality is maintained by 'ibis kiss,' and 'see the sun go round' is particularly childlike in its phrasing. The rages decline and the child swims in the moon, as it were.

The spaces and pauses are those before sleep; the layout of the poem helps suggest this reading even more fully than the references to sleeplessness, to a child being comforted and to singing. The spaces work in conjunction with content and memories, and embody the situation of the poem. Space works both syntagmatically and paradigmatically here, with content and memory. Inevitably, space has a role to play in the positioning of lines (which is syntagmatic), but it is by no means limited to positioning. In this poem, as with others discussed above, space is itself an act of *substitution* for language. This technique attempts to reach across the gap that is formed by what language, as wording, cannot do; we extend our conception of language to include the music that fills spaces in order to 'say' more (or sing more). Again, an analogy with pauses in music is apt.

One could argue that the use of space in the layout eventually becomes a kind of syntagm, within the duration of the piece, since there is a consistency to its patterning. If space is repeatedly used in the same way, it becomes a form, and there is little doubt that pleasure is gained by visual consistency. But this only occurs in 'Thrills' *after* it has disrupted reader expectations, conventional language practices and established codes, and introduced a spatial meta-code, taking us into its own world of artifice. The space in this poem enables the reader to arrive at the sense of a lullaby, and it has done so, I would suggest, by disrupting logic, or at least the way we expect to read lines of a poem on the page – the 'otherness' of space helps create change and innovation.

My assertion that space is an act of substitution for language means that space could be considered a function of language. Such spatial variations as those described may be essential to the fulfilment of the poem's potential to achieve diversity and multiplicity. Further examples from Leggott's earlier work shed more light on the issue of the functions of space and layout.

'Tigers' is a series of spherical poems that includes text on the left and right sides of its curves as well as through the centre, which the sides interweave (Leggott 1991, pp. 52-54). The effect is at times akin to Paterson's double margin form. These line variants give visual

support to complementary and related images and ideas, conveying a sense of mapping. The parallel poems can give the effect of a group of related pieces, within the one sphere. At times, a second poem acts as a commentary on the first, e.g. 'a / step / into / heaven,' which responds to, 'wavejumping/ down the coast/ eight months a year call up' (Leggott 1991, p. 52). Paradigmatic shifts are sometimes softened by enjambment, rather than being made more abrupt, for example, in 'eight months a year call up / the weather office every morning,' where the first line should break before 'call up', which is a new direction; this practice gives the illusion that the syntagm is conventional.

The content of this first poem, referring as it does to a glass blower and his workshop is especially suited to the spherical structure adopted, which evokes a molten drop. In the other poems from the series, allusions to the rotating of the earth, navigation at sea and tiger eyes give a similar sense of coherence between form and content. Though each is spherical overall, no two poems are the same in their inner shape, within the spheres. The poems have been structured and confined externally, but freed internally in terms of their supporting structures. One could say that the poems in 'Tigers' are set on a circular page, which evokes ideas of the page as metaphor. This might include the page as a form of technology, expressive for 'space, text and image' and an interface between designer and reader (Mak 2011, pp. 18-21).

Over time, Leggott's poetry has given less emphasis to visual aspects of the page, perhaps because of the fact that she has been losing her sight since the mid-eighties, but the play of relational axes is no less important. I would now like to consider contrasting facets of a more recent poem from *Milk & honey*.

so far

on the first day of October
in a city without hot water
the temperature climbs to 31 degrees
and I
        in a room with full-length mirrors
wash like an odalisque *petalled self*
on the tiled floor, diffuse light

as of jalousies or halogen
keeping the frescoes chalky (Leggott 2005, p. 2[41])

Leggott begins by telling us the date, a simple story-telling strategy. The detail of the city having no hot water evokes either a type or an exception. The temperature is notable for the poet, suggesting that she is a visitor. Initially, the sequence of syntagms is more or less synonymous with whole lines, and seems logical, with the slight exception perhaps in the reference to hot water. The personification of 'climbs' is almost unrecognisable as such, a fixed syntagm. The poet uses a slightly old-fashioned form, 'and I', as if Edith Wharton were about to hold forth in Morocco, and a break occurs with this divided fourth line. The room's full-length mirrors, evoking the exotic, suggest 'odalisque' and extend the exotic code.

The reader assumes that 'petalled self' is a quotation or reference to a detail of a painting; the italics themselves have the effect of adding verisimilitude. Leggott's use of intertext is discussed in Janet Newman's analysis of 'Blue irises' (from *DIA*). It is revealed that in a process Leggott calls 'reticulation', she 'creates complex networks of reference, interlacing quotations from diverse sources in new contexts', with the intention of creating 'an alternative poetic world' (Newman 2015, p. 111). While this strategy is more overt and obvious in 'Blue irises', which uses a great deal of quotation, examples of 'unspecified intertextual borrowing' occur in 'so far', including allusions to her own work. The intertextual device has been noted as paradigmatic, and intra-textual elements as syntagmatic (Chandler 2007, p. 84).

Both 'petalled self' and the tiled floor maintain the exotic code. The word 'jalousies' can be read as an archaic spelling of 'jealousies' or as a kind of blind, or both. The word 'halogen' returns the reader to a modern setting, and may disrupt the more archaic suggestiveness of the images created before it. Such simultaneous and unintegrated suggestiveness is part of the multiplicity that the poem achieves. In some ways, the poem might already be said to lack 'thematic unity' (see Culler, above). The frescoes are another detail we associate with earlier historical time frames, but the code has shifted now and use of the colloquial 'chalky' confirms this. The poem tends to exploit misdirection for effect in the manner of the

[41] References to *Milk & honey* will be made by page number only for the rest of this section.

Riffaterrean stage set. The second, numbered section begins with the word 'spruiking' – a more common term in Australia than New Zealand – whose origin is unknown, but means to advertise in public by speaking.

2 spruiking
for love's boy on a pavement
covered by fallen blossom
victorious armour
washed away in the night
endless headlights bearing
one avenue to another
three thousand solar showers
have been purchased
since the explosion (2)

The phrase 'love's boy' is curiously quaint (perhaps evoking Romeo) and contrasts with the modern 'pavement'. The exotic code both initiated and disturbed in the first stanza is now transposed into a romantic code, despite the initial variations of register which 'blossom' and 'victorious armour' give. Line five, 'one avenue to another' is pragmatic, and of any time, and line six is again modern. The reference to the number of solar showers purchased since an explosion explains the earlier reference to the city without hot water. We do not know what this explosion was or when it occurred, but, because of the intratextuality, it is syntagmatically coherent.

To summarise the approach used in this stanza, Leggott's syntagms are either disrupted – from 'love's boy' to the pavement – or are generated by association – from 'blossom' to 'armour' – or with what seems like logic – from 'night' to 'headlights', 'avenues' and 'solar showers'. The writing is both descriptive (of the pavement and the night) and symbolic (of love and chivalry)[42]. The competing nature of references indicates an occurrence of deconstruction[43]. It appears that the poem has already leapt beyond the diversity of interpretations that a poststructuralist reading might note, to this sense of opposing ideas and interpretations that can emerge from a text. The poem continues:

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[42] Description is associated with consonance and symbol with dissonance, 'rationalised as imagination' (Riffaterre 1978, pp. 6-7).

[43] I use the word 'occurrence' conscious of Derrida's warning that deconstruction is not a method but something which arises from reading certain texts.

3 the fire-eater juggles
torches knives an iron ball
five teeth missing by the river
his bride sings a cappella
veils tied to a balcony railing
fructus ventris fructus sanctus
white laburnum on the river path
warble on a bike
who will enter the shadows
under the bridge at noon? (2-3)

The juggler is undoubtedly juggling by the river, but he is surely not juggling teeth, and the teeth are probably not missing by the river. The enjambment and lack of punctuation disrupts grammar and the multiplicity frustrates the ordinary sense of meaning. But the weird images created in this way add colour.

Continuing the romantic code established earlier, but in contrast to what immediately precedes it (a clear breaking of the order of the syntagm), the text cites the bride. She may be performing with the artist, but we cannot be sure. The word ‘veils’ continues the romantic code; it may be a metaphorical visualisation of the style of singing that is *a cappella*, or a literal observation. It has been suggested that, ‘every transgression of a selectional rule constitutes a potential metaphor’ (Pettit 1977, p. 103), since metaphor belongs in the axis of selection, and it certainly appears that it is this general potential for transgression that the text harnesses, together with the combining of the relational axes.

The Latin which follows may be part of her song, in which case its sequencing from the third line is broken by the fourth, or it is an association with the romantic code, since the first phrase is from the Ave Maria prayer, meaning ‘fruit of the womb’, and the second means ‘sacred fruit’. The reference to white suggests the purity or innocence of anticipation of marriage (romantic code). But next comes ‘warble on a bike’, a skilful and whimsical metonym. This expression is in a different tone, which may accord with the performance code. The warble is probably a person whistling, humming or singing on a bicycle, possibly the performer, or a play on the word ‘wobble’. Alternatively, it is a bird perched on a set of handlebars. Humour is implicit in this doubt over the referent for the metonym, and such playfulness is part of Leggott’s delight in language and awareness of poetry’s semiotic potential.

The reference to shadows under the bridge may suggest a tryst, embellishing the romantic associations. The lines elide and leap with joie de vivre and multiplicity. It is possible to identify at least three codes in this stanza: the romantic, the performative and the realistic or contemporary. Some phrases are clearly designed to pull one back into the immediacy of what is happening, despite distracting allusions to various phenomena that may or may not be real. Perhaps what emerges is an indication of the tendency in contemporary poetry for the writer to maintain a variety of competing codes, rather than the single code which might have pervaded much poetry of the past. In the fourth stanza, the comment on tests and services being resumed again connects with the idea of an explosion

> 4 the tests were successful
> and service may be resumed
> sooner than expected
> I live like Utnapishtim in the distance
> six floors up in a confluence
> where Brunton meets Jolimont
> that is how we got here
> the trains wake me before dawn
> each day is a bird in another place (3)

The juxtaposition of this stanza's opening with the third stanza's romantic allusions jolts the reader back to the present. Also, 'the tests' could now mean something else, as if the romantic has to be tested for soundness, so that a kind of comparison between competing codes occurs, as well as breaking off from one to another. The voice of the text likens herself to Utnapishtim, a character in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, who serves a role similar to that of Noah in the Biblical flood story. For the speaker to identify with an ancient myth at this point is a surprise. Reference to the sixth storey is a minor shock given that a code associated with ancient literature is being created (or perhaps this is a reiteration of a larger code encompassing the exotic and ancient). And the use of 'confluence', which we associate with rivers and which would otherwise accord so well with the Gilgamesh theme, is another unexpected twist, perhaps riffing solely on associated images of water. Contemporaneity becomes a theme across such images – though, unlike Paterson's consistent reference to that theme, it is not sustained.

The text returns to the names of streets, which add further, plausible detail. The seventh line is a flashback, a thought tangent, showing that the poet expects to be able to utilise the

idiosyncrasies of the mind, or her idiolect. The trains make an early alarm call, but the voice of the poem relishes the opportunity to encounter the newness of things, and the ninth line is again one which breaks the syntagmatic flow established by the previous.

She is awake in time for the dawn chorus, and the statement that each day is, 'a bird in another place,' works multi-dimensionally. It could be seen as a pleasing metaphor and an example of what is seen: those with an interest in the subject look out for new birds in new places. Alternatively, it may be a metonymic choice. But, though the poem seemed earlier to evoke a European city, the names Brunton and Jolimont together (along with the reference to the Shrine of Remembrance in the next section) now indicate Melbourne[44]. We are not in some exotic, European or Eastern city, but in Australia – not such a distant reality for a New Zealand text. Riffaterre argues that any sign within a text is present for its potential poetic quality, and, from a specific example, shows that a single word which brings unity to the poem could in fact be absent from it (1978, p. 3); in this case, exotic allusions abound, but the name, Melbourne, evades us. This omission evokes Derrida's discussion of the decentred, poststructuralist text and is, one could say, an extreme of the sense of otherness in poetry.

The ideas and images of these four stanzas from Leggott are presented with little by way of narrative connection but, overall, create an impression of a place – real or not – and of a mind-set at a certain time, things which are complete in themselves. One of the text's strategies is to upset reader expectations, and it manages to do this in a way which is both challenging and aesthetically rich. These unforeseen effects are extremely valuable, showing the strength of such open poetry to create, or recreate (if that were possible – Riffaterre would say it is not), an experience. And in stanza five, this sense of unfolding poetic creation continues unabated:

5 Ingres fingers on the sidewalk
was she done, his shrieking Medusa
before the rain in the night?
bookstores stay open coffee is cheap
light falls in the Shrine of Remembrance
as if one body lay sleeping
on the cumulus of another
champagne sustains the wait

[44] It is as if the reader has been tricked, and the Riffaterrean stage set again comes to mind.

as urns are sent from kitchen to tub
elevators groan and whirr (3)

'Ingres fingers' are a metaphor for the figures blurry in the heat. The 'she' now referred to is probably associated with Ingres (rather than the bride of the third stanza). The timing might suggest that the voice is reminiscing on some previous experience, perhaps connected to the 'before dawn' period mentioned at the end of stanza four. But, in this stanza, the 'before rain in the night' does suggest that we're in the present. Bookstores are open and we see the Shrine of Remembrance.

