

**The Dragon's Map:  
Guiding and rousing the poet**

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## i. Abstract

This thesis inhabits territory between the work of the literary critic and the reflective creative writer. Employing a meditative and creatively recursive method of analysis, it considers how poets often write from within the confines of a provocative playlet, and see the world from the sanctuary of their memories of their childhood home, focused by an inner eye. Borrowing judiciously from Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* series, the thesis calls this way of composing creative work 'visiting her dragons'. As a result of such 'visits', a poet's work incorporates the slow, building, climaxing, revelation of drama in an alternative world whose laws of motion escape her full control.

The thesis also defends the claim that significant (valuable, novel or fitting) poetic lines germinate in ordered subjective scenes, generally 'inhabited' by that author. Original poems spring from a writer occupying an imagined scene's space and structure, though are hardly deducible from it. The poet becomes a character in her own daydream scenario, one which grows circuitously from her mesmerising mythos of home and provides the feeling, image, and thought that lets her 'find the words' rather than making them up out of nowhere—or merely rehashing what she<sup>1</sup> has read. In it she can 'rewrite history' if she wishes. This process becomes specific to a given work, and tends to point beyond the quotidian and the charted. A new, singular scene makes a space in the mind for both imaginative and critical thought. Further, such scenes are communicable to readers, however imperfectly, because they connect in various ways to readers' own experiences of and understandings of home. This is important not least because it emphasises how centrally connected poetry is to human experience in the world, and to sensory modes of apprehension.

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<sup>1</sup> In this work I reverse the ancient practice of using the pronouns 'he' for the poet and 'she' for the reader—rather than employing 'he' throughout, the clumsy 'he or she', 'he/she', s/he', etc.

This thesis also pursues questions such as how imaginal scenes grow from the writer's sense of place and origin ('home'); how they join with other influences; how they are disciplined into a work; and how they are transferred in verbal form to a reader. Images are central, as the poet may be alienated or distanced from the 'real' world and yet, because of that 'exile', able to see it in some perspective while still empathising with it and its inhabitants. The poet is thus impelled to set out her impressions imaginatively and the act of writing is an 'emergent' or unpredictable product of a special sort of daydream. The writer's 'history' of daydreaming, with its developing scenes, is at first 'naïve' but must become 'lucid': a mental state she is acutely aware of; a daydream she feels she must revisit and structure or discipline (though flexibly) in order to go on writing. That demands a great deal of conceptual criticality and, conversely, of motivating passion and empathy—a 'critical empathy' (or critical immersion). She must feel and construct at the same time. And whenever we start a new project, we start from what we feel we really know: the concept of 'home' mentioned above. Without home, we have nowhere to begin, no anchor. With it we may make positive change, even revolution.

The discussion of these issues is supported by an interpretation of English-language poetry and (to a lesser degree) examples of poetic prose / prose poetry, taken mostly from c.1920-2000. Each of these works amply illustrates that an imaginal scene partaking of home was important for the writer's *poesis*. It also includes a consideration of the origins of the author's own poetry, as a kind of case study providing evidence for the thesis's conclusions. The thesis as a whole is part literary criticism and literary theory—and, more generally, an attempt to arrive at an illuminating view of that fascinating conundrum, literary creativity.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Cartography and scenes: Here be dragons

In Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* series, it is said that the dragon cannot lie. Without taking on board Le Guin's fictional world, I would say that a good poem is similar. It cannot quite lie, though it may talk in eloquent riddles. A good poem is one which nears some profound truth, whether factual, psychological, or moral. The unknown, uncontrollable dragon with its truthful gaze always inhabits the areas of the map that poets are most interested in. Those areas come to life as imagined scenes carrying their own truths and personal penumbra, as far as the poet is concerned. To deal out her gracile patterns of truth, a poet must from time to time visit her dragons.<sup>i</sup>

To discover how an authentic work of art grew in its maker's mind may not be practical, but there is always an artefact—in the case of a poem, a 'resonant', metred text.<sup>ii</sup> That text bears clues to its creative gestation. Like a tale, a poem is often built on scenes called up by its author, developing scenes 'inhabited' by that author and taking on various textual forms. There may be no story but there is usually a praeternatural setting, and a point is made. Each lens-like 'imaginal' sphere, inhabited by the poet, is viewed in the context of her personal past and present. It guides her words, but may surprise and inflame her too, making things momentarily 'strange'.

Ronald T. Kellogg, a cognitive psychologist, states:

After centuries of effort devoted to analyzing and interpreting texts, the contemporary focus on how texts are composed in the first place seems long overdue ... (1994: vii).

Since, however, the matter is highly subjective and mysterious even to the practitioner, investigating it is no easy task. Merely surveying poets, say, might miss the point. Metaphorically, the poet speaks with a dragon, who may remain silent. She is 'on' like an actor or singer and

must perform, even if the only audience she has is the scene itself. Even then, she doesn't make things up out of nothing. Her stance requires a specific transaction or pact between herself and the scene, in that it resembles a kind of 'living out' of something, a special encounter.<sup>iii</sup> It also entails adopting a 'path of composition', a word recalling another word, say, or an image another image; or a word an image and vice versa (Sadoski & Paivio 2009: 52-54, 81-82).

The apparent relationship between the well-written artefact and these valued milieus suggests how poems might be conceived and made. The meaning of the work, formed so to speak in the uncanny gaze of the dragon's eye, her own dragon's eye, will be found in them.

In this thesis I wish to 'map' and defend the claim that many significant and 'original' poems germinate in such play-like scenes. To that end I will examine a wide range of poems and some examples of prose in order to establish plausible connections between their imaginative beginnings (which can extend to a poet's early memories) and their received—especially printed—form. In this I stress the author's reliance on situations made up often of visual sensory images, each a '*quasi-perceptual experience*' (Thomas, 2014: Intro, emphasis original) of meaningful shape, colour and action—seen from a certain 'internal' standpoint.

In saying all this, I write as a poet about the process of making poetry, which will extend from my own practice to that of other poets. I argue that a certain type of concrete imagining is required in making at least some kinds of poetry, and that such imagining stems from salient memories laid down in the poet's life. I illustrate my argument with various 'non-epic' English-language poems and works of prose, mostly from the twentieth century, though I have also included some nineteenth century precursors. I have chosen examples by diverse poets and a few prose writers, albeit mostly modern, to show how authors originate, mould, and 'transmit' their works through evocative imagery (cf. Llorens, n.d.: 7). In short, I will defend the claim that poetic 'creativity' normally takes affecting, private (if 'drawable') daydream images steeped in personal and social history, and makes ingenious exertions to translate them into

what is judged by poet or critic to be poetic diction.

Words bring to mind pictures and vice versa, but internal ‘pictures’ of scenes come first. John Berger (2008), for example, acknowledges the wholeness and primacy of sensory experience, and the way in which it is ingrained in human perception and thought:

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is also another sense in which seeing comes before words. [...] we explain that world with words but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. (ibid.: 7)

Words *refer*. Some words also *contain*: they name (aspects of), and thus share, scenes. Scenes contain us. The more convincing and dramatic this relevant internal detail when a poet writes, the more the text’s descriptions will convey to the reader a sense of her creative ‘wholeness’ (Bruner, ‘The Conditions of Creativity’, in Gruber, Terrell, & Wertheimer, 1967: 1-30, at 2). Such integrity, yet fecundity, proceeds not only from the poet’s influences but ultimately from her personal past, her ‘myth’ of origin or home—coloured of course by her society and culture. She feels she has a place, if only in a world that she is writing from ‘within’. The challenging sense of being ‘whole’ yet incomplete also reflects a mind that is mostly coherent and in command of itself. It makes her sound a reliable witness whose point of view is plausible and whose words ring true.

I would situate my investigation and its methodology<sup>iv</sup> within the broad discipline of ‘creativity studies’, one to which, as a practising poet, I have the capacity to make a contribution. (See for example Ward, Smith, & Vaid, 1997; Finke, Ward, & Smith, 1992; Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 49-52; Rothenberg & Hausman (eds), 1976.) In what follows, I examine how a poet turns preverbal fantasies and feelings into finely controlled words. This matter is hardly one whose aetiology is well established, and has even been described as ‘numinous’ (Neumann, 1971: 7, 84), recalling the theology of Rudolf Otto (1936). Whether religious or not, one might

agree that ‘mysticism’, or Freudian ‘oceanic feelings’ (Freud, 1995: 723ff), or just plain curiosity or wistfulness about the world can motivate composition for some poets.

When a poet starts work, she does not merely call up such words and recombine or arrange them (Barthes, 1977: 146);<sup>v</sup> rather, she creates images of things, events and persons in an inner visual field and, after a challenge familiar to a thespian, procrusteanly ‘fits words to them’.

While it is hard to generalise here, since different poets work differently, there is a subset whose works effectively answer William Carlos Williams’s question in *The Great American Novel*, “‘Can you not see, can you not taste, can you not smell, can you not hear, can you not touch—words?’” (Tashjian, 1978: 15), with an emphatic *yes!* Williams draws attention to the connection between linguistic artefacts and sensory and imaginary apprehension. Poetry engages with life, not with language in some bloodless, abstract sense:

But all art is sensual and poetry particularly so. It is directly [...] of the senses, and since the senses do not exist without an object for their employment all art is necessarily objective. It doesn’t declaim or explain, it presents. (Williams, ‘A Note on Poetry’, in Benét & Pearson, 1938, 1313).

The term ‘sensual’ (or sensuous) implies to me a physical relation with reality which is often imperfectly reflected in language, including poetic language. Through this relation, the poet is able to

lift, by use of his imagination and the language he hears, the material conditions and appearances of his environment to the sphere of the intelligence where they will have new currency. [...] This broadening of the choice in the materials of poetry has great modern significance; there is an older parallel to it in painting, where by dwelling upon light itself the artist has often drawn many otherwise unsightly objects into his works.

(Williams, loc. cit.)

Hence the fascination that any scene might exercise. A poet may well experience the ‘emotional need of finding order in nature’ (Rothenberg, 1979: 128), of containing it, even if she does not

confine herself to exploring the ‘reality of the internal psychological world’ (ibid.), and may also seek to link that inner realm to the ‘external physical world’ (ibid.). A world of empty expressions, conversely, has no attraction at all. In the following poem by William Carlos Williams (1991, Vol. I: 453), the words are meaningless without the force of human emotional apprehension of ‘otherwise unsightly objects’:

Between Walls

the back wings  
of the

hospital where  
nothing

will grow lie  
cinders

in which shine  
the broken

pieces of a green  
bottle

Of course, as with any historical document, the written words of a poem are often all a reader has access to, and they are often difficult to piece together into a coherent picture. It nevertheless seems plausible that the author of the poem holds a moving image or scene in her mind that energises the poem’s composition and maintains at least a vestigial life within the finished

work (Rothenberg, 1979: Ch2). The fascinating (though possibly ugly) scene is a resonant, inner place where we might find that ‘green makes red “sing”’ (Bachelard, 1971, 33) as in a painting.<sup>vi</sup> That is its aesthetic ‘beauty’. Sometimes it is a living complex of dramatic forces, human or otherwise; a motivation for a poet to write a poem, also a ‘backstory’ grounded in her personal history. The mental setting, like one in a dream, is partly picture, partly ‘felt’, and partly ‘known’—the author is aware of what she has ‘seen’ or encountered and has implicit knowledge about much of the rest.

The poetic imaginal scene (such as Percy Bysshe Shelley’s traveller from an antique land confronting the statue of Ozymandias and the barren waste surrounding it) is a capsule of experience held and occupied like a living place in the mind, however it may be relocated in the work. It is a sort of galvanising and choreographed ‘daydream’ with its earliest roots likely in infancy. To quote Freud’s essay ‘Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming’ (1995: 437):

The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously—that is which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from reality. Language has preserved this relationship between children’s play and poetic creation. It gives [in German] the name of ‘Spiel’ [‘play’] to those forms of imaginative writing which require to be linked to tangible objects and which are capable of representation.

This creation is not quite the same as being ‘fixated to the unexorcised images of our infancy’ (Campbell, 1968: 11) because, if it were, the poet would be possessed by it and could not separate it sharply from reality. Nevertheless, it retains an alienated quality, being ‘uncanny’ in the sense of the familiar having become estranged (Freud, 1925, 241).

Bachelard states that ‘poetic reveries are also born from the living forces of language’ (1971: 46); for me, inner visions, as examples of those living forces, are both within and ‘beside’ or ‘behind’ language—or linguistic ‘signifiers’ (signs, symbols) at any rate. Language holds, fixes and transmits them, though with difficulty. Inner images are not wholly visual, any more than

those which sometimes accompany listening to someone on a telephone—a distant voice against an aural background of familiar noises—or to a radio play, that ‘theatre of the mind’ where lack of vision forces us to visualise (Verma, 2012, 3). Without delving into the issue via science or philosophy, we can grant that the mental scene and its psychic impact convince the poet, viscerally, of the reality of the situation encountered.

Significant acts of writing are typically accompanied by fantasy or internal ‘play’, a series of playlets perhaps, either based on experience or newly imagined. Like someone else’s play, it may feel like a genuine and uncontrived situation drawn from life and not, at first, completely understood. As Rothenberg points out:

The creative process is motivated by the creator’s interest in discovery. This interest in discovery begins the process and continues at every step of the way. [...] Almost never does the creative artist know very much about the product he will eventually create. (Rothenberg, 1979: 129)

Indeed, if the artist did know, he would not only grow bored but his poem would, to put it earthily, *die in the arse*. Thus, the ‘learning’ experience of creative discovery often brings on a kind of reverse nostalgia or *saudade*; just as you might dwell in memory on what has been lost, you can also feel a bittersweet longing for that which has never existed. Any one playlet is a reflection on a selection of real perceptions, an anticipatory, open-ended scene, or fragment of one.

Emily Dickinson’s works, for example, ‘occupy a mid-space between experience and imagination’ (Gordon (2010: 109). They feature the usually concrete language of scenes, if slightly disturbing ones:

Apparently with no surprise  
To any happy Flower  
The Frost beheads it at its play –

In accidental power –  
The blonde Assassin passes on –  
The Sun appears unmoved  
To measure off another Day  
For an Approving God –

(Dickinson, 2005: 603, no. 1668)

As readers, we grasp meaning from the images. Many of us have been horrified at frost wrecking our hard-won garden beds. How much the content reflects Dickinson's personal experiences we can only surmise. It seems to make reference to cognitive and emotional reassembly of experience, sensation and image, as well as related abstractions, phrases and rhythmic figures. All of this contributes to evocation of the scene that the poet is fashioning as she writes, and into which we as readers are permitted to walk. It has metaphorical or symbolic power, and also an incomplete 'wholeness' of its own.

Any caution found within the preceding paragraph might be set aside if we accept Bachelard's faith in phenomenology:

the phenomenological method leads us to attempt communication with the creating consciousness of the poet. The newborn poetic image—a simple image!—thus quite simply becomes an absolute origin, an origin of consciousness (1971: 1).

For Bachelard, consciousness itself is an act (*ibid.*: 5), but for me, that act need not have an 'absolute origin' in some universe of mind.

Nevertheless, the complex of thoughts, feelings and memories that contributes to a poetic act of composition has attributes that the poet is not aware of, even on subsequent readings of her poem. Further, her sentences take their meaning not only from their relation to the world but also to her imagined audience, which may indeed be 'myself as audience', as Canberra poet and painter Chris Jones puts it (interview, 20 April 2018). And as noted, even the poet is not

certain what is coming next; that would require an impossible preconception. Writing poetry may be an immersive and speculative reliving—‘Truth in art is not imitation, but reincarnation’ (Le Guin, 2004: 268)—but it is a reliving which struggles with mystery and doubt, and often ambiguity of image and meaning. The writer’s selection and interpretation in what she creates is likely to be significantly guided by the interaction between the new or refurbished imagery of a fresh poem and her storehouse of remembered imagery. In this sense, many poems are at once autobiographical and fictive.

Of her own act of making poetry, the British experimental poet Emily Critchley (2012: n.pag.) states:

I tend to have been reading something particularly inspiring as a prompt to rhythm or form, then all the latent thoughts and emotions I have been saving up [...] come rushing to the surface.

Critchley characterises the act of composition as a highly subjective and personal activity, stating that she has to find ‘a point where my intelligence and my intuition, or whatever you want to call it, are in sync’ (ibid.). Other poets are less meditative, but even an ostensibly dispassionate and overtly imagistic poem such as William Carlos Williams’s ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’ (1991: 224) evokes an unrepeatable moment, a treasured reality beyond quotidian discourse that is worthy of a dragon:<sup>vii</sup>

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white

chickens

Such metastable mental scenes are integral to much language use in poetry and elsewhere. In 'All Things Pass', Stevie Smith (1983: 55) treats the theme of tragic (or comic) impermanence with a raised eyebrow, and the 'scene' that results for the reader is minimal as a lawn cemetery:

All things pass

Love and mankind is grass

Even through the creation of such minimal scenes, a poem can map—then reach beyond—the intimate country of the poet's past and present. Poetry composition is frequently driven by the desire to plumb a portion of the world and to reveal a claimed truth or a new insight, and to do so slowly, dramatically, with a building rhythm. Through this it attempts to 'see' beneath or beyond the quotidian—or to regard an old notion from a new perspective, as with Phillip Larkin's 'Aubade' (2003, 190), an eloquent musing on the sometimes stupefying thought of death, which threatens the very home that gives rise to the reflection:

And so it stays just on the edge of vision,

A small, unfocused blur, a standing chill

That slows each impulse down to indecision.

Most things may never happen: this one will

It may be argued, then, that poetry is about going beyond language, or beyond impoverished characterisations of language. What we see, poet and reader, is embodied in a pan-sensory mental image complex (Mitchell, 1984: 507), a quasi-visual scene that arises and ultimately unfolds from our various interactions with the shared world, a scene that encapsulates a portion of that

world, making a space in the mind for aesthetic engagement with a poem's 'idea'.<sup>viii</sup> This sort of scene tends to precede the poet's act of writing, and change its value during the course of composition. After all, it is the poet's link both to her deeper, 'unconscious' (and whole) self and to the everyday world in which she and her readers languish.

The power of a visualised scene is further exemplified by the power-house like a throne in Williams's mostly *ekphrastic* work, 'Classic Scene' (1991, Vol. I: 444-445), inspired by the Charles Sheeler painting, *Classic Landscape* (1931).<sup>ix</sup> It might be that, for some, like Williams himself, it harbours a promise, even for the worker-denizens of the 'squalid shacks', elements not in the painting (see Cohen, 2010: 184):

Classic Scene

A power-house

in the shape of

a red brick chair

90 feet high

on the seat of which

sit the figures

of two metal

stacks—aluminum

commanding an area

of squalid shacks

side by side—

from one of which

buff smoke

streams while under

a grey sky

the other remains

passive today—

## 1.2. The dragon's lair

Curled around her creative eggs, a poet dwells in her own fruitful place, congruously or not. Her own world is superimposed on and circuitously connected to ours. This act or even its attempt is laudable: 'the artist, the writer, and to a new degree the scientist [...] create or they seek to create, and this in itself endows the process with dignity.' (Bruner, in Gruber, Terrell, & Wertheimer, 1967: 2). The poet's productive world is likely to be grounded in her sense of origin or home, and is a kind of myth or generative daydream. The actual details of how we learn about our place in the world are mostly forgotten, but we retain precious fragments. As Dorothy Hewett states at the opening of her autobiography:

The first house sits in the hollow of the heart, it will never go away. It is the house of childhood become myth, inhabited by characters larger than life whose murmured conversations whisper and tug at the mind. (Hewett, 1990: 3)

As with Hewett, this notional first house may, sometimes even in calligrammatic shape, become by analogy a kind of special and enduring 'place' in a writer's mind<sup>x</sup>, a locale or *agora* that she as an author negotiates. It may, on the other hand, be fantastic yet dreamily domestic, as in Shelley's poem 'The Cloud' (2002, 301-304), in which the speaker is the angel-like cloud itself:

From my wings are shaken the dews that waken  
The sweet buds every one  
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,  
As she dances about the sun.

If inhabited by characters, these may be foils for the dreamer and those she knows, or imaginal beings in their own right.

Poetry-making of this kind requires the maintenance of a 'child's eye' view of things through fruitful, luminous milieus. By reshaping spontaneous or received images and sentences, the poet has the opportunity to 'renovate' aspects of her originary daydream in each new work, a process that might loosely be called making a 'new home'. That architectural process is neither random free association nor the product of mechanical recombination. Nor is it predictable. Rather, creative production tends to be metabolic, a physical interaction with one's surroundings, real or imaginary.

### **1.3 Seeing with the dragon's vision**

Seeing creatively—or, as it were, with the dragon's vision—involves living for a poetic moment in the dragon's kaleidoscopic purview, transfixed by the endless lens of its eye. Like a painter, many a poet is 'compelled' to explore and capture a view of that part of the world and society she belongs to. In doing so she can take on what might be thought of as a brief alternative identity, as an observer, a character, or as herself engaged in a new encounter. She will likely build on the recent and the archaic, including experiences from infancy.

In striving to comprehend what they place or see on the page, authors and readers often intuit images that combine different features. Cognitive psychologists Sadoski and Paivio assert that

mental images can integrate naturally, and do so in the case of reading and authorial re-reading—and that reverse of reading, writing:

In some cases our imagistic associations blend across modalities into a holistic, multimodal experience that reflects physical reality. Imagery in response to text descriptions can take such a multimodal, elaborate form, although it is perhaps seldom this intense for most people. However, such imagery is often reported by poets and novelists as the basis for composing. (2009, 57)

Thus, this composing, this finding (not making up) of words or ‘reading’ of images, is no mechanical, rule-ridden affair. One attempt to explain how mental images relate to words is found in their ‘Dual Coding Theory’ (DCT), though they apply it mainly to reading (Sadoski & Paivio, 2009: 81-82):

The DCT view is consistent with these views regarding the construction of integrated scenes from sentences and texts. [...] Even slight changes in relational words such as prepositions can make significant changes in the [mental] model evoked. For example, the sentence *The fish swam under the turtles on the log* is understood differently than *The fish swam under the turtles by the log* (cf. Bransford, Barclay, & Franks, 1972).