There follows a shifting series of metaphoric appeals. Light is compared to a sleeping body, but it is no ordinary one, rather it rests on the 'cumulus' of another, so that the softness and familiarity of someone is implied. Champagne sustains the protagonists, but what are they waiting for? Presumably, it is nothing more urgent than the water which is to be brought for a bath. This bringing of water, necessitated by the explosion, aids the poet in evoking the romantic code, though, again, it is juxtaposed with contemporary life by way of reference to elevators. The metaphors, of course, are paradigmatic, while some lines follow a syntagmatic path in a purely descriptive mode, such as, 'bookstores stay open coffee is cheap'. Even here the choice of omitting a comma and breaking a rule of punctuation aids the energy and rhythm of the line and ensures that the writing does not become prosaic; it keeps moving.

6 it was a translation I brought back
nothing but guesses with expensive names
at wrist and throat I gained
two hours of sunlight
clouds of words
dispersed at the edge of space
a kiss disappearing off the page
I will never print again (3-4)

The use of the empty subject 'it' beginning the sixth stanza has the effect of universalising what the translations could refer to. Is everything that has passed so far been a translation? Is the voice somehow acknowledging that each transfer between codes and registers is a translation? These questions are like the guesses, which have fancy names linked to wrist and throat, which evoke jewellery brought from another exotic location. The enjambment of, 'at wrist and throat I gained', allows the concepts to be linked in an illogical but suggestive way, as each component sign, syntagm or phrase fulfils more than one function. In this sense, one

can say that Leggott's use of enjambment is paradigmatic because it is a disruption of logical phrasing and line structure which would otherwise be syntagmatic. The two hours gained is easier to decipher: the time difference between New Zealand and Melbourne.

We encounter clouds of words as well as the earlier concept of cloud-like people, which our minds retain, and forcing the reverse consideration: that people may be like clouds, intangible and unreal, just as words are difficult to realise and pin down. Words disappear on the edge of space, and one cannot help but make the comparison with our lives on this planet, on the edge of space, kept in place by gravity, both magnetic and cellular.

The extended metaphor of the clouds' activity is transposed to a kiss disappearing off the page. It is almost impossible to read this reference without sensing an allusion to Leggott's lip-shaped poem 'Micromelismata' (from *DIA*). Yet, without it, the metaphor still has significance, and a rich one, when one considers that a kiss, like the spoken word, disappears. One could have another kiss or speak a new word, but the individual, phenomenological occurrence has passed, like the elusive moment. I think Riffaterre would be happy with this interpretation of a sign whose referent is explicable within the text. To also read this as a new, intertextual element is satisfying to the reader in a different way, inviting further speculations as to meaning.

The image of the kiss, quoted above, is followed by the declaration, 'I will never print again'. As well as the fact that Leggott will not write that particular poem again, we know from her history that, by this stage of writing, her sight was deteriorating, perhaps to the extent that the composition of such innovative post-concrete poems as the 'Tigers' series might no longer be possible. In general, the poetry in this collection – *Milk & honey* – is far less visual, less concerned with layout and spatial experiments than previous collections. Yet, it is still deeply imagistic in effect, so much so that one begins to doubts the necessity for alternative layouts to enhance visual imagery.

7 days of purification
signs in the sky
pretty mountain rites
rigmarole of the hours
you were lucky
I was very lucky

a feral girl without hands
a green flame
before the invasion
loving till it hurt (4)

The metaphor of days of purification which follows the metaphor of space suggests a connection with the idea of not being able to print again. Perhaps the struggle that must occur when one is faced with the possibility of losing the sense of sight could cause or necessitate a spiritual cleansing. But perhaps knowledge of a poet's circumstances suggests a biographical interpretation even where it should not. The biographical interpretation, like the authorial fallacy, may limit us more than any other and prevent us from appreciating the imaginative, generative qualities of a literary work, as various critics have suggested (Bakhtin 1981, p. 265; Roudiez, in Kristeva 1984, p. 8; Belsey 1980, p. 16). Riffaterre's criticism holds up perfectly well without it.

In what seems like a waiting time, the voice looks at the sky and the mountains and rests with them; the 'rigmarole' of hours isn't taken too seriously, though a retreat rather than a holiday is suggested by 'purification'. As well as an exotic-historic or romantic code we have a retreat code. Someone has told the speaker that she was lucky and she re-iterates the fact, perhaps accepting it. We do not know what the voice of the poem was lucky in, but maybe the simple fact that a situation could always have been worse is suggested, a universal idea which means that the poem is not closed off towards one particular meaning, but has many possible interpretations.

She was a 'feral' girl, so that some accident might have occurred, rather like the explosion in the backdrop of the poem. But why, exactly, does she have no hands? What does the green flame signify? A test? Was the invasion a medical procedure? She had to love till it hurt, to forgive the situation, one might think, or in order to heal. To love the individual who was bound to perform some devastating task to save a life, even if to limit it? These are questions that might intrigue us, sustained by the ambiguity of the poem.

8 I smiled at the poet
and bought lunch in the white cafe
his new book lay on the table
he talked of past and future works
and of the device he would carry

for one other's call
farewell poet
may you never be alone or unhappy
may your archives download safely
into tomorrow
9 John Lennon is 59
IMAGINE – somebody
encountered this week
could become one of the most
important people in your life
over the next two months
don't reject new contacts
just because they don't meet
your normal standards
take that feather off the scale
of expanded light (4-5)

The line 'loving till it hurt' is the segueway to the next stanza's meeting with a poet in a café. In the café, we ponder this latest link between stanzas. The text leaves off with the idea of loving till it hurt and begins again with, 'I smiled at the poet'. There is something forced about this action, but it is also gently ironic. The poet's new book lies on the table, showing that the main preoccupation of the poet is the poet's work, rather than the location, the café, or the other (poet) that he meets, i.e. he is not sitting there reading *her* poetry, a fact that is subtly unnoted. The device he refers to is a mystery, but at the same time we hardly question that it refers to something, to a real thing or quality, since significance is not broken simply by an absence of information.

She 'farewells' him, another grand gesture, adhering to the historical-exotic code and perhaps even the romantic one. The salute, 'may you never be alone or unhappy' is hardly more modern and again suggests a teasing, ironic voice. The text then switches to a reference to archives downloading, and not being stored correctly; these are not traditional, tangible archives, but electronic ones. The reference gives us some sense of intangibility concerning the poet's work, that it will be lodged, not in the hearts and minds of readers, but in electronic databases[45]. There is much humour in transposing that modern reference to some archaic phrasing, a kind of phrasal metonymy. We get a sense of the fragility of the poet's vocation, as well as the voice of this poem teasing the seriousness of poets in general.

[45] Leggott was a founder of the New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre, an archival site.

The stanza ends with a reference to tomorrow and the next begins by referring to John Lennon and the age he would be if still alive. The text's use of the word 'tomorrow' may reference the Beatles song 'Tomorrow Never Knows', which leads to further associative imaginings, playful, and mindful of semiotic potential. We have just been thinking about a meeting and interaction with a poet and now ponder a song-writer, another kind of contemporary, lyrical artist. The progress of this part of the poem mirrors the thought process, an example of stream-of-consciousness writing, and it reflects the influence of the media and its random jump-cuts on contemporary society. Lines six and seven read like advice from a horoscope, or healyourlifedotcom, which is a contemporary register and part of the strikingly modern code that inhabits segments of most stanzas.

The constant shifts between codes, or merging of codes to create new ones, challenge the reader. Leggott's use of metaphor is truly paradigmatic, in the widest sense; as are her employment of juxtaposition, adaptive and explorative links between sections, personification and implication. The play between these codes enhances the poem's complexities.

> 10 there's been a lot
> in the news and in the movies
> about the threat to Earth
> from asteroids and comets
> the idea that we're at risk
> from a cosmic collision
> was first dreamed up
> by the science fiction writer
> HG Wells   now the astronomers
> have followed suit
> your day is the operatic condition
> of the world (5)

The text jolts us back to earth with something in the news about threats to the planet, a strong contrast from the previous 'expanded light'. The actual threat to earth from comets and asteroids is not explored in the text. The 'train of thought' changes direction and links back to the origins of science fiction writing in the work of H.G. Wells, so that again the writing employs a stream-of-consciousness technique, and an idiolect. It also, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, asserts the primal role of writers as heralds and prophets of the future. The speaker's reaction suggests that the news items may represent groundless claims, which should not be

taken seriously. The poem's focus switches quickly to 'your day', as if the days of the writer and the astronomer have already been, and now it is your turn (dear reader, as it were). But the phrase 'the operatic condition / of the world' suggests that the daily life of the individual is subsumed within larger 'operatic' forces and pressures; and, overall, the poem is itself operatic in its scope and excess.

> 11 birds wake me
> wind and moonlight
> surf driven high on the beaches
> a church bell later on
> those raptors
> released over upturned
> faces the gloved hand
> jesses strafing the ground
> little mouse *carpe*
> *carpe diem*
> no singing will ever
> bring you back
>
> 12 *commanded*
> *to pray* between
> two crystal trees
> candelabra of the soul
> darkened, waiting
> not a dream
> but a gallery where I
> unlace the huntsman's
> boots praying
> another nature will
> survive the skin (5-6)

The 'birds wake me' of stanza 11 returns us to the image of birds and their significance to the traveller mentioned in stanza four. It confirms singing as a code, and the wind, moonlight and surf add their imagery and musicality to the scene. Later, the church bell joins in, and together they are 'raptors', travelling through the air over the upturned faces of people, who recognise and enjoy them in their different ways. The enjambment of 'over upturned / faces the gloved hand' suggests constriction, perhaps of the limitations that people work within and against. The verb 'jesses' refers to falconry. The voice looks up and sees a dead mouse that can no longer 'seize the day', a fact which reminds us of mortality. The idea that no singing can bring us back re-activates the performance code established at various phases of the

poem, and the reference to prayer which begins stanza 12 affirms the (possibly originary) setting of church music. The two crystal trees evoke representations of Christmas. These trees are 'candelabra of the soul'; this exaggerated metaphor suggests the implausibility of certain religious dogmas, and a reaction to the quoted injunction to pray.

A more positive vision soon makes itself known. Though the soul may be darkened and waiting, it is really a gallery from which one looks out. In this place, the huntsman's boots are unlaced, suggesting a more naturalistic archetype for spirituality – Lady Chatterley's lover rather than the celibate figure of Jesus. One can even pray that some other nature will prevail; it 'survives the skin', implying that the desires of the flesh are a challenge, as well as the fact that the skin will simply perish one day (a further reminder of mortality). The word 'gallery' evokes the idea of art and of one's life and work being somehow preserved by artistic practice.

13 let's be clear
I am the huntress
you desired
cleaning a flesh wound
also designated
for you are the hunter
of heaven
am I one of twelve
labours
or is the circle
twenty four?
will you step out
of the trees
when I call you
to the game? (6)

The voice identifies herself with the huntress, linking back to the huntsman and the one desired. But the idea of being clear is ironic, since the poem continues to be playful and indeterminate. The Artemis/Diana figure and the labours of Hercules may form part of its scope of reference. Given the poem's tropes, hunter and huntress may allude to a romantic or sexual liaison, real or imagined. The direct reference to a game recalls the assertion that writing poetry is just that (Riffaterre 1978, p. 14). The next stanza's transition to 'past midnight' suggests anticipation, as well as the passage of time, since we do not know whether anyone has met the invitation to 'the game':

14 past midnight
lights lighting
in the high branches
deep reaches
far festivals lighting
lights in the branches
high overhead (7)

The lights of festivals are distant yet illuminate the near-ground. The repetition, of 'lights' and 'lighting', creates a sense of returning and iterative, even incantatory rhythm. Repetition is a paradigmatic trope, since it goes beyond what is logically necessary. Within the context of the sophisticated codes represented by the poem, the relative simplicity of 'lights lighting' is unexpected, reminding the reader that this work is, after all, employing conventions associated with the lyric.