Something as simple as how one arranges the text can clearly ‘signal’ distinct images and this ‘signalling’ might well operate in reverse order, and go from images to words. One may write poetry, as David Malouf says, ‘out of inner necessity’ and it may come ‘out of who-knows-where’ (Malouf, 2015: ix), and in many cases such ‘inner necessity’ may be due to strong feelings generated or catalysed by a valued imaginal scene, impelling it to be translated into verbal imagery.

In saying this, and in exploring the verbal imagery of particular poems, I will adopt a fairly inclusive stance about what constitutes the ‘poetic’, namely that it foregrounds its associative words and concepts ‘iconically’, and often imagistically, without being so particular as to be rigidly unsuggestive.<sup>xi</sup> Poetic language as a result is fructive and succinct, thrusting unusual

perspectives onto a reader. In the following chapters, I will analyse how the poet organises her work, and how poetic texts carry their meanings to readers. I will explore one energising source of much poetry, the dream of home, and how this fantasy of the dragon's 'lair' with its creative gold joins with other influences and is disciplined into a locale and a work—and what the content and purpose of this activity might be.

Mental images of many poetic scenes connect to a poet's perception and deep memory, and their import can be transferred approximately to various readers through the 'conduit' provided by figurative verbal imagery. Such scenes are a point of reference, a criterion, a touchstone, a way of reliving the past and projecting such imagining into the future. Poetic scenes are also harbours—both a sort of home base for the mind and gateway to the alien or new; as well as a very personal conceptual space, an organising mental (intellectual and emotional) complex, unity, or *Gestalt* (after Sadoski & Paivio (2009)).

#### **1.4. Surprised by the dragon's gaze**

Our prodigious ability to form, invent and nurture is a major part of what makes us human (Gaut, 2010: 1042-1043), but the issue of 'creativity'—in this case, originating words—remains a contested area. Creativity is inherently open-ended, occasionally forecastable like the weather but not predictable as the planets. Poets in the dragon's gaze lack complete control over what new material emerges on the page but they cannot, or should not, kill it, as Siegfried kills Fafnir. A poet may be heroic, but is no rampaging St George.

Margaret A. Boden (2004: 1-2) asks:

Human creativity is something of a mystery, not to say a paradox. One new idea may be creative, while another is merely new. What's the difference? And how is creativity possible? Creative ideas are unpredictable. Sometimes, they even seem to be impossible—and yet they happen. How can that be explained? Could a scientific psychology help us to understand how creativity is possible?

Yet a scene may be as old as time, like the unstable lyric of a folk song. A poet is the kind of hero who quests for the power of a new insight (cf Campbell, 1968: 30).

Creative ideas old or new often emerge surprisingly from entering the uncanny interior scene (cf Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 4-5), which sometimes feels like twisting the dragon's tail, sometimes like a gift. The unblinking stare is not always baleful. These ideas are in some way new, but one must 'make a distinction between "psychological" creativity and "historical" creativity' (Boden, 2004: 2), between that which is new to the thinker and that which is new historically. Poetic originality is likely to be in the former category, at least. And for Boden (ibid.: 2-3) there are three 'ways' of creativity (cf Gaut, 2010: 1038): the first consists of 'making unfamiliar combinations of familiar ideas',<sup>xii</sup> hardly ever at random and in a way that also 'makes sense' (cf Sadoski & Paivio, 2009: 74):

If the novel combination is to be valued by us, it has to have some point. It may or (more usually) may not have been caused by some random process—like shaking marbles in a bag. But the ideas/marbles have to have some intelligible conceptual pathway between them for the combination to "make sense." [...] Even if two ideas are put together randomly in the first place, which I suspect happens only rarely, they are retained/valued only if some such links can be found.

As Rothenberg too asserts, 'creations are both *new* and *valuable* and creativity is the state or capacity through which a new and valuable entity or quality is brought into being' (1979: 330). The other two 'involve the *exploration*, and in the most surprising cases the *transformation*, of conceptual spaces in people's minds.'<sup>xiii</sup> Charting the territory is no predictable matter.

Joseph Campbell's 'monomyth' idea of the beneficent 'redeeming hero' (Campbell, 1968: 16), strongly influenced by Jungian psychology, unites many 'styles of thought' across cultures. Home is an individual but also social and historical place; a poet is the one who, in the absence of a classical hero, explores it and discovers something new. The 'wise old man'/ doctor archetype may seek to destroy the 'dragon-terror' (ibid.: 10) inherent in our darkling origins and

precarious place in the world, but the poet must listen to it. That involves a perpetual confrontation with space and time, meaning and meaninglessness, birth and death.

While influenced socially, familiarly, and by any kind of myth, the specifics of the scene are to a significant extent ‘originated by one individual mind’ (Boden, 2004, 3). Unlike science, art feasts upon the particular. But art goes beyond shuffling perceptions or artistic influences; it is also a way of enhancing individual memory and consciousness, and has the slightly intoxicating power to create within a social milieu—a form of reaching for ‘psychological’ or even ‘historical’ creativity.<sup>xiv</sup> It is a hammer as well as a mirror.<sup>xv</sup> Both mirrors and hammers are selective. Artists do more than explore ‘conceptual spaces’. They may also produce new values, contribute to new conceptual spaces, or collective and less concrete ‘encapsulations’ of reality—without which some new combinations of ideas and images won’t ‘make sense’. Artists, and specifically poets, might theoretically produce little that is absolutely new at the level of ideas, but might still revolutionise literary practice and thinking more broadly.<sup>xvi</sup> That has been particularly true of modernist poetry, for instance.

My own ‘act of writing’ is at once an echo of past and future that seems to emanate from a point at a tangent to what seems to me to be real. It tries to go somewhere fresh. It is an alert meditation, occasionally an attempt to attain aspects of Keatsian ‘negative capability’,<sup>xvii</sup> or, *in extremis*, a state of ultimately obscure ‘apostate prayer’, explicit in my poem ‘Our Children’ (2014):

husk of the past year  
skips down the damp lane  
old memories graze there  
white bees on blown clover  
waking with insight  
gazing on tree-tops

flames float like balsa  
over the common  
timelessly pondering  
lost synchronicity  
the village trips round us  
to weep in the morning  
[...]

After many drafts, the words select and distil the salient aspects of the dramatic scene that was developing in my mind as I wrote. However, the scene—and its effect on the reader—is conveyed by the disposition of words and lines only vaguely; like one just woken from a dream we do not quite know which year is the ‘past year’, nor which lane is the ‘damp lane’, nor what the ‘old memories’ are, let alone why they should ‘graze’ or find sustenance there. The poem is both a metaphorical commonplace—life is a (lonely) journey<sup>xviii</sup>—and a dreamlike *mediation* between the imaginal (speculative) and real, where everything hangs in the balance. A *mise en scène* such as this one is initially the poet’s subjective experience, but it seeks out, so to speak, the reader’s imaginative capacity and their own scenes.

dates that mark passings  
deaths before birthdays  
crushing the heart  
in a mystique of leap-years  
same past, now staler  
more gone to gossamer  
red in the snug church  
years stacked in corners  
why do we wait

in the dust of our century?

they do not remember

and nor shall their children.

Here, the poet's dreaming refers to real lanes, those traversed on lonely walks to and from school, and a lifelong terror of meaninglessness, of pointless disintegration: 'they do not remember / and nor shall their children'. But the 'real' lanes also become metaphorical as the poems unfolds, reaching beyond their particularity into generalisation. The poem is 'about' self-discovery and the resulting alienation, a sense of tearing 'exile'. The visualised scene, once 'transferred', may mean something else to others but, as I've suggested above, there is likely to be some commonality between writer and reader.

In this sense, we might say that poetry can be the fragile, *triste*, but durable end-product of this power of internal discovery. As such, it is also a primary means of 'thinking aloud', and it is not conducted simply 'in' words (Donald, 1993; Fürth, 1966);<sup>xix</sup> it is passionate geometry and imagining aloud too. At the same time, it can be the psycho-orthographic equivalent of an inner Socratic dialogue:

the very process of writing one's thoughts leads individuals to refine those thoughts and to discover new ways of thinking. (Wolf, 2008: 73, after Vygotsky, 2012, and Plato)

Not only that, but we can re-enact the meetings with our dragon too.

### **1.5. Naming and sharing the unnamed region**

A poet's 'efforts to capture ideas with ever more precise written words' (Wolf, 2008: 73) are undertaken under the spell of a poetic scene, guided by the character and movement of that particular meeting with the dragon. She may experience 'projection' or 'superstitious perception',<sup>xx</sup> a controlled hallucination of varying intensity which does not blur subject and object<sup>xxi</sup> but effects an interchange between them. Or she may match one part of a vision with another,

not just verbally but imaginally—what Denise Levertov calls ‘non-aural rhyme’ (1965: 422)—and then transform the match into words. The encounter and its inner logic can come first in the poet’s mind, or words may evoke it and start a poem, but such words often go nowhere creatively for the poet without that scene. As Sadoski and Paivio say of referential imagery (albeit in reading):

It is central to making sense of the text where that phrase is taken literally. We invest a text with meaning by making it a quasi-sensory event; the referential evocation of images gives form, shape, and substance to meaning. Imagery may not be consciously experienced when reading some texts, and, strictly speaking, it is not theoretically necessary to a meaningful reading of some texts. But it is experienced by virtually all readers in some situations and by some readers in virtually all situations. Thus, it is a phenomenon of reading behavior that must be theoretically accounted for, and no theory of reading can be complete without it (2009: 74).

Some words might be seen as ‘names’: commonplace, recurring signifiers of objects and actions that are claimed or assigned by social groups to identify or catalogue aspects of a given reality, and not simply to modify other words (cf Burridge & Mulder, 1998: Ch5). These concrete rather than relational words—‘food’ versus ‘more’, for example—are typically, but not always, nouns. They often invoke or provoke images, for author or reader, with particular felicity, rather than (as, say, with prepositions) having only an auxiliary function in making images more specific. (The cat sat *on* the mat, not under it.<sup>xxii</sup>)

But with poetry it is only a posited ‘reality’. To gain value and currency in a poetic text, words must be immersed in or linked to the subjective scene’s absorbing images. (Images suggest words, words suggest images, partly because both are ambiguous.) Nouns structured in lines, phrases or sentences become much more than just names and their auxiliaries: a name is more than a name, and ‘Paris’ or ‘Taipei’ is not just a word, even a label or caption, or single ‘meaning’. It is an internal experience built on memory (if you have been there) or hearsay. At

times, the poetic scene's mental imagery may be augmented by further images arising from what words refer to, but the poet usually integrates that with the scene she 'occupies' while writing. Like other images, words too are mental patterns or working models, comparable at times to scenes viewed through a window before one ventures out into the demanding world. While they inevitably simplify or 'reduce' the real world, they have meanings that spill over into the preverbal, which has a life of its own—as found in visualised scenes.

Even a recalled emotional encounter, say, is 'recontextualised' and made 'new', opened up in fantasy for further development. What was painful, for example, might be transformed into something humorous, as with the black humour found in some of the quirky poems of Stevie Smith, a good example being 'I Remember' (quoted in Barbera & McBrien, 1985: 205:

It was my bridal night I remember,  
An old man of seventy-three  
I lay with my young bride in my arms,  
A girl with t.b.  
It was wartime, and overhead  
The Germans were making a particularly heavy raid on Hampstead.  
What rendered the confusion worse, perversely  
Our bombers had chosen that moment to set out for Germany.  
Harry, do they ever collide?  
I do not think it has ever happened,  
Oh my bride, my bride.

This *triste* tryst, a wry, distancing look at carnage (the ceiling notwithstanding) and a shared sense of a particular history, has the capacity to give its readers a sense of engagement and empowerment. Word meanings are anchored in fictive scenes like these and related scenes in

life. What we know of the world impinges upon us and is not itself a controlled authorial construction. It can reveal the unknown and unpredicted; it may surprise. ‘An act that produces effective surprise—this I shall take as the hallmark of a creative enterprise’ (Bruner, in Gruber, Terrell & Wertheimer, 1967: 3): words, for example, tend to function best when they are grounded in something deeper or more real than themselves; they convey real knowledge when they impart something *interesting* that we did not know beforehand.

The words of poetry have the ability to plunge us into wordless, patterned image, and who knows where that might lead. The act of writing poetry more or less ‘within the scene’ marshalls poetic lines and their sense in accordance with it; we might speak loosely of the ‘transduction’<sup>xxiii</sup> of thought and feeling into personal energy or creative fire, which orders personal and social meaning anew. The thought of a poet might move sympathetically with the goings-on in her current imaginary place; the reader later tries to join in with this mental activity, as rendered in a poem, in order to make it his own. Her scene partakes of that recurrence and invariance that is pivotal to understanding (Price, 1953: 7-8).

In 1888, at 23 years of age, WB Yeats sat down in London and wrote of his childhood. The result was ‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’ (2008: 31), set in a homely green ‘arcadia’ (though its loneliness might seem dystopian to some), in which he mythologised the scene that his poem occupies:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.  
[...]  
I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;

While I stand by the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Presumably the scene that captivated Yeats was built on intimate memories.<sup>xxiv</sup> In the poem he relives a youthful fantasy of dwelling alone on the island in a 'bee-loud glade', contrasting that womb-like or Edenic vision with the 'pavements grey' of London. I am interested here in the way in which a work such as this, through recasting the poet's various personal recollections into a persuasively-rendered setting 'beneath the dragon's gaze', compels the 'audience member' to partake of it as an imaginative participant. There is a quantum exchange of energy as in the theatre between actor, text, performance, and audience. In the same way that a single play is different each time it is performed, with a poem there is an unpredictable third level built between poet and reader, built by that particular 'alchemy' that occurs every time the text is read or heard.

Around half of our time is taken up by the misty and 'spontaneous cognition' of daydream (Andrews-Hanna et al, 2010; Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010; Lewis, 2014). Imagined scenes are frequently connected to daydreams that harbour the energetic germs of stories, even 'parables'<sup>xxv</sup> (Turner, 1996: v, 10ff). As we drift with them, they slowly sieve our memories. Sometimes an 'undersong' accompanies them (Petrino, 2010).<sup>xxvi</sup> A poet hums a 'work song' (aloud or silently), falling into a state of mind like one falling asleep in water yet rising to a new surface. Daydream narratives derived from such experiences and pressed into service by a writer will need the further constraints and impulses of (for example) a pre-existent grammatical system of sentences, or a selection of 'conceptual spaces' (or metaphors). They already comprise, and flow within, an 'organic' progression of pan-sensory representations—or interactional effects of the patterns, and singularities, of the world on the brain—which arguably give rise to much of grammar and its 'rules' (Langacker, 1990, 2013).

## 1.6. Summary: The dragon's territory

In poetry, an enlivening, surprising scene frequently consists of an active network or system of relationships between 'characters' who may or may not change or develop over time within a selected setting. Indeed, 'place' is a handy metaphor for the abstract and the emotional—like an arch of suddenly-significant branches over a never-before noticed avenue spied sidelong from a main road, or the tragic green door in the white wall in H.G. Wells's memorable short story 'The Door in the Wall' (1911). In such imagined places the reader crosses a dramatic, perceptual edge (balanced as it were midway between abstract and concrete, general and particular), filled with anticipation, curiosity and an 'edge' of dramatic tension. Typically, two commonplace realities or accounts are suggested: what is, and what might well be round the corner—over the rainbow/threshold, within the dragon-infested interstices of cartography, beyond the plodding or soaring present.<sup>xxvii</sup> To any reader, both intimated 'realities' depend, often significantly, on specific, suggestive and anticipatory imagery, contained as it were within the larger image of the nascent work.

Indeed, many poems are built on predominantly visual scenes imagined by its author from a certain point of view. The author's point of view is not only a general sort of relation between herself, her material and the readership, but also a specific one between herself and the close perception of the scene. Words conjure up pictures and vice-versa, but pictures often come first. Words *contain*; and they present and name scenes. Scenes contain us. The scenes are influenced by the poet's myth-like sense of home—her 'dragon's lair' or den. They are focused through this legacy and through the poet's creative capacities; her periods in the dragon's gaze. Through them, she conjures names from apparent chaos. This process can always surprise her.

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- i Cf Knights, 1983: 357:  
It has as been known at least since the time of Aristotle that a major literary resource is the description or evocation of forms of direct sensory experience which stir the reader to apprehend mental states. For example,  
I am in blood  
Stipp'd in so far, that should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er [*Macbeth*, Act 3, Scene 4].  
Such a relationship (far from bloodless!) can surely, with effort, be reversed.
- ii As Aristotle said in Book III of the *Rhetoric* (1408b: viii, 3, 1909: 162): 'Prose must ... have *rhythm*, but not *metre*; for then it will be poetry.' The poetry-prose (and metre-rhythm) distinction is fluid, however, and the two broad genres are cross-fertilising. To me, poetry and prose are more emphases, or differing treatments of an idea, than rigid categories. Both may seek 'the best words in their best order' (Coleridge, 2005, *Table Talk*, 12 July 1827).
- iii Also, a general transaction or pact between herself and the scaly 'devils' of her material and perhaps postulated readership (which might be just herself as reader).
- iv "'Method, method, what do you want from me? You know that I have eaten the fruit of the subconscious'" (Jules Laforgue, 'Moralités légendaires', quoted in Bachelard, 1971: 1).
- v In his 1967 *locus classicus* 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes (1977: 146) claims:  
The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture [...] the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. Did he wish to express himself, he ought at least to know that the inner 'thing' he thinks to 'translate' is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely.  
The question of how these words are chosen and arranged comes close to asking about the subjective source of creativity and may seem naïve, but this PhD will attempt to give an answer to it.
- vi Cf 1971: 7: the 'phenomenologist [...] reverberates to the poetic image'.
- vii On how this poem came about, see Rizzo, 2005.
- viii Cf Alexander (2013, #6):  
'Embedded at the heart of Percy Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry" (1821) [Shelley, 2002, §42, 533] are lines in which he evokes the unbidden power of the poem: "It creates for us a being within our being. It makes us inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being."  
What is this counterworld, this being within our being, this zone of desire that poetry evokes? Surely there is a great and buried truth here, something to do with our ecstatic being, the piercings of sense that mere rationality cannot afford, a way of making sense, lacking which we would all be hostages in our own skins.
- ix Oil on canvas, 25 inches x 32.25 inches. The Ebsworth Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- x Cf. Poulet, in Tompkins, 1980: 46: a book, like a child, is 'the means by which an author actually preserves his ideas, his feelings, his modes of dreaming and living. It is his means of saving his identity from death'.
- xi Or so general—and lacking in Wallace Stevens's 'strength of reality' (1951: 7)—as to be glib or vapid.
- xii Or divisions of ideas, cf Gaut (2010: 1044):  
A painter, sculptor or composer can be highly creative in producing beautiful and original works, but they need not thereby be producing connections between disparate domains; and sometimes one can be highly creative in *disconnecting* things: philosophers can be creative in making distinctions, which separate concepts previously run together. Making connections is one way to be creative, but it is not the only way.
- xiii On page 3 Boden explains that:  
Conceptual spaces are structured styles of thought. They're normally picked up from one's own culture or peer-group, but are occasionally borrowed from other cultures. In either case, they're already there: they aren't originated by one individual mind. They include ways of writing prose or poetry; styles of sculpture, painting, or music; theories in chemistry or biology; fashions of couture or choreography, *nouvel cuisine* [sic] and good old meat-and-two-veg [...] in short, any disciplined way of thinking that's familiar to (and valued by) a certain social group.  
Such valued metaphorical 'spaces' for the poet are often facets of the dream of home, precursors of specific scenes that are, to a considerable extent, held in common before the work commences (e.g., a lot of people recall a beach at which they swam as a child.) Working on such a scene is likely to organise such conceptual spaces further, as the poet is moved to come up with story, trope, or formal poetic structure (much contemporary poetry stressing trope and structure more than story). Night dreams or periods of playful or other activity unconnected to a project may also present relevant ideas, on waking or out of a clear sky.
- xiv Or something new to a given 'culture' or society, 'reinvented' rather than borrowed.
- xv 'Art is a hammer' (Trotsky, 2005: 120), shaping the world, is an observation taken from either Vladimir Mayakovsky or Bertolt Brecht. The other metaphor of art is from Aristotle (1997, §I-VI: 1-10) and, latterly, Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 3:2, 17-24.
- xvi Boden (2004: 8): 'Because creativity *by definition* involves not only novelty but value, and because values are highly variable, it follows that many arguments about creativity are rooted in disagreements about value.'
- xvii See John Keats's letter, dated 22 December 1817, to his brothers George and Tom (Keats, 2001: 492):  
& at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously — I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason.

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- Cf Atwood (2003: 139): negative capability need not be taken so far that it destroys fact and reason.
- xviii Cf the 'conceptual metaphors' of Lakoff & Johnson, (2003).
- xix Cf Woolf (2008: 65-66):  
 As the twentieth-century Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky said, the act of putting spoken words and unspoken thoughts into written words releases and, in the process, changes the thoughts themselves. As humans learned to use written language more and more precisely to convey their thoughts, their capacity for abstract thought and novel ideas accelerated.  
 Unlike Woolf and Vygotsky, I would attribute this outcome to the enduring and searchable nature of writing, some features of which might apply, *mutatis mutandis* (with appropriate adjustments), to certain oral traditions—cf the notion of 'orature' (Kambysellis, 2007; Ngũgĩ, 2007; Moolla, 2012).
- xx See Gombrich (1969, Pt 3); Gosselin et al. (2001); Gosselin & Schyns (2002: 191); Gosselin & Schyns (2003). The Behaviorist B.F. Skinner coined the term 'superstitious perception' in 1948; it need not be 'superstitious' if seen as an aid to art (e.g., Leonardo, 1888, Vol. 1, IX.I.508, on artistic inspiration from random stains—stains whose pattern is initially irrelevant to the artist—on a wall).
- xxi Writing and reading weaves an arabesque between subject and object (within and between author and reader), not 'blurring' them unless to resolve their inconsistencies into something new; one cannot comprehend a blur without resolving it. Thanks to Paul Hetherington for this point.
- xxii As per the observations of Sadoski & Paivio above (2009: 81-82).
- xxiii Cf Charles (2009, §8).
- xxiv The poem was set off or 'triggered' by the sound of tinkling water coming from a device in a shop window in the Strand which consisted of a ball balanced on a jet of water, advertising cool drinks. It set him 'thinking of Sligo and lake water' (Springer, 2012, Yeats's 1932 recording).
- xxv Turner holds that:  
*Story* is a basic principle of mind. Most of our experience, our knowledge, and our thinking is organized as stories. The mental scope of story is magnified by *projection*—one story helps us make sense of another. The projection of one story onto another is *parable*, a basic cognitive principle that shows up everywhere, from simple actions like telling time to complex literary creations like Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*. (1996: v, 10ff)
- xxvi Melody or rhythm that we sometimes hear according to mood and feeling. Stevie Smith was wont to make up tunes as she wrote, and she sometimes sang them before an audience (Barbera & McBrien, 1985: 84, 155-156, 294).
- xxvii The 'drift' may then become a flow. The following quotation from *Mrs Dalloway* (Woolf, 2003: 22-23) gives one example of the sort of feeling I am thinking of, a feeling probably intrinsic to any 'suspension of disbelief':  
 she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence, so that she filled the room she entered, and felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl.