The festival – with an implied atmosphere of ritual and magic – is the very stuff of the incantatory mode, and of otherness. The centre of this evocation lies outside the text. It functions intra-textually insofar as it alludes to other previous codes and events, such as the juggler and the bride. This phenomenon bears close resemblance to the incantatory purpose of evoking or summoning a spirit, or a stimulus for the ecstatic, transcending the self. Significance is achieved within the text – according with Riffaterre's theories concerning representation and significance – but there is something outside its boundaries – according with ideas of the decentred text. Such lacunae are an important aspect of the art of poetry, which suggest rather than explain, inviting an affective response, as well as stimulating the mind.

15 minutes
of an ecstatic literature
in collapse o o o
experimentation lyricism wit
all three angels all
double deleting the record
setting the circuits ablaze
checking the alternate settings
the unreleased versions
campfires of footsteps leaving
for the end of time all night
all night long deadly snakes

in the desert boots and all
leaving no trace (7)

From 'high overhead', we move to the minutes that are passing in stanza 15, as the cliché 'fifteen seconds of fame' is recycled. Rather than an experience (the festival), the text is now concerned with literature. The attributes of writing, 'experimentation lyricism wit' are angels. They flow together, without punctuation (again keeping the line alive, with what might otherwise be a prosaic sequence of terms). An exotic (think frescoes) or religious code is evoked, but then violently juxtaposed with 'double deleting' a brilliant, contemporary phrasal verb, and one which echoes the concerns of electronic archives mentioned in stanza eight. Here, in this imaginative clash of the ancient and modern, circuits combust and alternatives are presented.

At the same time, the writing demonstrates differences in orientation which are themselves alternatives, as threads of content interweave and reinforce each other, in the manner of kernel words. As one term reinforces another, it establishes a code and achieves a sense of heightened significance. The writing interweaves codes and their juxtapositions abruptly. By sustaining this practice, the text creates a larger code for the reading of poetry, or perhaps more specifically for the reading of *this* poetry, where the reader begins to anticipate a sometimes perplexing relationship between codes to reappear: to expect the unexpected. One reviewer confesses to being unsure how to read a Leggott poem. Its complexities problematise attempts at classification, leaving the reader/reviewer with many questions and a sense of the reading as only ever begun (Ross 2000b, pp. 158-160)[46]. This is an astute way of approaching Leggott's work and makes for an extremely engaged encounter between poetry and reader, as the text tests the boundaries of association and narrative building.

The metaphor 'campfires of footsteps' is particularly fascinating. It implies that the movement of human bodies itself illuminates, and is itself a 'festival' of sorts. It is continually leaving for the end of time, with ever-present dangers. Death leaves no trace, and perhaps we, too, leave no trace, comprising an archetypal camp fire that will eventually burn out. Our value lies in community, represented by communal ritual, and a reminder of humanity's fundamental needs.

[46] Another reviewer noted the 'tonal complexity' of *Milk & honey* (Livesey 2005, p. 9).

16 the platoon hops along
in rubber suits carrying its flippers
and singing endorsements
that was yesterday
now the release forms include
hill work where they return
for the exhausted one
can you run can you run can you
keep him in the middle
wipe away the tears
pick up the suitcases and
continue wiring safe to sound
with the green flame (7-8)

The transition to Stanza 16 harnesses an association between boots and the group as a platoon. They are in rubber suits, carrying flippers, so that now we begin to interpret them as marines or frogmen. And they are 'singing endorsements' as if the world of advertising and sponsorship had permeated the military, and as the text's details harness the incongruous and further a clashing of codes. Each line of this stanza offers the unexpected. The traits and tropes of this poetry are like no other; this is not a well-practiced form or style given a new twist by fresh subject matter, but a radically new approach.

And all this is framed by the idea of 'yesterday'. (Comparison might be made with Paterson's conflating of time periods within a stanza, and with a similar sense of movement.) The detail about 'release forms' pushes the stanza madly forward, or elsewhere. The subjects 'they' who return from hill work are presumably the strange platoon already mentioned. This emphasises the stanza's effects of disjuncture and incongruity because in the hills they would surely have no need for diving paraphernalia. There's something filmic about this writing, in its use of particular, often dramatic detail and an equivalent of wide, panning shots. Leggott's way of decontextualising much of this detail and drama radically opens up the field of her poem.

The platoon on the hill may be taken as an intra-textual metaphor for translinguistic poetry. A member of the troop is exhausted and is protected by being placed in the middle of the group; an analogy with societal and communal functions is suggested. The stanza closes with a reference to a green flame (mentioned in stanza seven), alongside an invasion. The green flame may signify the flash of an explosion, which, recalling earlier stanzas, recreates in the

reader's mind the explosion that has disabled a city's water supply[47]. This single reference to the green flame also unites codes and interpretations from several other stanzas of the poem, such as the suggestion that a foreign, eastern city was implicated. Now, these ideas return, as the poem throws a loop around various possibilities. We could 'be' in the Middle East, past or present, back in Melbourne, or another city which has faced major upheaval, or in no city at all, a city of the mind, a storyteller's mind, even a reading of Marco Polo's encounter with the Great Khan.

Returning from the numerous considerations conjured by the sixteenth stanza, we encounter an abrupt reference to Psyche, coupled with the concept of sin.

17 Psyche before her sin
is a dilettante
To read to listen to study
to gaze was all part of being
loved without loving
a pleasure previous to any trial
or pain of seeking the beloved
The light must be tried
Psyche must doubt and seek to know
reading must become life and writing
and all go wrong
There is no way but Psyche's search
the creative work of a union
in knowledge and experience
At the end there is a new Eros
a new Master over Love
Eros, like Osiris
or Lucifer (if He be the Prince
of light whom the Gnostics believe
scattered in sparks throughout
the darkness of what is matter)
is a Lord over us in spirit
who is dispersed everywhere
to our senses
We are drawn to Him, but we must
also gather Him to be
We cannot

[47] Recent US invasions of Zaire or Albania may be alluded to here (the poem was written in October, 1998 and first published in 2002, in *Trout*).

in the early stages locate Him
but He finds us out
Seized by His orders *we fall in love*
in order that He be
and in His duration the powers
of Eros are boundless
We are struck by His presence
and in becoming lovers we become
something other than ourselves
subjects of a daemonic force
previous to our humanity (8-9)

The ancient myth of Cupid and Psyche is referenced in tandem with that of Osiris and gnostic beliefs; a contemporary reading of this myth which accommodates the daemonic, possessive nature of sexual love follows. The enjambment across lines three to four fashions the lyrical ‘to gaze was all part of being’ emphasising the need to wonder. The sense of ‘loved without loving’ is unclear, depending on how long one pauses at the end of the fourth line. It is an ‘other’ that we must fill in ourselves. ‘I was loved without loving’ seems the most likely, but ‘I loved without loving’ is also possible. In this new personal setting, pleasure precedes trial and there is pain in loving, with the romantic code evoked once more by the archaic ‘beloved’. Writing becomes part of life, not separate from it, and, in real experience, everything must go wrong, just as interpretations run aground. Creativity is a union of knowledge and experience. The God of the erotic, *Eros* wins over all, as one finds union with the divine through love. Lucifer is contextualised here according to Gnostic beliefs rather than Christian ones, with the attendant idea of needing to test the light. This lord appeals to the senses, rather than ideas. This is a god we must gather to ourselves, a self-realised object of worship; the divine is ‘reticulated’.

Eros, the lover, is a kind of personal god known to the individual. In falling in love we are transformed into something ‘other’ (by the other). This is something which comes to us, but which, the text suggests, we should have been looking for. It is an external force, and has much in common with the religious, though the writing anchors itself in an unconventional spirituality. This force is anterior to our life on earth; a life force. Derrida might note the presence of an ‘originary’ element in this life force, just as presence is noted here as a quality of the other. Notions such as the lover, the other, the god are bound up with language (1997, pp. 20-21). Yet these concerns are as natural as the trees, and we migrate from one theory or

belief of the originary to another, into which elaborate and varied pantheon poetry itself might be admitted, if the idea that all forms of language are subsumed in poetry is true, or at least that these systems find their greatest range of expression in that genre (Roudiez, in Kristeva 1984, p. 2).

> 18 horse on the hillside
> horse climbing the hunter’s belt
> horse of dust and hot stars
> embedded in dust
> horse on a field of heaven
> almost dawn almost
> not leaving the ground
> almost not there at the door
> leaving the ground (9)

The next reference is to a horse, an animal we associate with earlier epochs, for transport and labour. Again, the paradigmatic axis is at work, signalled by associations. The horse climbing the hunter’s belt is both a reference to the constellation of Orion and to rites of passage. The horse of dust and stars fuses these two meanings. The repetition of the animal’s name has a similar effect to the repetition of ‘lights’ in stanza 14. There is a lyrical preoccupation here, with unexpected twists, often emphasised through enjambment – an example is, ‘almost dawn almost’. The horse not being at the door conveys a fragment of a narrative, the full complement of which lies somewhere beyond the text. But the grammar allows the idea that the horse suddenly is there, and, contradictorily, leaving the ground. This action makes the reader ‘look up’ – a strongly affective response. Stanza 19 alludes to French wine, sweeps and may-queens, deep pools, and an eidolon, suggesting a return to spring time and the haunting of memory. The next stanza combines ideas of the constellations with more quotidian concerns:

> 20 door to door
> Captain January’s maple sugar
> corroborates impurities
> of purpose, stitches one side of paradise
> to all the others, how to
> fly over celebrations with a star map
> torn out of the voice recording
> heartbreak and joyous guard

She wrote:
She wrote: (10)

Here, the personification of, 'stitches one side of paradise / to all the others', is a brilliant example of a paradigmatic technique (which concerns substitution).

The repetition of 'She wrote' sounds like a bird call, especially following the images of flight in the preceding stanzas. Some imaginative version of the writer's life is once more suggested and the code of the writer's life introduced earlier in the poem is re-established. Ideas, images and lines swirl around each other in stanza 20 and are difficult to separate, the frequent use of enjambment helping to connect the various concepts. The phrase 'a star map' is unexpected and fresh and 'torn out of the voice' violent, yet balanced by the word 'recording'. A compound noun 'voice recording' emerges and recalls previous references to archives, as well as encapsulating the poem's earlier references to joy and heartbreak. The poet's eye is separate from (while observing) the celebrations of others, yet it takes some pleasure in them. However, there is a declining fall that follows.

21 on wings, on springs
on sails, on gales, on this
hommage à piazzolla
look forward and leave behind
the sad paper flowers
a violin in the dark (10)

Images of flight continue into this stanza, and the festival code is re-affirmed by the reference to a piece that responds to the work of Argentine composer Piazzolla. The injunction to 'look forward and leave behind', suggests that the poem's speaker is in transition and powerfully captures the sense the whole poem yields of being 'in process', and of dealing with the provisional. The 'violin' in the dark metonymically gathers in the poem's various allusions to music, and it is suggested that this may be a darkness of understanding. It brings to mind Philip Mead's astute reading of another Leggott text and its 'metonymy about affect, not metaphor about feeling' (1995, p. 125), since affect is conveyed in a similar way here. Leggott then continues to develop tropes associated with travel and transition:

22 let's take
a holiday
in other places

23 boldly bodily
soft ophidian
I’m counting countries
every day of my life
I’m forgetting refractions
who was a beloved (10)

In stanzas 22 and 23, the poem toys with ideas of travel, departure and forgetfulness. The idea of the beloved is being remembered and forgotten at once; perhaps in a faint and fading echo of the Cupid and Psyche story. Describing the beloved as a refraction of light is a startling metaphor, suggesting both the primacy of love and the idea that love may merely be a form of deflection. In such an image, the word being employed undergoes a number of semiotic transfers, some of them driven by metonymic associations. For example, the word ‘light’ recalls the idea of a god, so there are implicit secondary meanings and suggestions such as ‘God is love’, or, perhaps more fundamentally, ‘Love is god’ – an idea which connects back to the Cupid and Psyche story. The italicised line is no doubt another ‘reticulation’ of an interlaced quotation. By the end of the stanza, there is a sense of this poem speaking both to and about itself, and, as it does so, it emphasises how its codes and meanings are as much about the act of saying a poem as they are about life – a complex effect.

24 bathing in the soft water
rain just gone from the window
air and water and orangeries
an ivory lace of the mind
refusing gifts *go from me*
go where I cannot see you
rescinding what’s left (11)

This stanza moves on, and yet also moves backwards in the poem’s time sequence, to the image of a bath introduced in stanza five. The likening of rain (and the pattern of trees in the orangeries) to the lacework of the mind demonstrates Leggott’s deft use of richly layered and interwoven metaphorical language. The mind repulses unspecified gifts, reinforcing the code of solitariness and self-determination so central to this work, as does the reticulation of the phrase ‘go from me / go where I cannot see you’. Such language signals a rupture in the work, as the sense of an interrupted beat permeates the following stanza, despite the repetition of the word ‘drums’ as a chanting device:

25 drums
every other morning
drums
where the sun lifts
drums
against the new green
drums
practising immolation
drums
of the whirring soul
drums
in the flowering tree (11)

The drums resonate through whatever else is happening, from trees flowering to an unspecified immolation. They are part of the festival code, and suggest a broad, almost remorseless, sense of the persistence of human music and celebration.