## Chapter 2: Twisting the dragon's tail

A poet regularly has the Daedalian experience of making verbal art from the ragged mental models of daydream scenes. These often honour her childhood. As Kate McNamara states in her essay 'Jane Air' (McNamara, 1999, 82-88, at 86):

The memories of childhood shift and shape with the seasons, there is no particular order of priorities. They map countries both real and those manufactured by the imagination, they blur distinction between the real and illusory; there is no need to adhere to strict perimeters. What was imagined was as powerful as what actually happened. Images come and go, sometimes like double exposed negatives, sometimes with an absolute clarity, others need to be teased from the backwaters of time.

Much of the poet's intellectual and emotional labour, with all its frustrations, false leads and catharses, is lost to the reader, though it can be fertilely speculated upon. What is lost is the open-ended world of poetic composition that is superimposed in daydream on the writer's perceived world, one in which problems are furnished with solutions, or parallel lives and dramas are lived out. To understand that world, a reader (like the authorial reader) must himself have some inkling of what the creative process entails, without necessarily being versed in literary practice.

In the working poet's mind, that special daydream is at first a ferment of sometimes lively thought which includes mental image, 'inner speech' (Gentner & Goldin-Meadow, 2003: 8), and energising feelings. 'Inner speech' alone is usually insufficient to impel a poet, except insofar as it carries with it and evokes a dramatic or visual (indeed pan-sensory) context. Indeed, the isolated acts of both writing and reading need the enlivening overview and impetus provided by daydream, such that each act becomes a shadow 'transaction', consummated by the reader in a process of creative conjecture.

To engage in such composition, any author—any creative exile from the quotidian world—must move empathically into the invigorating current of daydream, yet bring into focus salient aspects of it. In this process, a poet’s imagination should burgeon with dynamic scenes, scenes that captivate, somewhat like a character who ‘takes over’ an actor. You ‘must actually see those you imitate, be permeated by them’, wrote Gustave Flaubert to Hippolyte Taine in 1866 (1984: 98), of characters in such scenes in prose. Without such ‘creative fantasies’, and the interest and questions they engender, the poet (or reader) could not hold (or be bothered to hold) a poem in mind, let alone act within the poem.

What a poet writes almost unwittingly articulates a scene drawn from her singular vantage point on the world, and is received and worked on in different ways by each reader. But how is that view of the world—or the ‘world’ created out of the uniqueness of one’s life—translated into language, so as to be understood?

On the page, the words of a poem are divorced from the mind that expressed them. But the poet has (or had) all that preceded those words, which might begin as just a vague presentiment of something, but which can proceed to an animated (or even filmic) image or scene held in her mind. This is not purely a matter of imagined light (or lightning); the visual aspect of the scene has the capacity to act as an ongoing ‘map’ of the rest of the poetic conception. Sometimes that scene causes words to pop into her head almost unbidden. That is because words, imagery and action relate viscerally. The mere sight of a person has the capacity to make one aware of all manner of possible intentions, attitudes, thought processes, and relevant or potential detail—especially an encounter with someone we know, or a character who has a clear social role: a council worker, shopkeeper, ‘traveller from an antique land’, etc.

In general terms, a word-form—say, ‘house’—often refers not merely to some abstract dictionary or encyclopedia concept (cf Eco, 1983, §7: 229-232) but to meanings and stories set within fictive scenes, which in turn are drawn partly from real-world referents. To think or write

of a house is usually to imagine what is done with or within it. It is even to discover new or newly-valued aspects of this thing-in-its-scene you believe you know so well, coloured by new knowledge from other contexts or locations, or various productive recombinations of elements of old knowledge (see reference to the ‘particulate principle’ (Abler, 1989; Studdert-Kennedy & Goldstein, 2003) below). The path of composition followed ought then to be ‘emergent’ in the sense of producing an unpredictable outcome.

Semantic (and semiotic) coherence in prose and poetry, furnished by patient verbal labour and an organising purpose, often results in coherent imagery—and vice versa:

Nearly everyone who reads has had the experience of being transported to another world — of becoming so engrossed in a narrative that he becomes almost unconscious of the act of reading. In these cases, the prose an author constructs becomes so vivid as to replace, in a small way, reality in a reader’s mind for a time. We see Chekhov’s gun and Faulkner’s dilapidated antebellum mansions. We, as readers, cherish these vivid interactions with text and measure the soundness of other works through them. Consequently, the successful evocation of images is a hallmark of well crafted fiction. (Grady, 2017: n.pag.)

This is true of much poetry, too. With a strongly felt and detailed picture or stage scene, a writer can pick and choose words in response to, or in order to render aspects of, what they ‘see’. (They can also deviate surprisingly from that picture, after the manner of a jazz musician departing from the expected rhythm or melodic progression of a piece of music. Dickinson does so in her ‘Lightning’ poem (2005: 390, no. 901):

As Lightning on a Landscape  
Exhibits Sheets of Place –  
Not yet suspected – but for Flash –  
And Click – and Suddenness.)

This poet’s scene, like one in a continuous, vivid dream (Gardner, 1991: 45), is dedicated to

the task in hand, and constitutes an active and goal-directed integration with an imagined context drawn from past and present experience. The poet ‘occupies’ it: it occupies her. Perceived artistically, an image in that kind of pointed context can possess the connotative penumbra, or aura, of a poetic line. The poetic line is particular and directional and so can be a series of image ‘frames’. At the improvisatory moment of making, certain words and lines ‘choose the poet’ and fit her special, creative mental state.

For both writer and reader, everyone who speaks sets an agenda. If I say ‘Once upon a time there was ...’ I set the stage for a character and a conflict, or a poetic ‘point’. A prose writer must enter a setting, people it with agents, and create such an agenda. A sympathetic reader enters a simulacrum of that setting and scene, and discovers it, as they interpret it. A poet adds unvoiced or chanted music.

In *The Anatomy of Poetry*, Boulton (1953: 1) states: ‘the attempt to find words has produced some of our greatest poetry’. We might ask many questions about the non-random finding of these words, such as where they come from, how are they acquired, and why they eventually fuse into a poem. There may be no definitive answers to such questions, but poetic lines sometimes have the capacity to be transmuted into experience, and vice versa. Even the words of others can cause us to relive or complete the images and scenes suggested by them, but with our own materials, in our own way.

Poets, then, may start with words in discovering images—or proceed in the opposite direction. Both of these ‘paths of composition’ may be followed (cf Knights, 1983: 357) and reversed at will. Throughout, though, some sort of unifying scene is invoked during composition. The complex, inner scene has more potential for unique expression than the words of others recast.

To recall or call up these bare words of others is to remember the images and scenes denoted and connoted by them in one’s own mind. Genuine communication can occur between interlocutors (society depends on it),<sup>xxviii</sup> but the thought the scene stirs is in some sense individual,

and perhaps largely non-verbal.

A scene can be an experiential (or literary) moment reappraised, or be cut, ostensibly at least, out of whole cloth. It may be imaginary, but it can feel genuine, like a precious memory. It may bring nostalgia for that which has been lost, that which is imperilled, and that which has never existed—but ought to.

Such scenes are evoked and assembled, with the finesse of a traditional dressmaker or watchmaker, in poetry. For example, the following lines by Emily Dickinson rearrange commonplaces of language and rhythm/metre but evoke the pathos of her complex relationships with her sister, Lavinia, and her intimate friend (some say lover) and eventual sister-in-law, Susan Huntington Gilbert (Dickinson):

One Sister have I in our house –  
And one, a hedge away.  
There's only one recorded,  
But both belong to me.

(Dickinson, 2005: 21, no. 5)

What Dickinson was thinking as she wrote this poem is not known or provable, and the precise nature of her relationship with Susan remains an unresolved question. As with all of the examples given above, without biographical correlations (such as letters), it isn't clear what issues create a poem—and, perhaps, many such issues are never identifiable in any case. Yet the experience of reading a poem is enlivened and made active and 'participative' by such uncertainty of interpretation.

In Dickinson's 'Frost' poem, quoted in my previous chapter, we ourselves feel a twinge of fear at the 'blonde Assassin', the frost. For both poet and reader a sense of unpredictability and surprise is partly conjured by a poem's presentation of a scene. In Dickinson's 'Sister' poem, the inclusion of the dividing hedge does a great deal of work not only in evoking a sense of

‘place’ in the poem, but in delineating the poem’s interior concerns. And because the poem’s details accord with biographical information concerning the proximity and separation of Emily Dickinson and Susan Gilbert Dickinson, one may read the poem as being partly prompted by two ideas of ‘home’—in this case, the actual homes of both of these women.

### **2.1. Seeing the lightning**

The elusive source of a great deal of poetry, then, resides to a large extent in the poet’s deep and more recent memory. Deep memory includes the continually revisited formative recollections of childhood that stand ‘behind’ what she has more recently experienced. Margaret Atwood observes that ‘every life lived is also an inner life, a life created’ (Atwood, 2003: 7), or re-created. That inner life frequently finds expression in the outward-directed inflections of poems. To successfully make a poem is an illuminating, mnemonic exercise, aptly illustrated when ‘inspired’ by a lightning bolt metaphor (cf Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 48-49). It leads to a transformation of words already forged, but not through the mechanical application of rules or commonplace expectations.

Moreover, a poet’s lines are directed by the anticipation of possible interpretations by potential readers. And that, long before publication, can risk throwing her private laboratory of verbal experiment into what feels like glaring scrutiny. So, wherever precisely words ‘come from’, the practice of writing poetry is not ‘mere’ assemblage, but often partakes of an exquisite incredulity, a momentary but conceivably painful—or gratifying—attempt to see oneself as others do. This provides a possible interpretation of Dickinson’s ‘Soul’ poem quoted above: a ‘quick calamity’ like the dangerous contact with another gives ‘the Soul’ a flash of insight (cf Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 26-27) as to its true, creative status in the dragon’s gaze.

This risk emphasises the fact that everything brought to the poet’s mind and set down may have attributes that are not perceived by that mind, even on subsequent readings, to say nothing

of the fact that the world changes around us too. It is an imagined stage debut with a self-authored script (cf Atwood, 2003: 24, on the painful exposure of live poetry readings), even if a specific audience or type of audience is not visualised. The poet's sentences take their meaning not only from their relation to the world but also to her audience. That is why, while writing, even the poet is not certain what is coming next, a little like one reading something *new*.

Writing and reading poetry is hardly confined to taking on board the words—i.e., Barthes's 'quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture' (1977, 146, quoted in n.5 above).<sup>xxix</sup> Rather, poetry may aspire to present dangerous but transformative imaginal truths with the aplomb of Sir Lancelot's foray into the Chapel Perilous (Malory, 1969: 221-224).

The quest here is for light, that flash of insight, that 'Lightning on a Landscape'. Critchley's 'intuition', with poetic lines springing to mind more or less unbidden, is quirky and surprising. A poet senses a work stirring, then pictures herself peculiarly close to the things or people she wishes to write about, imaginatively merging with them. An object in a poem—say, a flower—is often more sensuously evoked, or otherwise more salient, than when found within a story in prose, where it is perhaps merely part of the setting, and incidental to the action. The poet proceeds by trying to observe and feel, then join—indeed love—a 'scene' in her mind; scenes can be evanescent as those refracted by a raindrop, lit by a fork of lightning. She is never quite sure, though, of what she might see there, of what meaning it may have next. Williams, in 'The Red Wheelbarrow', tries to hold on to an elusive, unrepeatable, preverbal reality, 'glazed' by a curious immortality but fading into the past, a ground beyond the figure. The light of understanding itself does not fade.

Intuition, a term that defies definition, appears to be conceptually distinct from, but compatible with, verbal, perceptual, or emotional cognition. Do we ever look without feeling? It takes a measure of risk and courage to follow one's intuition with a measure of criticality (rather than hiding behind literalism or even podsnappery).

Perhaps a mere ‘light’ can evoke the dawn of a conscious thought or some outstanding yet oddly forgotten experience. It underscores the awesome precarity of our earthly existence that Rainer Maria Rilke alludes to in his *Duino Elegy I*:

Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the Angelic  
Orders? And even if one were to suddenly  
take me to its heart, I would vanish into its  
stronger existence. For beauty is nothing but  
the beginning of terror, that we are still able to bear,  
and we revere it so, because it calmly disdains  
to destroy us. Every Angel is terror.

(Rilke, 2001: 11-12; cf Delistraty, 2017)

Though dangerously singled out, somehow the poet survives, and even flourishes. Never quite beginning anew, mental scenes and their light act on the need, the ability, and the opportunity to record and memorialise *life*—and even, in rarer ‘poetic moments’, to create something fresh without ‘bower-bird’ shallowness, something that will take tentative shape in the fitfully shared, emotionally taut space between poet and reader. As the Australian poet Margaret Diesendorf puts it: ‘There is much about light that we don’t understand’ (1981: 10).

Through such a process, a poem may chart, then reach beyond, the intimate country of the poet’s past and present. Cartography must never lose sight of the solid, finite earth, let alone its vibrant placement in a boundless universe. With luck (for it is no ‘exact science’) this mental mapping will fill the reader with a sense of their potential within the world (cf Berger, in Levy, 2017), and share some of the angst of existence that never quite dissipates with age.

Thus, poetry is not just about language; it is about going *beyond* language as a classificatory system, and into the light. In order to make the images of poet and reader approximate each other, the poet connects emotionally and rationally with language that appears to fit the poetic

scene (a place containing characters and objects where action in the shape of an imaginary incident occurs) and its depth. One feels the words of a poem stirring, coming or ‘whirling up’ (Skovron, 2005: 9).

The poet must contemplate, but then metaphorically and viscerally become part of, the developing image and its implicit story (or stories).<sup>xxx</sup> The poet becomes a temporary character in her own intuited and constraining but *living* ‘imaginal scene’—whatever its (significant) origins, and however sketchy it may initially be—which usually grows and acquires emotional depth and relative autonomy as she writes.

One difference between this meaningful transformation and the practice of ‘poetic faith’, as described by Coleridge ([2013], 152), lies in the emphasis not on the audience or reader but on a *poet* acting in her own variously-lit ‘inner theatre’. That theatre, specific to the work-in-progress, need not violate the norms of the world we know; indeed, it imposes a sense of emotional and situational ‘strength of reality’ or relevance on the participant (Stevens, 1951: 7).<sup>xxxi</sup> The poet employs such relative realism in order to keep herself interested and to ‘translate’ her imaginary experience into illuminated words a reader will grasp. As with someone in a real situation in a heightened state of consciousness, her verbal response is partly automatic, but still coherent. It will feel authentic and strike a similar chord in the reader.

### **2.1.1. Or at least, brief sparks**

Some years ago, while sitting and waiting for a bus, I looked down and saw a crow looking up at me in an apparent mute appeal, a sick crow clearly not capable of flying away and which then hid beneath my bench to escape the evening crowd. I felt helpless, and when the bus came I got aboard and left, but the incident stuck in my mind. Later, I ‘merged’ into this ‘realistic’ scene and from within it wrote the following poem, ‘Carrion’, in which the crow has become the ‘vehicle’ (Richards, 1965: 96ff) of what might be a simile-shaped metaphor (Cohen, 1976:

257):<sup>xxxii</sup>

you  
drop through the net  
choke in the street, like the crow  
coughing  
beneath my blind bench  
paths wing to the wall  
twist on the spot like a fly  
cresting the cold deep sleep drop,  
the golden spires  
blurred and singing  
beyond the diesel mist.

A 'homeless' person is embodied in the dying crow, exhibiting all the 'human' aspects of an exile beyond normal parameters. The social order actively desocialises and dehumanises the homeless and effectively renders them mute, though not quite invisible. Their status is reduced from that of citizen to something akin to a wild animal. Here, my initial memory has been transformed into a controlled and controlling scene of poetic experience of which I am part; the struggle to control and extend it goads one into finding the words. Empathically I squirm, I 'twist on the spot' like a sprayed fly. That intuitive empathy is essential, I think, in crafting a powerful poem.

A poem is not just 'words' one may revisit (even if words and sentences pertaining to a scene resemble captions on a corresponding, animate, three-dimensional 'grid' of meaning<sup>xxxiii</sup>), they are effectively virtual worlds to immerse oneself in. Their self-sufficiency may be apparent, but it is profound. It is a rearranged universe.

This self-sufficiency is exemplified by the power-house like a throne (or capitalist castle) in Williams's 1937 ekphrastic poem 'Classic Scene', above. It is no home, though, except insofar as it stands for a more nurturing future. Today such an ambivalent scene—squalor and hope combined—might be more resonant in China. In the poem, an image or 'scene', drawn from life, is in a sense passed from one artist (Charles Sheeler, the painter) to another.

Just as Shelley saw all great poetry as 'episodes to that great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world' ('A Defence of Poetry', 1821, §20, in 2002: 522), so we might claim that, throughout history, we are all building (more or less blindly) a single world society—and we may hope, optimistically, that even its imperious power stations and attendant hovels could one day contribute to a better, secularly transcendent, planetary 'home'.

## **2.2. The ancient crucible**

A poet's 'home' is a memory complex, a reliving of and relearning about her origins, an aetiological myth or story about her real early home life, and possibly a partial and indeed intentional fiction. It is not invariably harmonious or static. Oppositional thinking marks infancy as well as later life (Rothenberg, 1979: 207-208), but there is 'reciprocity in all opposition' (ibid.: 211), with home resembling a discordant chord, one requiring resolution, even if that never comes.

If an author's home-life is 'good', i.e. enlightening and 'empowering', it may contrast painfully with other worlds she sees. If it is loveless, oppressive or stultifying, or if its memory has over time become a bore or an embarrassment, she may conceivably invent a better home—and occasionally the persona to go with it!<sup>xxxiv</sup> All sorts of 'homes' are possible, but Dickens's 'genius', for example, was not completely 'blighted in its infancy' by being forced at age 11 into the Blacking Factory while his father languished in the Debtor's Prison; or even by critics.<sup>xxxv</sup> Nor was that of the 20th century American poets Elizabeth Bishop (Pierpont, 2017), Sylvia

Plath, John Berryman, or many others, despite the fact that two of these eventually committed suicide. The desire for the unpredictable is played out every time a poet—or prose writer—comes up with a literary ‘gem’ of a line or phrase or metaphor, regardless of its import. The drive to invent, the desire and compulsion to learn and make—and to do so through exercising what Turner (1996, 7) calls ‘the literary mind’—*may* be awakened by some secret or personal discovery, some special source of light, like Jane Eyre’s bay window, which granted her temporary haven from her oppressive surroundings.

Since it is where thinking, learning, discovering and inventing start, and all staples of individuation (Rothenberg, 1979: 211), actual home—good, bad, or indifferent; house, hovel or hole in the ground—seems to me to be the legitimising origin of those imaginal spaces, scenes and journeys found in the half-mythic, ‘improvable’ homes of writing. A new book is therefore the fruit of a ‘new’ home.<sup>xxxvi</sup> In her ‘Introduction’ to the highly poetic *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Virginia Woolf states:

Books are the flowers or fruit stuck here and there on a tree which has its roots deep down in the earth of our earliest life, of our first experience (2011: 11).

This personal tree’s intellectual and semantic circulatory system is entwined in what we might call our ‘becoming’. It is the jumping-off point to an imaginary, secret, ‘parallel universe’ we as authors feel impelled to describe, explain, and conjure in others, with words (cf the ‘surrounding’ world in Berger, 2008: 7). In its convoluted branches many poets will discover their own constructive power to describe or make the flowers and fruit of scenes, and the ability to fulfil their desires within a changing social and natural order (cf Calvino, 1986: 50-51; Frye, 1971: 105-106). Reading, with its holistic stimulation of the sensorium<sup>xxxvii</sup> and memory, helps a reader travel back home, or to a revisited, recontextualised, and renewable home ‘where you have never been’ (Le Guin, 1975: 52), which one might term the writer’s personal ideal world against which the real can be measured, and in which the past—and history—may be rewritten.

Through idiosyncratic re-enactment within the reverie, and the resultant re-definition of the self (Rosenblatt, 1994: 144-145), the reader as well as the writer reimagines who each is or has been or will be, and learns (or teaches herself) how to become and remain an 'author'. Compare this to Louise M. Rosenblatt (1994: 88): recognising 'the essential role of the text as the stimulus of the creativity of the reader' includes, I would add, recognising the author—here, poet—as a reader who also writes. (As Wolf (2008: 17-18) has it, 'the goal of reading is to go beyond the author's ideas to thoughts that are increasingly autonomous, transformative, and ultimately independent of the written text'.)

Every scene, to be productive of good poetry, must in poet-reader and actual reader strike the great deep bell of their origins as individuals or as human beings. The 'mythos' or iconic story of home confers a mythological resonance to the lines written; home as mutable, 'generative daydream' acts as a cunningly formative influence from the poet's own past—a past that we may otherwise be constrained in gleaning from her writings. The scene is a virtual but more or less shared place, though one with a history (fictive and author-biographical) we come to care about, partly because we compare it to the first house we ourselves ever lived in. That first house allows us to establish a ground of value, which will—amongst other things—allow us to detect 'originality'. And, in a way, a poet is inscribing her life within her lines. The scene she endows us with there is of home, though it may be expressed in antithesis (like the uprooted and atomised individual/dying crow in 'Carrion').

The poet's mental scene, in its personal depth, gives rise to and so approximately corresponds to the imagery and descriptions within a text. In Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' (1967: 295-298) the 'sunless sea'<sup>xxxviii</sup> (see Ch5 below), while tantalisingly ambiguous, plausibly refers to an imaginary, secluded or underground sea pictured and 'felt' by Coleridge as he wrote (though we can't prove that), and will likely evoke its equivocal equivalent(s) in the reader's mind. My crow (ostensibly just a simile) is also one whose 'extraneous' details are mainly left up to the

reader.