26 lunar shadows
crashed on the mountain
errors of judgement
a comedy a love
immaterial wandering
just this
and this (11)

This stanza counterbalances the previous. These are lunar shadows rather than the moon itself, and there is something tempering about the image, a consolation. Errors of judgment can be conflated with comedy and love, with all facets of life. A travel code is again evoked, all of which confirms the poem's restless evocation of its own wandering through indeterminacies connected to unspecified relationships and a sense of happenstance. It is then fascinating to speculate who the 'he' of the next stanza refers to:

27 if he is all heart
coming in to some body
on the other side of the universe
the moon the room the valley
where messages from gods
are pegged on the blue
and every night is an education (12)

Is this the lover of stanza 17 returning, the symbol of love, the one desired as well as problematised? This 'he', this universal love, can occupy a body even on the other side of the universe. Other gods have their messages, too, which are written on the metonymic, and perhaps synecdochic, blue sky.

> 28 ophis you are
> soft in my hand
> wild orchids
> wouldn't keep me
> out of your hair
>
> 29 *Ofi-Okos* a man
> holding a snake
>
> *Ofi-Okos* helping
> a snake to swim
>
> a serpent of stars
> a cinema of narrative
>
> engulfing
> the naked eye (12)

The ophis (Greek for snake) evokes the Garden of Eden, sensuality and the phallic. It is wild orchids that would not keep her, rather than the wild horses of the phrase – a subtle and intrinsically poetic metonym. A bodily connection is asserted here, although the image of the man allowing a snake to swim also links the snake with the stars and constellations. Astronomical imagery and images of water interweave, along with the idea of stories and a theatre. In one sense, these are metaphors for the flow and performative nature of the poem itself, and the semiotic potential of words is rarely more apparent than at the beginning of the thirtieth stanza.

> 30 Cup, wake –
> tip you out
> on me dark
> waves
> frequent me
> sun beyond
> visible sun

dark
filaments (12-13)

We move from the heavens to an injunction directed towards the 'Cup' to wake. It is difficult to read this word without thinking of the cup of suffering of Christian mythology. Yet the minimalist lines, and more particularly their caesurae, are variously suggestive, and the stanza as a whole resists any attempt to pin it down to a single meaning. It is suggested that the suffering implied by the poem may be tipped out over the voice that speaks; while, simultaneously, the succession of images from the poem as a whole might belong within this cup – which could suggest a denotation of the work itself. The line might also refer intertextually to a poem of Leggott's from the eighties, which describes a period of remission of her retinitis pigmentosa, and includes the lines, 'an Eye-Cup / violet-rimmed eyes looking out / on all the voyagers' (1987, p. 64).

The voice of 'so far' enjoins the sun to frequent her, a sun which is 'beyond / visible sun', so that one wonders if some other kind of sun, a metaphorical one for joy, hope or acceptance may be present, even though it is problematic in radiating 'dark filaments'. What we do know is that the poem continues to encompass multiplicities, even as it is about to end.

31 here they come
scorpion horseboy
seagoat waterbearer
two fish ram bull
and heaven's horse
when I look north
believing

* * *
* *
*

serpent of stars
cinema of narrative
theatre of love (13)

Constellations are again referenced, including the horse, which recalls stanza 18 and the animal's various manifestations in mythology. The characters of the constellations of astronomy and astrology merge. There is a hint here that believing may be a dangerous or uncertain thing.

The text arranges six purely typographical stars, as if to say that words can do no more, and we leave it to the stars, and space, to speak for themselves, and perhaps even to decide actual human experience. This typographical meditation on belief and its significance brings the idea of transcendence back to the reader's attention, as well as reinvigorating the notion of love that runs throughout the work as a whole. The phrases 'serpent of stars' and 'cinema of narrative' constitute a form of poetic reiteration, as does 'theatre of love'. Love's role and mode seems more originary than earlier in this work – this is a theatre, rather than a cinema, less darkened, more alive and mediated by human interaction. The last line appears to function, among other things, as a plea for genuine and intimate human interaction.

These closing images give a clue to the poet's approach to composition. There is much play in the movement of stars, in both their predictability and their unpredictability, in the cinema and in the theatre. The metaphors are grand ones, whose excess might suggest that one cannot believe in the idea of love after all – at least not outside this sense of playfulness. Even the truth of love, if it is a truth, is enacted within the construct of a performance. But the performance is part of the message and part of the beauty of love, transcending the imaginative and the real, the small and the large. The form of the poem, in suggesting the operatic, provides a clue to the need to heed it as a kind of broad semiotic sweep of feelings and associations. In this sense, the poem performs its content.

Could it be that such a diverse poem might still function as a single sign, in the way that Riffaterre described (1978, pp. 11-12)? Our lives may be understood as a fiction or a play, however serious, and the poem emphasises this – which, in turn, is reminiscent of Riffaterre's description of the writing of poetry as a game. If there are messages, they are written on 'the blue' for us to read, metonymically, and in the metaphors of serpents, cinemas and theatres for stars, narrative and love.

The trope of metaphor is certainly the commonest in Leggott's work in this poem, but regular examples of arresting metonyms have also been noted. The paradigmatic juxtapositions build

on each other, seeming to create notionally coherent, yet always unstable, wholes. Leggott achieves multiplicity through her employment of a profusion of codes, which she frequently allows to compete with and disrupt each other. At others, her use of codes echoes earlier passages, sometimes developing their ideas. Examples of Riffaterre's definition of semiotics as the transferral of a sign from one level of discourse to another are plentiful. They are found, not surprisingly, where the most unexpected things occur, when a code is established and swiftly broken, when the sequence of syntagm is disrupted or when juxtapositions of lines or stanzas suggest new readings.

Apart from the break across lines three and four, there are few striking uses of space in the layout of 'so far'. Rather, the poem has an extremely compressed quality and the lack of space in the layout helps conflate and condense ideas in intriguing and suggestive ways. The text tests the boundaries of association, largely, of course, through paradigmatic relations, and by juxtaposing codes, such as the religious with the modern-technological, the romantic and exotic with the pragmatic.

The poem is also translinguistic; it goes beyond the bounds of the semiotic discourse of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. It is 'larger picture' poetry, born of its times, cognisant of the internet and multimedia. When one considers features of translinguistics – multi-dimensionality, multiplicity, intertextual and intratextual writing – one realises that each of these features is powerfully present within 'so far'. In this way, Leggott's poetry mirrors many of the significant shifts in language use in our age.

In contrast with the poem 'Tigers', I would argue that in 'so far', the syntagmatic aspect of the line has been liberated in a way that permits more frequent paradigmatic surprises. Originality of form is immediately visible in 'Tigers', whereas, in 'so far', the conventionality of line stanza and line breaks is gradually teased out of stability and familiarity. Additionally, the manipulation of layout in 'Tigers' cannot be regarded as syntagmatic because the sequentiality of the syntagm is broken by the multiplicity of its structure, as is logic. Logic sets out thoughts one at a time, in the same way that the syntagm only occurs *singly* (Barthes 1968, p. 58). At least two significant characteristics of the syntagm are exceeded in 'Tigers': sequentiality and singularity.

The assemblage idea of a multiplicity of multiplicities is reflected clearly in Leggott's poetry. For example, one is only able to describe a variety of threads through 'so far' and 'Tigers', rather than arriving at any idea of thematic unity, or even of a culmination of effects, as in 'Thrills (helpless)'. The musicality of 'so far' is no less pronounced than that of 'Thrills (helpless)', though exhibiting different qualities; perhaps it is rather less embodied.

The idea that all language and speech is subsumed in poetry seems justified by the explorations of a poet such as Leggott. Kristeva's claim reverses Jakobson's assertion that poetics is a branch of linguistics, since, in the fathomless laboratory that is poetry, all language and all codes may be tested. Such a reversal echoes the shift made between Saussure's assertion that linguistics is a branch of semiotics and Barthes' competing notion that semiotics is the sub-set in that relationship.

Conclusion: For poetic practice

Charting the intersections of the relational axes in the work of these three very different poets helps identify how they are working, and what flexibility the relational axes are capable of. The analysis demonstrates that the intersection between these axes is sometimes so interwoven that they move beyond the binary and work in concert; they are mobile, not static. The binary is a useful tool for understanding, but we are prey to many forces in the world of which we also need to give account. Hejinian notes, 'each moment stands under an enormous vertical and horizontal pressure of information'. This state of affairs is ambiguous and incomplete but loaded with potential. The ability to make distinctions is what saves us from chaos (1994, p. 653). The work of the poets discussed here is distinct indeed, and it observes and characterises the era in which we live in different ways, and sometimes constitutes what has been called 'postlinear' poetry.

These poets exemplify many of the traits of semiotics described by Riffaterre and Jakobson, and their work exhibits the complexities of language, ambiguity and indeterminacy that critics and theorists frequently articulate. For example, each of these poets constructs and deconstructs the Riffaterrean 'stage-set' at which and through which their readers must look. The poets' body of work is lodged in a truly contemporary context and mode, sometimes represented by ideas associated with postmodernism, but also by the poststructuralist understanding of the decentred text. A strong sense of being captured by the postmodern moment is evident, but all three poets are, to some extent, trying to escape it. Their work often complicates conventional literary understandings, such as the applicability of codes, and seeks a fuller context in the cultural expanse that is assemblage. What I have called 'meta-codes' – comprising fragmentation and the use of space – at least seeks to expand the frame of reference.

Paterson's texts are concerned with using space to find a vehicle which will contain his fragmentary, often novelistic, yet harmonic narrative. His work celebrates contemporaneity, voice and form. Ironically, the poetry in the double margin form can seem more time-bound, as if the form has not always liberated the poet. Having said that, being caught within the contemporaneous is far more open than being trapped within the linear; the voice of a poem cannot stand outside some understanding of and immersion in time, even though a poem transcends the temporal in some ways.

Spatially, Paterson's double margin form not only explores the unknown of the right hand side of the page, but it camps out in a right hand margin in order to become more familiar with its terrain. The uses of space are varied and break apart conventions of reading. They suggest movement; create poetry from prose by repositioning phrases; demonstrate changes of thinking pattern and direction, and even create metaphor and irony. His visual strategies maximise the effects of language, which are felt and imaginary, paradigmatic and lexical, with form that shifts with content. In sections of this and other poems where the uses of space become formalised and habitual they can be considered syntagmatic.

Loney's juxtapositions and enjambment make the reader do a great deal of work. Its assertion of postmodernism and disillusionment with it are equally felt, reflecting the predicament of our era. He makes striking use of biography and celebrates the fragments associated with it. The use of space in Loney is less marked, but at times of subtle power. Loney's writing is oddly solitary, but without being maudlin. It places the self's explorations somewhere near the centre, largely without indulgence, but rather with a postmodern, Whitmanesque exemplar of experience. In Loney, the signified is often absent, elusive, uncertain, deconstructed, self-referentially debated, avoided, deferred, like meaning itself. The originary nature of the sign which Derrida discusses finds an acute parallel in Loney's concerns over the self as an edition and his frequent embodied reaction to the idea of the book. This concept is intimately connected in his work with anxieties about the postmodern era, also relevant to the other two poets.

Leggott's early works pursue spatial experiments. In later works, syntagmatic combination and paradigmatic selection in conventional lineation is just as powerful, achieving a rich multiplicity. In 'so far', one could say that the gaps of meaning and numerous contexts are filled up by the reader (as Culler suggested). Although it has been claimed of Leggott's work that a sense of words struggling against each other in their inadequacy is absent (Johnston 1992, 646), references and codes do compete, so that at the level of the phrase this kind of struggle does indeed occur.

Leggott's work is concerned with expressing the multiplicity of experience, and with experience framed in language with compressed allusions and illusion. The structures utilised are of the moment and the period of production, both personal and social. There is a strong social aspect to her writing which shares with Paterson's novelistic strategies a Bakhtinian

dialogic. Riffaterre's ideas on significance find frequent examples in Leggott's writing. She is adept at depicting the world, and therefore concerned with representation (and representational codes), perhaps more so than the other two poets. Yet she moves beyond provisional representations with disturbing regularity.

The difference in these three poets' approach to technical issues illustrates tendencies and achievements in their engagement with forces that are represented by the needs of positioning and combination, or substitution and selection. It is difficult to find metonymy in Paterson; Loney uses it almost as often as metaphor; Leggott's metaphorical scope is stunning, but she balances both forces. Yet, the disruptive nature of poetry described by Kristeva is less obviously apparent, less confrontational in Leggott and more so in Loney. Codes are relatively consistent in Paterson; shifting in Loney, but almost – although fruitfully – out of control in Leggott. Paterson's work is less focussed on language as a topic than Loney's. Leggott celebrates language with exuberance, whereas Loney more often protests its limitations.

Perhaps Loney, most of all, has moved beyond time, into an area governed by space, a postmodern condition which attempts to look beyond itself. Yet that gaze finds an embrace in Leggott's work where the line of sight is neither forward nor back, but encompasses both[48]. Each poet provides examples of the transferral of a sign from one level of discourse to another (Riffaterre), most particularly Leggott's. And Riffaterre's idea that a poem says one thing and means another is implicit in much of the work discussed here. Each poet exemplifies the use of an inner language, in ways which reflect idiolects, sometimes through the use of space (Paterson), or through stream-of-consciousness (Loney and Leggott), albeit in very different forms.

This exegesis gives examples of the use of space that both prove and disprove the understanding of spatial relations as syntagmatic. The evidence of the poems studied here – poems eminently suited to the discussion of page space in poetry – help form an argument that spatial relations occupy both axes. Spatial relations venture between the syntagm. It is not an arbitrarily defined feature of language (langue) but a use-instructed factor determined by a variety of instances (paroles). The example of the use of space enacting content makes

[48] It has been noted before that even critical vocabulary is compelled to use metaphors of sight when discussing Leggott's work (Ross 2000b, p. 159).

the syntagmatic axis lean into the paradigmatic, as form blends with content. This is a particularly strong instance of the interrelationship between these mobile axes. It is important because the dual function suggests that the use of space is more significant than many poets might give it credit for.

I have found only one previous attempt to annotate specific uses of page space in poetry (Berry 2002), so that a general belief often repeated over many decades that it could 'score music' in poetry seems to have endured without very systematic investigation. That idea needs to be balanced by the thought that space works in at least two simple and fundamental ways: through the *presence* of more white space on the page, and through its *absence*, which includes the conflating of phrases in prose poetry (as well as the *scriptio continua*, described above). The manipulation of space can undoubtedly aid the sense of movement in a poem (as Drucker suggested), contributing directly to its content, analogous to the use of silence in music.

The use of space breaks codes or creates a meta-code, as well as breaking the sequentiality and singularity of the syntagm. The link with paralinguistics is complex but justifiable, since the difficult cases of the use of space, and even punctuation, highlight the fact that the materiality of signs is often neglected in literary discussion. Future research may show that its applications are almost limitless.

Poems that make conspicuous use of space, as described in this exegesis, are necessarily neither better nor worse than texts which are more conventionally laid out. Such spatial formations constitute options for the practitioner. Conventional lineation can achieve a number of these features, but in many of the cases described the use of space has effects which are more embodied in their specificity. On the whole, the uses of space described above and collated in the Appendix are more visual than musical. The idea of utilising space in a way analogous to scoring music is one of the most distinctive of these functions, less achievable with conventional lineation, but by no means the commonest function. Rather, it is one of many effects. At the same time as noting the usefulness of space for musicality in Leggott's work from *Swimmer, dancers*, I have argued that other musical qualities were just as powerful in later works from *Milk & honey*.

Each of the three poets whose work I have discussed made use of space in specific ways in their earlier works, but abandoned those experiments in favour of modified techniques or other completely different techniques in later works; they continue to evolve as practitioners. In the cases outlined, the use of space creates meaning and effects in the same way language does. The poems discussed are inclined to fight conventional assumptions associated with language and poetry, perhaps seeking a more complete understanding of the multiplicity of the self, as well as language. The assemblage idea that 'each of us was several' (Deleuze et al. 1988, p. 3) finds accord with Leggott's writing practice, as well as her own theorising on the subject. She suggests that her writing has a 'cast-list' of seven: 'I, you, he, she, we, you (all), and they' (Leggott 1994, p. 62), a grouping which can generate heteroglossia without formal collaboration.

Awareness of the use of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations in poetry, including the function of space within those axes, means that the poet can utilise these functions more consciously and by so doing enhance and manipulate effects through the finer details of practice, in techniques such as those described. Fundamentally, the binary of form and content points to the need for a balanced approach to both elements in composition.

Form and content influence each other in a huge variety of ways, just as the relational axes constantly intertwine. Strong movements towards one or the other feature help educate the reader about what is possible in poetry and what might be attempted in terms of either form or content, whether through a strong formal structure (Paterson); a fragmentary mode of composition (Loney), or an overlapping of codes (Leggott). Each constitutes 'warring forces of signification' (Culler), 'collisions and disparities' (Lotman), and the differences and oppositions (Lucy) that make for expressive and innovative poetry. I hope that this analysis and discussion is of use to other poets, as it has been for myself in composing the poems which constitute the final section of my thesis.

Appendix: Towards a taxonomy of space

This preliminary attempt at a taxonomy of space is made with the understanding that classification is merely a condition of knowledge (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, p. 182). It seeks to better comprehend how space contributes to meaning, and to encourage poets to make use of space in suggestive and embodied ways, and to add piquancy to the reader's enjoyment of poetry.

Eleanor Berry has categorised twelve functions for the use of page space in the early poetry of Charles Olson (and in response to his work on prosody), as well as listing five visual forms which sections of his work employ (Berry 2002, pp. 58-60)[49]. I have found numerous examples in the work of each of the poets studied of intriguing uses of space, but, as with Berry's taxonomy, they do not always concern the idea of scoring music. I propose my own taxonomy of space, and will sort the instances I collect into groups.

The instances of the uses of space described can be summarised in this way, space:

1. Makes the page appear inviting (Paterson 1982: p. 1)
2. Enacts content (which relates to movement) (Paterson 1982: p. 1)
3. Separates out different ideas or suggests changes of direction (Paterson 1982: p. 1)
4. Varies the degree of combination of ideas (including the conflating of time periods) (Paterson 1982: p. 1)
5. Suggests/creates transitions (Paterson 1982: p. 1)
6. Evokes time stretched out in a physical, embodied manner. (Paterson 1982: p. 1)
7. Designates different voices or 'characters' (Paterson 1982, p. 5)
8. Creates metaphor (Paterson 1982, p. 10)
9. Enacts the internal, emotional world of a character (Paterson 1982, p. 15)
10. Creates new phrases through unusual enjambment, e.g. poetry from prose, effectively scoring music (Paterson 1982, p. 23)
11. Creates irony (Paterson 2008, p. 29)
12. Assists the undecidability of a text (also creates time for the reader to make connections, and to interpret) (Loney 1992, pp. 13-14)

[49] In a footnote to his essay on erasure, Brian McHale notes several uses of space in recent American poetry, as: a form of graphic design, or performance notes (like silence in music); as 'semanticised figures', or as non-visual referents, such as 'the void' (2005, p. 278).

13. Compresses and conflates ideas (Loney 1992b, p. 15)
14. Suggests embodiment (Loney 1992b, p. 16)
15. Space/silence is used instead of language, which encourages the reader to be more active (Loney 1992b:, p. 17)
16. Confounds the line (Loney 2005, pp. 63-71)
17. Evokes idiolect (Loney 2005, pp. 63-65)
18. Highlights some of the limitations of language (Loney 2005, pp. 63-69)
19. Evokes (sculpted) breath (Loney 2005, p. 65)
20. Represents the postmodern (Loney 2005, p. 71)
21. Makes the reader sing (Leggott 1991, pp. 12-14)

The above instances might be grouped in this way, space:

1. Makes the page appear inviting
2. Enacts content (#2, #3, #9, #14, #19)
3. Varies the combination/conflating of ideas (#4, #11)
4. Suggests/creates transitions of time (#5, #6)
5. Designates different voices or ‘characters’ (#7)
6. Creates metaphor (8)
7. Scores music (#10, #16)
8. Creates irony (11)
9. Assists undecidability (#15)
10. Substitutes for language (#13)
11. Confounds the line (#14)
12. Evokes idiolect (#15)
13. Shows some limitations of language (#18)
14. Represents the postmodern (#20)
15. Makes the reader sing (#21)

It is a grouping which might easily be embellished by future research, which I very much hope to conduct.

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‘gestures’ in *Social Alternatives* 34:2

‘I’m going to meet my body’ in *foam:e* #13

‘Land of the shining stream’ in *Ink to Paper – Limestone Tanka Poets Anthology* (2016)

‘Transfusions’ in the *21st AAWP Conference Proceedings*

‘*from* Las tals oov Masses Aroynghtbokkle’ in *Haibun Today* 11:2

The section *tracer* was published as a chapbook of the same name by Ampersand Duck in 2015

Some of the haiku included here appeared in the collections *urban haiku* and *River’s edge* (Recent Work Press, 2015 and 2016)

‘Co’ forthcoming in *Meanjin*, Winter 2017

‘The affect’ forthcoming in *Maine Review*

This MS will appear as a collection from Puncher & Wattmann in 2017

The creative project responds to the exegesis

The practice-led creative project engages with concepts raised by the textual analysis and theoretical discussions being undertaken for the exegetical component, complementing this research and actualising the ideas generated in poetic form, though in more lateral and sometimes less explicit ways. Specific topics that the creative project explores include: the role of metonymy and metaphor in poetry; formal structures as syntagmatic confines; the idea of the centre being outside structure; the place of written language (as opposed to speech); social context; selection and substitution in poems; binary oppositions; spatial relations, misdirection and the unity of the whole.

A number of poems reply directly to techniques or preoccupations of the three New Zealand poets studied in this exegesis. The creative project utilises a range of forms, found poetry, conceptual poetry, concrete poetry, haiku and tanka sequence, haibun, sonnet, villanelle and prose poetry. Thematically, the persistence of memory and a re-examination of one's history, as well as attempts to look forward and embrace change and its uncertainties are important threads in these poems.

Poems such as 'semi' and 'Co' use eavesdropped conversations as well as imagined situations to suggest tangentially related ideas which stretch paradigmatic links whilst trying to maintain as many threads as possible. Different speakers are scored across the page. The idea that the use of space can act as a form of substitution for language finds expression in the poem 'I'm going to meet my body', where the space before the third 'son' suggests the passage of time and with it a break in the chain of events, an additional extra.

Most of the section 'tracer' is about public events, but they are of very different kinds. 'Redex' is what I call a reductive symposia poem, attempting to capture major ideas and strange uses of language. It makes use of page space to accentuate the often accidental insterstices of language. The reductive approach is continued in the process enacted across the three poems which follow it.

Following a decision not to keep my writing of mainstream poetry and haiku separate, I have bookended several poems with haiku; such poems are effectively 'haibunised'. The haibun form seems to me to have considerable potential for experiment, since it interlinks the diverse

elements of prose and haiku. The poem ‘gallery’ is another experiment with haibun, focussing especially on lineation. ‘Land of the shining stream’ is closest to a traditional haibun, but also employs tanka (the form from which haiku derived and usually rendered in five lines in English), as well as haiku written over two, three or four lines.

The prose poem sequence ‘A little less erasure’ considers the impact of the conflating of ideas in Alan Loney’s ‘The erasure tapes’, taking his material as a kind of signal for my own writing about memory, and particularly of a father figure. The prose poems and haibun are experiments which juxtapose the sentence and sentence fragment with the line, and invert some of the concerns with space.

In studying the relational axes I have become more aware of certain mechanics of poetry, especially the differing ways in which each axis contributes to meaning. This has helped me to extend my experiments with each axis and their connections with form and content. I have discovered, for example, that an emphasis on metonymy slows down the writing process, in comparison with a focus on metaphor. I have learnt that there are numerous ways in which page space contributes to meaning, particularly in enacting content and to enhance the affective quality of poetry.