Apart from being virtual, the poet's scene is normally a place, or space, like any other: three-dimensional, animate, and suffused with narrative and a unique emotional, atmospheric, or dramatic tone. Such mental scenes of thought or action can be 'disposable' and replaced rapidly at first, but they eventually endure. That process is not a foregone conclusion, yet it is amenable to reason. As outlined above, creative production is not purely representative but interactive—as with the apparently anthropomorphised crow. Just as stone breaks in its own way under the sculptor's hammer, a poem is not consciously or 'unconsciously' imposed, but the result of a kind of adventure.

To put it another way, relived (or reliveable) daydream images are ultimately rooted in and given value by the author's 'internalisation' of the initiatory, singular, and familiar experiences of youth. Broadly speaking, the first home is that place and period where the developing infant is introduced to accumulated social experience, cross-modal images, the making of representational form, and language. Childhood introduces the 'estranging' or uncanny<sup>xxxix</sup> idea of 'the new', an experience or encounter or idea that is not just a rehash of the past. Its introductions live on, if distorted, in mood<sup>xl</sup> and memory. We often dissolve then reabsorb some of our earlier suppositions as we age, and this inflects our writing.

A reverie may engage and, as it were, see through that seemingly endless lens of home in memory given a renewed focus—a 'work-specific' turn—by the intention to write, a context that grants selected image sequences fresh legitimacy, meaning, and impetus. Home and its hearth—and sometimes a concomitant desire for a transcendence of those origins—inform most readers, of which the author is the first: she is the reader-writer who draws on lived experience, artistic exposure, and 'book-learning' (including literary influence) to add to the sum of what might be read in the future. Whenever she starts a new project, she starts from what she feels she really knows.

Faced with a blank page,<sup>xli</sup> or with first drafts that need rewriting, an author could, by resolving an aspect of daydream, generate then inwardly ‘observe’ a scene or space. Each word or image is a potential new beginning, not a barren recombination. Thus drawn into a recontextualised, now oddly-unfamiliar reverie by the ‘relived images’ of an earlier generative daydream, taken from their original context and modified half-consciously, driven or guided by need, curiosity and desire, the writer may offer a resonant text to the reader who has his own, all-pervasive sense of home. The scene stands on the home ground of personal history and literary meaning.

### **2.3. Twists of the imagination**

A poet tries to appropriate a ‘view’ of the world she belongs to. A ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ or ‘poetic faith’ (Coleridge, [2013], 152) is then much easier. Just as most of us will find words ‘spontaneously’ in a real-life situation, driven by aims or desires—and ‘adrenalin’ when making a public speech—so a poet’s creative capacity will be piqued by teasing words out from the imaginary situation she abstracts from the world and steps into. She will submerge herself in the further daydreams—supplemented perhaps by night dreams—which spring from the imaginary place and pass their verbal syntheses on to others, so that they too may inhabit the imaginary place through a form of vicarious fantasy.<sup>xlii</sup>

In all this the poet tries to retain some rational aloofness so as not to drift into undisciplined fantasy. Any gems, once found, must be cut into jewels. It is a dangerous procedure, risking failure. But these imperfect, lengthy tasks are central to poetic creativity: finding images connected to feeling,<sup>xliii</sup> then finding and refining the appropriate words. In this way, creative work may be understood as beginning in, building on and updating juvenility.<sup>xliv</sup>

One writes poetry ‘out of inner necessity’ and it will come ‘out of who-knows-where’ (Malouf, 2015: ix)—though still a ‘where’, while ‘inner necessity’ is due to strong feelings

generated or catalysed by the personal-historical scene. Unlike a factory-made car or toaster, every attempt at an original poem is an experiment, unpredictable as a butterfly. Any rules (including decisions about the use of grammar, syntax and vocabulary) are not fixed but chosen by the poet, subject to the fluid constraints of the scene. And that is not so much *beyond* words as the fount of them. It may indeed be an ‘inscape’, though it is not dependent on any religious dogma (cf Wilson, 2003).<sup>xlv</sup>

To be convincing and inspiring to both author and reader, i.e. the ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ readers, a scene and its poem should not be so general—and lacking in Wallace Stevens’s ‘strength of reality’ (1951: 7)—as to be glib or vapid. Poetic language should at times thrust jarring or captivating perspectives onto a reader to make them think and dream newly. It should compel. It should reveal. Making poetry, then, calls for the poet to verbalise and even ‘label’ her daydream and arrange it into patterns of selected—or invented—‘elements’.

Since the poet is often ‘in exile’—alienated from the distanced world that others may take more-or-less for granted—she is able to see it *differently*, and this sense of exile (psychic if not actual homelessness) will colour her ‘mythos’ of home and thus her poetic scenes. As we all need a place to live, a mental as well as physical ‘room of one’s own’, she could be impelled to reject the complacent order and, even if no revolutionary, dragoon her impressions into an alternative ‘home’. She is helped in that by the impetuosity of the mind’s creative power. As William Carlos Williams said in 1920, ‘There is no thing that with a twist of the imagination cannot be something else’ (*Kora in Hell*, XXII, #2, n.d.: 85). And yet sometimes this ability seems strangely constipated, perhaps held in by the need to be ‘real’—to avoid *meaningless*, arbitrary relativism—or by the rejection of a habitual creative practice that would merely deepen a well-worn creative groove. One problem is how to justify using the result of the ‘twist’ in poetry; another, investigated below, is how to get it to function.

In general terms, then, dredging up diction requires an author to immerse herself in and

interact with her own mental images, and to use her linguistic or intellectual (and thespian) abilities to fashion sequential sentences from her responses to what is happening there.<sup>xlvi</sup> She may picture herself (a figure of herself) in the middle of things and then, through an act of imagination, 'be' on the spot. Or, the poet might use her image-making faculty to bring her objects of writing on stage with herself. Through one or other process, she might coax such personal mental images into some compelling pattern, rendering them into words of memorable text. These 'systems' of images, producing corresponding or newly-minted word-meanings and emotions,<sup>xlvii</sup> spring ultimately from the unfolding order of the generative daydream of home and, in immersing herself in them, the author is much like an enthralled reader.

#### **2.4 The dragon's path to the new**

A poet embracing the valued, 'alternative' and not fully explored situation she has abstracted in a daydream is occasionally in a position to produce a genuinely new or original work. That is, this submersion in a provisional state of affairs (akin to Keats's negative capability) may bring about unpredictable or paradoxical outcomes, somewhat as real-life interactions can. This often occurs after initial poetic 'inspiration' appears in the shape of an 'estranging' or uncanny scene, in which a relation to earlier preoccupations of the poet may be revealed.

The poet's 'efforts to capture ideas with ever more precise written words' (Wolf, 2008: 73) are efforts to produce such well-ordered terminology under the spell of a valued scene. Her efforts are guided by the character and movement of that scene, but the scene is not a product of 'micromanaged' design or imported, sovereign names; it impinges *en bloc* on the poet from outside and often from the past, and she receives it like one encountering a new landscape or social situation. Its temporal 'grids' or diagrams of verbalised imaginative connections and other meanings, both concrete and abstract, may intrigue her and take her somewhere unforeseen. Also, whether the scene and its inner logic appear first in the poet's mind, or as words in

lines and sentences stir it up, poetic language goes nowhere creatively without such a scene. If she ‘sings’ of a crow, say, the author like the reader must get to *know* what that term might imply—not simply by understanding the word, but through gaining imaginative access to the scene in which the referent appears. That typically means discovering it ‘inside herself’.

The poet (or reader) becomes an ‘internal actor’ who expresses more than a ‘tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture’ that are ‘mixed’ or recombined after being divorced from their original non-verbal and verbal context (Roland Barthes 1977: 146). Words are referring entities that usually require at least one quasi-concrete object of description—which, in poetry is, strictly speaking, fictive.

Poetry (like music, or comedy) plunges us into misty waters nuanced with feeling and wordless, patterned images, and maybe ‘imageless’ thought, verbal or not.<sup>xlviii</sup> (Mist and mystery, unlike an analogously amorphous drone or ‘white noise’, make one curious.) The act of writing poetry more or less ‘within the scene’ marshals poetic lines and their sense in accordance with it. It entails, *au fond*, a careful verbal pacing and rhythmic judgement contoured by this dedicated daydream, and by the poet’s value judgments more generally.

Pacing and rhythm necessitate recurrence, and recurrence or pattern is essential (as I have argued) to understanding (cf Price, 1953: 7-8). Such recurrence structures individual experiences; these in turn are able to yield motifs that dwell in memory and imagination in a faithful or ‘slanted’ form—take Blake’s wanderer in ‘London’, or Whitman’s ‘cabin’d ship’, both of which function to provide an imaginative focus for the poetic works they inhabit.

In all this, home and its myriad echoes permeate the poet’s initiation of unhackneyed scenes and subsequent finding of apposite words—as for instance with the young W.B. Yeats described earlier, ‘exiled’ in London. ‘Home’ is where the heart blossoms, if obscurely. For Yeats, actual home was epitomised by a place called in English ‘heather island’<sup>xlix</sup> (according to the poet (see Springer, 2012) and the accompanying 1932 recording by Yeats himself), near the town of Sligo

in Ireland.

### 2.4.1. The dragon's plume of originality

Whether continuous and vivid, or fragmentary, daydream scenes are influenced by, and in turn influence, our circumstances and our mood. As such, they enable poetic expression and desire to reach beyond the everyday, an outcome often surprising to poet and reader alike.

To what extent can that happen? No doubt, *proof* that an author has seen or produced something utterly and non-trivially 'new' is impossible and, I think, inessential here. 'Originality'—as valued by the Romantic poets,<sup>1</sup> and regarded by them as the mark of 'genius' (Millen, 2010: 92)<sup>li</sup>—is not the sole end of the poetic art, any more than a plume of fire is the whole essence of even a western dragon. Erskine (1922: 735), asks:

Is it the business of art to discover new ideas, or indeed to busy itself much with any ideas, as separated from emotion and the other elements of complete experience? Is it the originality of genius in art to say something no one has ever thought of before, or to say something we all recognize as important and true? As for the mere question of priority, even stupid things have been said for a first time; do we wear the laurel for being the first to say them?<sup>lii</sup>

I think the patent answer is that art—here poetry—is never just a matter of being the first, but that an integrated world-view (or overview), inescapably containing contradictions, is called for. Busying oneself with 'pure ideas', if there are such things, is perhaps best left to mathematicians and Idealist philosophers. Originality may in some qualified sense be attainable, and could even be a lodestar worth pursuing, but we should not abandon the 'second burthen of a former child', as Shakespeare calls a mistaken claim to literary novelty in Sonnet 59. He knows that the 'second' treatment of an ('impure') idea may constitute an improvement.<sup>liii</sup> There is 'creativity of means as well as of ends' (Gaut, 2010: 1041) and, indeed, there is a plethora of possible ends and means. Continuity or recurrence is needed for comprehension,

but need not amount to the ‘mind-forged manacles’ (Blake, 2002: 76) of deadening, customary, possibly enforced repetition.<sup>liv</sup> Poetry *may* bring about new knowledge or, more probably, reflect new discoveries elsewhere in the world, but it also preserves, amplifies or rediscovers existing insights.