The use of the sentence rather than the line in the various prose poems is another kind of manipulation of space. Bringing words and phrases close together (especially with the omission of punctuation), leads to a conflating of ideas with an increase in indeterminacy with regard to the beginnings and endings of phrases. This assists the poetry in embodying the situations, ideas and emotions being explored.

imagine pattern

imagine pattern

no one imagines how much time it takes
writing a letter in blood
coaxing life out of *columns*
going backwards from *Mill's Mess*
unwinding *Burke's Barrage*

those who've gone before
                trap and free

                throw me a word
I'll give a pattern

no one imagines how much time
writing a letter in blood
learnt between hemispheres
        by the time I reached the end
half my possessions were things to throw
        I juggled
because I couldn't multi-task –
        our world demands it

those who've gone before
        trap and free

no one imagines
writing a letter in blood
between hemispheres
by the time I reached the end
I could juggle six balls

but not drive a car

the car must be driven
  to get to the running event
    to get to the juggling festival
      to get to work

like writing a letter in blood
I grasped a few catches
of s e v e n balls
instead of earning
raising children
vying for office

by the time I reached the end
I had achieved nothing

what I could carry

between hemispheres
how to learn
repeated in music
and research –
I never imagined how easy it could be
to succeed

I finally failed properly
going backwards
from *Mill's Mess*
the machine, the Frauberg shuffle
the giraffe, the penguin
shower, reverse
sea-saw, double-see-saw
and tricks I invented myself
    the play things of a child . . .

tea

after the first sip
settle to reading Bakhtin
  the charm in knowing
  the cup is ready

something catches your attention
an idea odours the room
wash it down
with sips

Bakhtin's second page
the word 'neutral'
in the quote by Zirminsky
the phrase 'linguistic descriptions'
applied to novels

someone is talking
raise the cup
I've learnt the word 'variform'

a wash
the cup empty
'the higher unity of the work as a whole'

paper

in the sheet
                    Martin's absence
Martin's travelling

light in the room
                        contains days
he walked beside the canal
                                        looking for birds

shadows on windows

life
      not an exercise

you walk away
                      find yourself
at the edge of a lake
which precedes
                       white paper

gallery

you end up looking
at the floor

slender wooden tiles
set diagonally to the space

pipes
and air ducts

sides of the building
with steep drops

to partly foliaged landings

hovering

above palmed gardens

outside   the black & white crossing   eroded

lamps   rows of trees

cylindrical   bus shelters

the gallery delivers its many messages

splashes
beneath each urinal

t–

in here
        & gone

when we forget
        t– doesn’t exist

exist it must
in the word

a kettle
        in a painting
of an imaginary universe

a bottle top
        that doesn’t fit

a fridge
        in a caravan
memories of the only family
        holiday

a button
        two or more buttons
that shirt
        lying on the floor

follow you . . .

she understands
which way is north

which side of the road to cycle on

which light says go
(it should be red, right?
he says
red is activity
green restfulness)

she remembers to include her phone number
in the email
so they can ring

*

when she plants for Spring
he wants to prepare new ground
get the spuds in

when she helps set up a Permablitz group
he wants to shovel the wheelbarrow full
mix mud

when she asks about friends
he wants to send out invitations

when she learns pottery
he wants to try the wheel

when she prepares for the end
he wants to be ready

A little less erasure

inspired by Alan Loney's 'The erasure tapes'

The words of the ancestors could cuff me that's the main a fist meant you were stronger 'I can still hit harder than you ya knaw' a father said to his son and nothing not the tablecloth never changed in gingham with dust honoured creases stains nor the broken window because a shoe after tormenting a sister nor the perspex homemade doubleglazing could let in or out love

*

Relations things to abuse to compare to contrast which usually means abuse oh i was only saying oh i was only pointing out and you are pointed out and slowly you learn nothing personal the universe is not personal if there was a god which is a higher self it wouldn't be personal the higher self is not personal it is higher it could not have come earlier

*

I'm a first edition it's been said before not by me that's the difference i'll fight to avoid expectations of being understood i'm a first edition don't blake me on this but i'll fall as well death and i-know-nothing-about-menopause taboo subjects i-know-nothing-about-menopause more than death should we have a symposium on the subject do you think my guides

*

I can't tell the story of my life it implicates others i must assume silence a way of retelling by not repeating the story into a story which believes its own history i wouldn't want to be judged by what on earth does my writing have to do with me you fantasise asking a poet this question and blocking your ears to his shrieks as he follows you to the door

*

He gave her the money she wasted bizarrely assuaged his guilt at her previous misdemeanour which he nevertheless punished these are the days of points of view the assertion of one thing not the denial of another it's hard to live this rule we discuss and chart add to our 'knowledge' only what i can do is knowledge can i learn by heart without you suspecting me of being him

*

You thought you had to speak became hung up you could have stayed silent though they wouldn't have been impressed you might have cultivated a teaching then again then again

you have to speak to be silent and so i won't eat in order to eat and i won't run in order to run the voice when coming out of a cold can sing like leonard cohen for just a few minutes which is a shrill

*

What size father what recorded what unstated like his medals and embroidery what he left in the mattress already counted in the wardrobe no naval suit thrown out years ago to moths the mantelpiece a photo number four kept the naval record written on cloth in case they fell overboard showed he never changed his rank number two holds it for all to see and i go to him soon

*

He converges on the future writing down what he will have achieved by then achieves it which is evidence of the power of the moment it's not that the future doesn't have a choice could still intervene with death on some day the list will end years of being thrown overboard at dawn prepare him for what lies ahead in the sea where he can breathe as he never would

*

Where cows and goats graze patterns of energy will one day include measured thought what neurotheologists are working on comes back to cricket in the summer love solitude grass swishing wet ankles and under under is why it's possible mycorrhizal telephones whisper minerals through the forest if this wasn't true i wouldn't believe it or tell you what i can

*

the self's own text metaphor beguiles like the bent stick in the water and like the stick in the water can't escape the fact that in the water the stick is the same i can't cry enough for the drowning the way i opened my eyes under water and saw that he was gone the mentor brother father

*

We didn't move into a new house it was as greatgrandfather built except the laundry lost and birds made a hole under the guttering right through to granite all is rubble despite that raising and plastering just as real butterflies seen in the garden where towards the end of life he prepared herbs for the ground we would walk and search what he did

*

They gave everything that can be said in both sets of dna the multiplication of the set the intersection with your set the modifying effect i forgot the presence of others changed behaviour for good i stopped believing dwelt on only two instructions which seemed enough

*

Skin off many times but i was the same i tell the future a story it laughs the identical way when i thought things were changing i’m the one who’s changing we’re the child that doesn’t watch itself and takes photos catalogues and forgets trying not to tell the future the same joke we don’t want to hear predictable laughter what else can we do but heal skin and slower than we want

semi

semi

(i)

I live in the institution
of my mind

End the buffering

helicopter parents

naked without a phone

I *might look like the obsessive/compulsive one*

*

he said ‘I am’
. . . never heard any more from him

at the atomic level
things which are separate
affect each other

the whirr
of the motor
on the fan

38°
you see things
in yourself

*

publicise others?

I don’t even

waiting to be asked

climate controlled
for your comfort

tweet you
network engaged individual
versus the surveilling state

Sunday
three pigeons
on a stave

*

$30 for the both

authentication

Tuesday
a young man squirts his arm pits
at the bus stop

*

'& a scatter of light . . .
it touches the stars' - Alistair Paterson

hats off
navigating
to a settlement

*

only yesterday
I wanted to say something about
self-reflective exercises
but didn't get a chance

*

you haven't read it yet?

I can read music for classical playing
but I like jazz

bollards
a thousand gravestones

he sometimes
deliberately
does things the hard way

wore a red & brown zigzag cardigan
for ten years
but no one got the joke

his partner persuaded him
to let go

*

          who's your go-to poet?

the man on the bus
who says hello to everyone
the two young women
who sit and have a real chat
(the way he lights up)

the man busking
selling loose poems for $2
who welcomed us to town

*

          don't work so hard

the shock
doesn't sink in

racing through lists

moments commodities
hours investments
this day
a stock market opportunity

          a child waves to you
another tries to get out of his trundler

          the manager
longs for
          a steadying hand hold

for a moment
my skin smells of your skin
I feel delicious

*

spider threads
link the immaculate
air conditioners

a child's painting
hangs on a string
rotates in the air flow

*

I've mellowed out a bit
remember me in Year 7
I was insane

what's conscience?

that's when you care about
what you do

signs of the Buddha: long earlobes
wheels on the soles of the shoes

first you bought an ironing board
now you want to buy an ironing board
and iron

that second hand shirt has two stains on it,
how much did it cost?

$10
that's $5 per stain

the extra ironing board
will make a great bookshelf

*

I can play
kind of
guitar

value in a system

she's already ninti

*

potentially dissident

exogenesis –
did life
transplant here?

*

a boy
nods & mutters
at numbers on the bus

intersection
lanes
funnel

half the city has name tags on strings

the work of art
not the icon

an oil on canvas town

learning to skip
ahead

The National Collection of Everything

it's a very shirt tucked in kind of place
but a lot of people are carrying tunes

(ii)

talking about art
he foams
at the mouth

bus stop
one homeless man
introduces us
to another

bus ride
her pigtail
hangs in my notes

I'm not allowed to stand for very long
I've got a certificate from the doctor
in case mum asks me
to go round the mall with her

in Year 9 we had to make
a controversial art work

*

I need more glittery headbands

A Wild Concession Card Must Be Shown To The Driver

*

'I could not swallow the lake' – Clarence Major

I tried

full of bricks
whole eucalypts

museum
not enough
dust

families
walk by the water
cycle

*

she has
a poet voice

I'm stuck here in the middle aisle
wondering what's going on

*

did you have words you didn't earn?

he called me an Imagist

embodied

enminded

I live here now

reflection is not highly thought of

transmitted, how you feel

always exploring the new land

a company called
disjunction media

an almost song

*

I wouldn't know an app
if it knocked me over

(I wonder if there is an app
that knocks you over)

the idea of the origin
of life is so mysterious
it’s not real

*

did you feel the solstice
blowing in?   you didn’t?
most people could feel it
blowing in, it’s going to be
a hot summer

we heard you used to go
to a discussion group

the way you elbowed him in the guts
what was that about?

she remembers what she wore
the night she met her husband

free-ass (paroles)

Saussure, sausage
bake in a
rin-tin-tin, Bakhtin
with the exciting adventures of
Kristeva Christabel

birds answer stars
a blush of light
between clouds

a blurb of light
a typo, the Bibel
a rustic joke
(or primitive instrument)

chattering
kind wakefulness

what's the password

is being dyslexic
any kind of advantage?

[clues
which can be
taken out]

Mother referenced multitudes:
to be Pacific, dear

*

the stool wobbles

euphemism
for what's hard to say

> *I didn't have the muscle tone*
> *to cut it off*

early morning
a knotted handkerchief
at the end of a stick

he steps onto the drive
the journey ends

*

disarrayed
thoughts cross easily

a bridge
between sign
and wilderness

*

met him
a simple metonym

what!
homonym Watt

shuffling bags
towards the exit

left out a personal pronoun
took the bus instead

he was also
whistling-osis

a thrush he remembered
on the fence post

singing

or

‘You know what lies are for’ – Sylvia Plath

learning to cover up

another’s error   is one’s own
Ramana Maharshi says

he can tell by looking at me
that I’m not in tune

perhaps he heard wrong   remembered amiss

heard and remembered   what he had to

[in literature
we don’t like the idea
of choice]

this is going to fall and break
fall and break
the child sings

symptom

that's not what you're here for

to live
and in living, announced
at birth, continued with each
affirmation, name,
a writer of stories
years that came first . . .

to cross out the shadow on the moon
to scribe the dance and paintings of dancers
I'm language
made into and out of
to be
in what the other has written. live
disappointments at what's read
preceding delight, often in
the same
text
that's changed
nothing, time moonched
perspective munted

I'll put a rainbow in your hand

fill a death with everything except certainty
feel at home on the street

we don't like rows

at the hairdressers
someone says
I don't want to misunderstand
the sign

auto

vocation

looked for snakes, toads
early purple orchids

moments of uncertainty
between people

nights of tension and violence
when I hated the man
downstairs

doomed love and shy looks of teenagers
dead end villagers in a dead end village
dogs that howled and people who wanted to

I respected nudity
but couldn't chisel my clothes off
till I was thirty

complained: everybody loves an artist
nobody wants to live with one

I was the problem
from the inside out

*

now the rains pour, I'm satisfied
cold, relieved
(the heat no longer follows)

my children poems fully formed
I watch them sleep
understand and run

love bit me many times
I rinsed wounds tenderly

now I've a love that
offers freely as a kiss
and with agreed silences

I fall into this closure
and do not perish
but witness

the progress of ants
curling bark

a good start

'I am alive only by accident' – Sylvia Plath

you were never meant to be born

I didn't want another one

you should have been a girl

fell into the world
ready to battle a mother's will
a father's lack

she pulled my hair
I pulled back

and laugh now I'm here

with the sunshine

and my tiredness

from hardworking

bringing

I wander the downs
climb burras
no one’s shouting
up there

come in, get food
go out

do everything on my own

there’s something wrong with me
I don’t know how to talk
if I say what I want
someone’s unhappy

breakfasts

we ate alone
stole open
rice pudding tins

when my brother beat me to the top crust
I got out all the slices
and took the crust from the bottom

became a vegetarian
when I was fourteen
Mother said, *you can do your own cooking*
from now on

gave me
ten pounds a week
to go to Tescos

bought milk, eggs, potatoes, spaghetti
kept the food in a suitcase
under the bed

lived on omelettes

and boiled potatoes
with salt

one packet stayed there for two years
till I left home
I didn't know how to cook
spaghetti

daring

no one dared me

to break the car’s aerial
to take dirty magazines
to school

to help a woman quit her
violent husband
(she always went back)

I’d like to say
everybody said I was crazy
but some of these were secret

gave up smoking
when I was eleven
gave up sucking my thumb
when I was eleven
gave up wetting the bed
when I was eleven

according to the *Primal Scream* guy
my childhood ended
when I was eleven

but not for
these reasons

‘O’ Level results

the ‘O’ Level results came

he refused to tell his parents

he asked father many times
for help with history homework

father carried on
watching the news

they were out

they were arguing

he told Gran
and she told them

years later   he realised

it must have hurt

lessons for a poet

stop work
look at this duck

quit your job
go to a place you've never been

enter into conversation with that
greasy-haired man with broken teeth

listen to a confused woman's story
in a carpark

take the job you didn't want
see what the staff have to do

change the colostomy bag
know its sweet sickened smell

have a drink with the talkoholic writer
walk home at 2 a.m.

help the abused woman leave her husband
dismiss his anger

listen to your father drone on about politics
watch him in the shed in the dark

hear your brother's ideas about baby-swapping
a cure for baldness and people disappearing

and re-appearing
as versions of themselves

nurse the profoundly handicapped man
whose mouth opens

get lost, walk twenty miles
do that often

fall asleep on the train
alight destinations too late

log on to the server
to see what the world gets swallowed by

not there

'I will patiently
reinvent your foment' – Michele Leggott

She didn tell me

she was pregnant before

Father didn say
ee an mother woudn gettin on

Ie didn knaw 'Arry
awned part a the owse

didn think she'd ever want ta leave

she'd ever actually gaw

Ie didn think the roof woud 'old
when the railway carridge rattled

didn expeck Gran woud 'it me
with the buckle

didn realise me son
woud walk owt sa young

didn think Ie'd miss un

accomplished

'boldly bodily' – Michele Leggott

ran fifteen miles
eating the hills of Ponterwyd
felt bouncy
at the end of it

hiked to Craig-y-Pistyll and back
twenty miles
round the dam
making notes

took the wrong road
hitching home from Glastonbury
walked 28 miles
from Pilton to Taunton

did the 30K fundraiser
at school
walked the three miles home
to Greensplat

not much
about literature

those two poems

our house
empty of books
except for
The Transport & General Workers' Union Handbook
father the Shop Steward

I started writing stories
aged ten

at eleven
got into the top class
my family silent
showing off again

at fifteen
gave my poems
to father
he looked at them
and gave them back
saying nothing

I didn't go to Uni

got married
had children
went to a faraway country

studied, aged 29
dropped out

published at last

33
returned to visit
he was thin
showed me
his two poems
about goings on at the local
while the landlord was away
I raved
about how funny they were

six months later
the phone call from my brother
asked me
what I wanted
from father’s belongings

those two poems

first date

moonlight stilled us
our hands
flitting   gesticulating

told childhood
embarrassments
all the while
smiling

distant music lulled us
an apartment not far
a subtle light
                  flickered there
we kissed

(no thought of contraception)

talking

          about who would earn
          the money

opus

never wanted life easy
that would be a rip-off
sought the challenge of things
which took
years to learn

one day
in an emporium
I saw a sign
Aim for success
Not perfection

it's still cooling
towards a chill morning
when I walk out

the times

it was half past separation
when I noticed who I was

quarter to release
before I could handle being alone

ten to balance
when I met the peaceful one

now there's
minutes left

tracer

Redex

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the plane shadowed
in a rainbow circle
in the cloud

coming into Melbourne
someone singing
a thin layer
over the city

*

try to relax

reception

he says he's
arm fodder

To us as to the neighbour
who shares our rooms

our regional condition
origin story

Flinders Street
small run magazines

aspire to Etel Adnan
the ninety-year old
poet philosopher

*

image & text
equal weight

evoke a sense
of correspondence

envelopes
personal choice
unbound
              a narrative

traps
        or animal traces

the momigami
                        grieving hold

            What will remain
                      when all this fades?

the embossed
                      straddles materials

a print maker's
                        fascination
                                          for *The Wake*

pulsing   coalescing

                  pretext
geocaching

no order
              a rotating machine

*

energy independent
                              syntropy

consciousness: language

                    representation:
transmission

(Medium is the massage)

reading   meditation
            there is less
                              yes

                    an extension of eye

grammar experiment
                    algorhythm tweaks

            nexus:
selfhood   book

            translucent material

        The Ten Thousand Things
made of
        all else

        investigative
particles
        should have been
a helix

                    temporal coherence
(we're getting tired)

        printers experiment
        > than poets

iconic associations
                grids   circles

spatial
        his Decodex

leaving sonic aside
to be able to do it
                yourself

language is memory
                of being at home
                                everywhere in the world

            rose   sense
mentalvisual

partialphysics

*

viability priority

the book needs no electricity
(except your own)

scroll to screen

fewer   better?

torque
process

explode text
break bindings
form

emblem
The Work of Art in the Age of

nothing's
permanent

*

made to tear –
Tim's books

a tisket, a tasket

a real layer

festival bread   someone mentions
a pig on a spit – with Australian 'i's

*

Library   repeating mirror   of our

distillations

collectors
wayzgoose

*

seeing is believing
but feeling
is the truth

an exorbitant privileging
of sight
technological extension
of a sense

proprioception

a space termed sensorium

after
alter frame of perception

making sense   not informing
sense

beyond tactile
point of reference
(manifold – map)

intimate   touch
cognitive perceptions
haptic

*

wayfinding

oceanic stick charts

when you cannot see the stars . . .

the eye feels the struggle
of the hand

I remember
that thick paper

we rely on collectors

a finger box
is a book

SAY YOU MAY
shrapnel
a g a p

why are they square?

*

imagine
everything needing to be
different

narrative time
passing

no harmony images across
the gutter
page dynamic

a book
that was normal

narrow
limits
the universal

she's good in a good way

*

sunset flight
the wings
glow red

air-hostess
head side to side
looking for rubbish

Redux

try to relax
reception

image & text
equal weight

unbound:
a narrative

grieving
hold

what will remain
when all this fades?

the
embossed

coalescing
no order

a rotating
machine

consciousness
begets

there is less
yes

translucent
material

particles
printers

to be able
to do it yourself

at home
everywhere in the world

break bindings
nothing’s permanent

mirror
of distillations

wayfinding
haptic

why are they
square?

imagine
needing to be different

narrative
time

passing
limits

she’s good
in a good way

On the first arrangement of 'Redex'

The movement from reception to the quote about the neighbour reinforces the social nature of the event. Links from text to narrative have new possibilities. Writing embraces language; type-setting makes words. Combine. Action stronger than a poem of mine offers. The way a new experience shakes values. Layers exposed. We're. Wayfinding. The eye struggles; haptic guides. Someone asks the awkward questions. Narrative time passing. I wish I had said that. She's good. Turning the page and the writing backwards, upside down, I have to re-invent reading. *Y*s are a good one. Whys are a good one. Wise are a good one. Giggle is difficult. Gregor is gillifult. Eyes is a colon; brackets are two hands, rushing. Dynamo Kiev (beat Borussia Moenchengladbach). But not without a struggle. Not as easy as spelling. Except. A lone Greek word an exception. Villify. Victory.

I can't say to you where the arrow lies. I'm an age. An aegis. I'm ash. Old English. I'm bold. Half-German, Welsh king. Neething. Nothing.

What I wrote before
was different

on the final arrangement of ‘Redex’

redex
caren

the plane
glyph

bumbling backwards
bottling upwards
blocking howlwards

over the city
to biobirocebirou

sirallion

where I said I’d go

a royal, regal raygal

translating ieyal

yes,
try to make an effort
try to relax

I’m in their hands
their unknown language
won’t attempt to translate
aileron, victory

to be able to do it
yourself

I turn the page
the only thing I want
to read
the date
upside front

it passed me
rebex

I had the chance to play
balalaika restrung
FDA

so I sing *Yon is elf*
flexion pointing
that way

a bucket in his hands
his able hands
upturned

and I in consciousness
turn his sunset flight
to order

writing on the window
going the other way
(remembering the train
and what it brought me)

this must be for him

war memorial

at the entrance
a severed limb

thank god for the artists
some of the photographers
tell the truth

a bandaged head

an emaciated Australian soldier
in a Japanese Prisoner of War camp

Australian soldiers tossing
dead Japanese soldiers
into a mass grave

an Australian soldier
about to be beheaded
by a Japanese sword

Jewish civilians thrown like chicken
carcasses

> "I started drawing & it
> started to drizzle with
> rain and a couple of the
> other blokes, digging
> in madly, stopped &
> propped up a couple of sticks
> & put round a sheet over the
> top of me."
>
> Ivor Hele, Battlefield burial of three NCOs

piano tanka

for Ann-Helena Schlüter

from the Ballade in F
she launches a cloud of notes
Chopin
hovering among them
enters the room

she plays
Beethoven’s Sonata in C
storm and
wonder in the chair

Bach she takes for a walk
and a picnic
unpacks the mind
letting it breathe
by the river bank

she sings her own song
in swirling arpeggios

walk home
skip in step

The Crooked Fiddle Band

at The National Folk Festival

Smeagol-like wears
a quiver full of bows

plays a gaelic tune gypsy style
Stephane Grappelli meets Opeth

they rock in seven beats
in eleven

with reggae chants
scratching dub style
hand reversed
de-tuning
sawing
pizzicato arpeggios
with two bows at once
and on the nyckelharpa

she runs across stage
to deliver one massive
slashing bow stroke
to Gordon on the bazouki

the drummer
Joe the drunk
leads in a cathartic scream
at the loss of an ear

hear them three times
never got to see
Led Zeppelin

festival

to be happy
you have to let go

    for a few bars
    music in two tents
    in tune

sit down and a band sets up
around you

the lamp shade floats
under the ceiling
a jellyfish

    young pub band
    all their shoes
    old

        his drum sticks
        almost frayed
        to nothing

the little boy
shooting at us
from the top deck
of the house bus

    when your country's full of bigots
    & you've got a really old constitution . . .

Frank Yamma's guitar strap:
Do not cross Police line

    in the silence
    after the first two tunes
    a child says, *now what*?

*

Martin sings at the stock camp
about accountants
civil servants and engineers

as the kitchen closes
for billy tea, damper & stew
his voice trails
around the tents

Martin singing in the stock camp
drinking billy tea
eating damper
the song *Bright Eyes*

to the far shore
my mentor
is travelling

playing with Usher

Written for Matt Withers' performances of Koshkin's Usher Waltz, based on Edgar Allen Poe's story The Fall of the House of Usher

creeping, spilling, it fades
into damp counterpanes
tables, ornaments and hair
the fear   of Roderick Usher

a friend would assuage
but no story can loosen twinned ties
an ailing sister, hallowed within her
the barren   House of Usher

in the night, on a storm
shook windows, opened doors
sleep would not come, but the sleeping would
the ignoble end   of Usher

death saying, the crack, the rhythm
of the house of decay could not
last another instant, stone chords ring
round the visitor   to Usher

The ghosts are those who don’t appear. The dead. The indigenous. The disabled. Some of the insane. The sick. The ones we don’t want to see. We retell their stories with silence.

We have stolen the idea of land. We are removed from touch, not touching enough, but polite. We retell stories with stories. We stress differences. We are content with our circles.

The dead are gone. We honour them, we say. They speak to us, and we speak back. They guide with affirmation. Of family. They’re on our side. From beyond.

Some of the insane are out on the street. In their long beards and misshapen pants, pushing trolleys or drawing baskets. Some are tucked away in an electronic zone. Some wear suits and talk about investment.

Some of the sick have sores on their faces, and walk funny, might fall at any minute, need an extra arm.

traced

for Caren Florance and Louise Curham

stutter
burn
smudge

spoke
frame
letter

night falls in

youmeetingwemeeting

the wind
has sway
loose
flap

ask
with a stamp

court on through
from one project or

want to be
a voice

clay

he is a

once it's become a mirror, can glass be glass again – paraphrasing Wanda Coleman

when exist
without words?

before I uttered
a time

we can't go back
the writing's all over my face

you read
know mood

just like the
psychoanalyst

he doesn't remember
being a baby either

may or may not
go back

to the mother-god
gargling

mother
mirror

the empty room

contains a chair
with two shirts draped over it

handbag, phone charger
book of short stories, tissues
festival brochure, phone, map
receipts, three hats
an empty picture frame
empty shopping bags, coat
two pairs of sandals

a pair of shoes

folded sheet used for a table

piece of cardboard
lamp, mandolin
juggling balls
tin whistles, folder of songs
notebook, another phone
plastic sandwich bag, laptop case
mug of tea, clipboard

another notebook and pen

cushion

companion

> ‘The grasses unload their griefs on my feet as if I were God’ – Sylvia Plath

imaginary conversation   I bite my mouth

after lunch   food swept away
I leave Sylvia
on the table

she tells me she feels sorry
for her children

only then do I think   a woman
who talked about her children
and left them

she caged images for me
which I wrestled for years

she won’t go away
and I won’t leave her

in moments
of disturbance
when I seem to have no focus

I reach for her

free

don’t let him speak about his wife
conversations stop midway
at the pain they don’t want to place

Giff hid in the three sisters’ house
where he laid open the photos
that let him speak about Ethel

he remembered me visiting Gran
his wife’s friend of fifty years
and came the pain they couldn’t place

he’d helped me dig the septic tank
shifted twice the soil, four times my age –
don’t let him speak about his wife

he was a hard man, up at six
worked till she called lunch and tea
pain never had a place

the houses are empty now, the sisters passed
he soon after, aged ninety-four
I still hear him speaking about his wife –
has he found the place

a study in years

she holds time’s span
and leaps cold walls
she flees cruel men
and plies the scent

daffodils in winter
lamp rays in the cave
he flashes his tongue
catches the glow

eventual return
surprise on the landing
the coal bucket handle
doesn’t tempt his throw

forgives her at last
the child that was meant

hands

for Sue

when expectations burn
and melt

when my hat blows off

the wind keeps on

you walk with me, evenings
when it cools

a gift
presented
reverentially
with the body

when I look at you
when I look at you
pupils drink

there’s no reason

and I have a reason

your picture above my desk

*

I hope you didn’t mind . . .

I didn’t

sometimes we know
before we’ve said it

like the tree and its branches
weta and feelers
if I should fall

your hands

button

opens the button of his shirt
as he walks into the building

somehow
it assumes an air
of importance
he hates that
he wants to be comfortable

it was dress-ups before
to put on a shirt
not brightly coloured

has he changed?

he has dreams
where he tells gangsters
what's unacceptable
and lives
to think about it

Gregory

tried to understand mathematics
but the numbers let him down
traps
formulae, time frames
he didn’t trust

he dreamt
a nine flew over his head
he hooked onto it
and out the window

met by a flock of eights and threes
he callootled over tree tops
snorting at blocked out colours
and lines on the ground

he never came back
to words

in the morning
he rode off to the fire station
on two wheels
learnt the craft
of an extinguisher

traffic

cover white page
red   green   purple
trousers   shirt   jersey

    it sees
    I see
    the glare

look into
      grass stalks
let them stroke
         corneas

    I’m not alone
            in this
    a man walks through the trees
    where I thought no one would go

    has balding hair
    carries a satchel
    one day
         I’ll meet him

tide

‘the little laps of luxury’ – Sylvia Plath

he runs from luxury
into the sea
drowns, lives again
drowns and lives

paintings don’t help any more
he feels out of touch
can’t unwind
floats

no longer
to the sea floor
to look at coral
lips of fish

he dreamt he dreamt
the tide flowed

binary

to Barthes

I don't know
what a red letter day is

understanding male and female
demanding

like theorists
coming to an empty room

perfectly appointed
on the side of a mountain

inside, a table set for dinner
and no food

you can sit
as long as you like

lips

(i)

her lips
without opening
in a twist of defiance
the struggle to find
food
wood for the fire
worry the roof might
teeter

(ii)

her lips
in tight lines
the mannered nature
of words, careful
to say the
precise things

(iii)

his lips
with a little
bleak humour
falling off his bike

clay

for Brian

the pit has filled with water
turquoise green
from the mineral in the clay
my brother floating there
under the surface
his hair fans out
limbs alert but resting

his eyes open wide
as he shouts
fuck you, I can breathe under water!

leaves
in a pile

kick swirl

the life leant

other
living
things

I'm going to meet my body

'we witness the family fictions' – Paula Green

father

mother

a daughter

a son

a son

[regretted] a son

representation

is repetition

they had

to keep going

one to me
I think

first breath

winter afternoon
between eucalypts
a red parrot
grazes the grass

death says
put down
your unearned hours
your pens, messages
orchestras and applications
put em away
sit

toast mothers
wash their feet

bathe the hair of children
with tears

rumble

I want to perish
but not from suicidal feelings

I don’t want to check emails or texts
enter passwords or pin numbers
in the hum & whine, intercom & chatter
to arrange bill payment
wait on the phone
enter a credit card number
listen to recorded voices

but wander
beside the lake
through bush
until . . .

one minute
one decade
one lifetime
from now

gestures

thankyou for the ribbon
tied around
our dwarf lemon tree

looking up
from a pot
to the future scalding sun
from a wicking bed
brim with stones, water
and soil

I send you this
unfolded paper
with a trace of words
and a courtyard garden

Co

Land of the shining stream

This summer, we camp on our land for the first time. It's two acres, bare, with regenerating bush in the gully and at water's edge. The only structure is the 'Ty Bach', the compost toilet I built before we went away.

Not many birds. Little food for nectar feeders like tui. But we look for signs of life as we get to know the place. A kingfisher perches on a fence post, dives into the stream and swoops past the tent. Pukeko fly in their strangled, ungainly way, frightened from pozzies in long grass. When I level the ground for the shed we're putting up, I spade worms, even in the red subsoil.

Spiders in the earth, grass, bedding, hats. Fantails dart about the bank with high-pitched chirps. A cabbage white wanders through and where the grass is shorter a common blue suspends itself on paper wings.

under
the waterfall
a waterfall

working holiday
marking my book
with builder's pencil

flannel to my head
smell
of the heat

watching
the river, the part
we don't own

Christmas Eve
sitting on a rock
in the river
with a mug of tea
and two digestives

the pine
massive
stained with guano

not back from washing
I find her
watching an eel

It’s dark grey and about a metre long, Sue says it’s a short-finned eel. We discuss names for it: Eric, Albert and Philomena. Next day, we settle on Angelina.

A family of ducks startles at the far, eastern end. A hare leaps up a couple of feet away and is in the next paddock. Harrier hawks hover. Damselflies couple over the pool.

Sand-flies keep us alert; weevils in the dry stores; ants on the picnic mat; flies at the Ty Bach. We uncover basket fungus resurrecting a ring of fire stones. Eastern rosellas. Bush warblers through the kamahi. There’s totara, ponga, koromiko, coprosma, manuka . . . in the winter, we planted kowhai, lancewoods, kauri, and flaxes.

deckchair
by the river
unoccupied

The neck of a turkey on the horizon. Four cow backsides on the hill.

grasses
scything
legs

summer winds
the washing line prop
back and forth

dandelion seed
disperses
a gust

pressed
into my nose
clover and clover scent

A bumble bee feeds on bird’s-foot trefoil and self-heal.

almost New Year
the moon climbs
a pine tree

We go to friends’ for New Year’s Eve.

the silence
after countdown
nine of us
content
to look into the fire

New Year's Day
all I know how to do
break apart pine needles
drop them in the stream

montbretias flowering
you don't mind them, you say
I marvel
at your solutions
to shed building hiccups

I'd rather sit on a rock than a chair (though the knees creak from getting up and down). The stream's name, Mataura, means red face; there's jasper here. Little whelks on the sides of stones; small black worms underneath. Tap a foot on the surface of the water, and the pitch shifts.

magpies
scattered sparrows
chitterwauling
and yellowhammers
fossicking in the bank

Sue finds a spider, sitting on a rock where we wash, its abdomen about the size of a hazelnut shell. It falls into the water, at home. Memories: carrying water in summer and winter when our well at home dried up, or froze. A quarter mile to the well in the woods with twenty-gallon containers, the stiff wend home.

bathing
in the moon

fire ban
dousing the fire
with river water

We get the shed to lockable stage. I put the catches and glass in. She tells me, *you're bloody marvellous!* I don't let on how easy it was.

Next day, we're off to a wedding in Auckland. We pop into a friend's place to have showers and do ironing.

empty house
egg water
still steaming

We arrive at the venue in plenty of time. I go to the chilly bin to get something to eat, pick up the cake box from my birthday and spill the contents over my ironed trousers. The proprietor of a café gives me a cloth and I manage to make myself presentable.

third verse
the page boy
yawns

Back at the camp, lights trail the rocks in the water at night as I wash my hands. I try to touch them.

A friend visits who knows more about the lights in the water. We run our hands around the edges of rocks. They give off a slime that glows, to distract predators. Latia, a tiny limpet. The only fresh water shellfish in the world that's bio-luminescent.

shivering
in the night
my love for you

daymoon
falling into
a yoga stretch

wrinkled water
        around these
                toes

summer sun
a broad-grinned
hat

with a zip
& slide
a fly
hovers into place

We can't avoid going out for supplies.

Monday afternoon
in a small town
he studies
the motorcycle

We don’t stay any longer than we need to.

seen
through fire sparks
the star-gazer’s chair

The affect

Turtles, jabiru, I want to dance with Big Crocodile to explore the panels of the heart. I want to know your cosmology. I want to look closer at the water, to glimpse the naughty boy's dreaming; to untwist tangled peas, to feel your country, to find the play you mention, to access your mind, to learn to fish with spears, to go out for a night on the town with you, Paddy Jaminji, to fall into your arms, to fall and have you catch me, to run my fingers along a world, to visit, to help you in the garden, to sit beside your unanswerable questions, to cherish your birth, to see your fire, to wade in your pool, to fly in your cosmos, to make you pancakes, to look through a window to the density of stars you see. We're composed of: rock, earth, dust, holes in the ground, we're fault lines on a fault line

our days are few, Kitty

Kantilla – thankyou

the stars are connected

we cannot touch

your centre, pulverised by light

Meditations on Svankmajer

stone drop
this me
in another life

rage
at the man
let the guinea pig go free

changing
places
with the beast

without him
we have a picnic
& don’t even know
what we are

housecrack
beating faster
the story crumbles

objects
torment him

voyeur –
feathers win
for a while

Co

          an there's a lot of the world that needs saving

bomb-dived by a cocky

a clock that's wound down

hitting bedrock bone

can you still dream?

          I might do the whole drag thing at some stage . . .
                    you totally should

                              that was meant to be a smile not a dollar

death is always plausible

she's hitting the find rhyme button

          when once one has seen god
          what is the remedy?

                    warning: the fire alarm system is operated
                    stand by for further instructions

                              cheese and chocolates is your creativity

                                        no more happy hours!

there's nothing wrong with me
there's nothing wrong with me
there's nothing wrong with me

          reach an extreme of emptiness

                    it's almost a category error

                              for every substitution instance of a propositional function
                              there is a truth functional operator

                                        but it didn't ruin my life

Transfusions

from an idea by J Pieloor

This poem is having a transfusion, lines replaced by endless

~

This poem is having a makeover:

> sharpened grammar shapes breath steps
> into the shower falters but doesn't elide
> or look for help because its weaknesses
> can be accommodated we like to put it
> that way

~

His caverned laughter as he reaches to one side whilst on the rock face, muscles tense, tips of fingers holding firm in crevices

the chime of rain late spring

~

The story begins in the town of Ashhurst where the smoke of the first factory forms background to the thrushes that jostle the earth in the new-ploughed field. Jacob harnesses the horse.

~

Its incredible this floors been mopped three times today Ive never seen the place so clean where did you come from I bet you wont stay long they never do Im going to see Jean in the next ward I don't spose youll be here when I get back but if you are could you make sure the dessert is nice and cold last time it was lukewarm and it spoils the raspberry fool

from **Las tals oov Masses Aroynghtbokkle**

Hars the thurd . . .

Masses Aroynghtbokkle eard la chiels saye leake leake leake ahl le tima thay durst knowe wha thay dowa an le whrled. Bit thy ire younge n oon hasta ramembour tha thou cannnow ramembour wha ista leake tah bey younge. Shey whisht thy younges cowed ruale le whrled, thy jouste nayed alattle adviceoun pour le financess and organashiountanen. Thire mindas iss moor progressighve gan thold meniv sexty-fighve whowl sed bey retoired bee nooa. Yowtha whan axepted rafyougiehs anto la laundre n ramembour how la crustodeons (owr crustodicas) of laundre iss.

Masses Aroynghtbokkle iss nah sa mouche idealistimona ass louver av hewmannertay, n yowtha iss ounder-prighverouged.

Hars the farth . . .

Hooga hargle brechit bargle! Thay noon axeptiountanen le Dyliountanen, wal! Thaunkfullaye Masses Aroynghtbokkle hadde neice chatta ooth Dyliountanen in Bal Konenna be le Malle. Hey didnaw thoughtick ee our Barbarianounnes. Cancider intratexxtualiteeses:

shopping mall
a lawyer tells us
we're still barbarians

We nay shed bayleave le lavyer, Sighmon sed. Moost oov alle, pooatri baylangs tah be daisruptighve.

abode

the body

a healing entity

hollows
encounters

lives in yesno
bumbles
splutters
to silence
thought rested
unlooping

this moment is my life
a difference
to song

cutting bread

folding clay