The ‘present’ is precious because, within it, we are truly alive (though life has no depth or purpose if it is not moving between the memory of the past and the anticipation of the future). It constitutes an imperceptible but shifting temporal ‘line’—rendered in diction chosen more or less idiosyncratically by the scene-dwelling author—between its system of relationships and the reader, who may feel himself a ‘temporary character’ too. The scene has ‘solid’ and sometimes animate image content, ‘existing parts’ (Millen, 2010: 99) gathered together or focused within a space or logical frame. That figurative frame has recontextualising borders,<sup>lv</sup> analogous to those implicit in the ‘bisociating’ stories—often jokes or metaphors—explored by Koestler (1964).<sup>lvi</sup> Any ‘mixing’ of words is determined by the active or generative daydreamer—her background and sensibility, and her commitment to burrow beneath the surface of things, not simply by writings she has read in the past. (This bias, however, is not always detectable in her biography.)

Within the dream of home, a marked-out mental scene might spellbind and provoke wonder, framing the unfamiliar like the little door at the end of the hall at the bottom of the rabbit-hole,<sup>lviii</sup> or the rim of Dickinson’s well, wherein water lies so far, ‘A neighbor from another world / Residing in a jar’ (Dickinson, 2005: 542-543, no. 1433).

The ‘free-associative’ flow of daydream needs to be systematised yet remain ‘free’. For example, a writer could start a poem in a circumstantial reverie, as a child may dream about boats in the bath; she then returns to that later, replaying, ‘reliving’, reworking and ‘taming’ it as if time were in her palm, making use of its peculiarities like the sculptor with a piece of tractable

stone. It is a matter of editing the (expendable) *daydream*, not just the text. She typically continues until the 'mood' of it goes stale, then returns to it later. As it is for a surfer, say, the balancing act is rewarding but tiring, confirming perhaps that transduction of energy is taking place.

## **2.5. The uncharted path of composition**

The attempt to compose poetry through mental scenes (wherein an image recalls a word or image, and vice-versa) takes place on a figurative, perhaps semi-conscious plane or 'path', a path with at least a putative end. Space or place is a useful and intelligible metaphor for that which is hard to visualise (such as time<sup>lviii</sup>), and a path through a space can stand for or be an extension of all sorts of progressions and 'journeys'. An author or reader may (re)live the poem<sup>lix</sup> figuratively as a 'journey' (or a visit to a picture gallery, play or film) that took place over time so that, in a way, it is new on each occasion and amenable to redirection.

The path of composition here is identified with the act of writing and how that plays out in the poet's mind, shifting mentally and with feeling from image to image or word, as well as from word to word or image—bearing in mind that a word without an image is like a map without a territory (cf Rich, 2013: 23; Korzybski, 1933). Yet it is itself very often a product—if a lateral or tangential one—of the record of that life journey beginning in the home, i.e. of the dream of home.

All journeys require time—and timing. Timing, riding on one's own or others' rhythms, is basic to rendering a successful reverie in poetic lines and syllables. The author's act of writing is almost a dance, a supremely individual (cf Wilde, 2010b, 13) yet quasi-social interaction (unless performed) with her emerging subject matter. It is not its own circular product, exactly, yet it continues through an interplay with its own material as it comes forth.

Like an actor, or the operator of a puppet show or a toy theatre,<sup>lx</sup> a poet may wish (or indeed be compelled), in order to write from a given point of view, to take on and become an invisible<sup>lxi</sup> ‘temporary character’ (and traveller) in a scene.<sup>lxii</sup> The reader, with luck, becomes a participative audience, in effect an ‘actor’ too. (Viewing a film is, by comparison, more receptive.) As Le Guin claims, ‘A reader reading *makes* the book, brings it into meaning, by translating arbitrary symbols, printed letters, into an inward, private reality’ (2004: 269, original italics). But the writer, whether of poetry or prose, is on stage first. As Le Guin adds, ‘Then comes the trancelike, selfless, rather terrifying, devouring work or play [recreation] of composition, which is very difficult to talk about’ (ibid.: 227).

Without warning, at times, the author slips into her own playlet, whether at the centre or periphery, reacting to, questioning, and modifying two ‘realities’—the one she fictively ‘inhabits’ and the one she actually inhabits—in each case either harmoniously or antagonistically. And she must employ language in order to make literature possible. The pragmatist philosopher and social psychologist George Herbert Mead (1967: 73-81) maintains that speech (and text) causes people to complete referenced actions in imagination as they listen, including images of action. Readers do the same, while writers composing new works do a similar thing, completing what has hitherto been incomplete or nascent and, in their originary forms, not always verbal. (Compare this to a snatch of tune that haunts us till we recall, and maybe hum, the whole of it.) This practice of weaving words into a daydream, or daydream imaginings into a paragraph, entails the author becoming an ‘actor with a pen’ (Canetti, 1984: 79). Furthermore, she is an *animateur*.<sup>lxiii</sup>

Ernst Bloch (1995: 118) argues:

Everybody’s life is pervaded by daydreams: one part of this is just stale, even enervating escapism, even booty for swindlers, but another part is provocative, is not content just to accept the bad which exists, does not accept renunciation. This other part has hoping at its core, and is teachable. It can be extricated from the unregulated daydream and from its sly misuse, can

be activated undimmed.

Bloch had revolution on his mind (weaving its flame into the transmutable dream of home), but here I am merely applying such thinking to the paths that the act of writing poetry could take. To create fine and even original works of poetry, a writer, like a reader, must immerse herself in that often dramatic, contextualising yet estranging theatre of labile but repeatedly 'relived' (or quasi-relived) reveries—relived in this case as the author goes over and over a putative path of composition during redrafting. These creative reveries, daydreams or fantasies challenge her and her readers; they are both familiar and exotic, like glimpses of transmogrified (yet recognisable) city towers at night, a flurry or flow of animated and participatory mental images—verbal or nonverbal, and not always governed by words—which may have originated at some time in perception and related feeling and now feature as daydream representations. The images are typically social but of necessity manifest themselves in an inflected way. They are relived and revised partly to eliminate the element of naïve wish fulfilment or, alternatively, anxiety that might otherwise mar the written work.

The French Idealist philosopher Gaston Bachelard states, of a writer's reverie or daydream: 'we hear the voice of our reverie which calls us to reimagine our past. We go into a very nearby elsewhere where reality and reverie are indistinguishable' (1971, 121). Bloch (influenced by Marx and Judaism) also argues that daydreams are not mere woolgathering but can be a precious (or generative) resource. They are the stuff of plans:

Nobody has ever lived without daydreams, but it is a question of knowing them deeper and deeper and in this way keeping them trained unerringly, usefully, on what is right. Let the daydreams grow even fuller, since this means they are enriching themselves around the sober glance; not in the sense of clogging, but of becoming clear. Not in the sense of merely contemplative reason which takes things as they are and as they stand, but of participating reason which takes them as they go, and therefore also as they could go better. Then let the daydreams grow really fuller, that is, clearer, less random, more familiar, more clearly understood and more mediated with the course of things. So that the wheat which is trying to ripen

can be encouraged to grow and be harvested. (Bloch, 1995: 118)

The scene is definitely participative, though not the outcome purely of ‘reason’, or at least not *cold* reason. Its daydream images and the works inspired by them may covertly reflect, or openly celebrate, the mythos of home or the quest to renew that home, to ‘make it new’ (North, 2013<sup>lxiv</sup>; Pound, 1935) without discarding its heritage. It then becomes a putative if idiosyncratic ‘ideal world’ in the mind, an ingenious ‘new place’ wherein misery, injustice and even death are abolished (or exposed), in thought.

It can, alternatively, be pervaded by loss, as in my following poem:<sup>lxv</sup>

Sunday Observance

an old man with a walking stick  
passes mottled trees  
wind flutters everything, it is Sunday  
telegraph poles telegraph calm  
far off birds sing  
leaves scatter  
the traffic has all stopped  
a desk with two sleeping cats:  
surely this is not heaven

Either way, home is bearing a harvest. And Bloch’s analysis might apply to all ‘invention’ (even where not recombinative) where daydream and image are central.

There might be some parallel to be drawn here between this feature of poetic composition (as well as other forms of writing) and certain aspects of scientific practice. We might again glance at the mathematician Jacques Hadamard’s survey in c.1900 of the mental techniques of

scientists, including Einstein (Hadamard, 1954). As Hadamard reminds us in his Introduction (xi):

our title is “Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field,” and not “Psychology of Mathematical Invention.” It may be useful to keep in mind that mathematical invention is but a case of invention in general, a process which can take place in several domains, whether it be in science, literature, in art or also technology.

In the ‘thought experiments’ (cf Degani-Raz, 2005; Pope, 2005: 15; Souder, 2003: 209) performed in the crafting of literature, the actual home has significance as the place which we return to in order to encounter or discover<sup>lxvi</sup> and seek to understand things. However, a time of ‘innocence’ cannot be preserved without becoming one of ignorance and so, as we make creative works, we orient ourselves on a forking path, and at a crucial moment. We return temporarily home(wards) while simultaneously remembering we are far from home. The (imperfectly) relived perceptual images and verbal interactions of our first few years metamorphose in memory; they come to bear a ‘mythological’ or foundational quality, along with newer ones that are permitted to dwell within their company.

Most importantly, writers impelled by, and able to access the inherent power of, such reverie often have an enhanced capacity to stand outside their social milieu to the extent that they bypass social convention in the shape of existing formulations in language. Many such writers fashion their own forms of expression, or idiolect, stemming ultimately from the way their unique set of experiences are admixed, re-encountered and mutated through ‘generative’ reverie.<sup>lxvii</sup>

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<sup>xxviii</sup> Verbal communication largely ‘works’ or society would cease to function; but when one party is absent it requires a concrete context that must be supplied by either interlocutor, author and reader, beginning with their similar social and cultural experiences and innate (and non-verbal) *ability* to learn.

<sup>xxix</sup> The unnamed protagonist in Gerald Murnane’s short story ‘The Boy’s Name was David’ is disturbed that he can only recall the images of stories he has read, rather than their actual words. In my terms, such an approach is misguided. Language is intended to recall or synthesise experiences, not to *be* an experience—even a savoured passage or line is savoured because of the experience it (imperfectly) conjures up again and again, each time with new insights, not simply because of its exquisite choice and placement of words. Paul Valéry (2007: 63) says of the recollection of simple sentences, such as someone asking for a light:

- the sound and as it were the features of your little sentence ... come back to me, echo within me, as though they were pleased to be there; I, too, like to hear myself repeat this little phrase, which has almost lost its meaning, which has stopped being of use, and which can yet go on living, though with quite another life. It has acquired a value; and has acquired it *at the expense of its finite significance*. It has created the need to be heard again. ... Here we are on the very threshold of the poetic state.
- xxx Cf Alexander (2013, #6):  
Embedded at the heart of Percy Shelley's "A Defence of Poetry" (1821) [Shelley, 2002, §42, 533] are lines in which he evokes the unbidden power of the poem: "It creates for us a being within our being. It makes us inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being."  
What is this counterworld, this being within our being, this zone of desire that poetry evokes? Surely there is a great and buried truth here, something to do with our ecstatic being, the piercings of sense that mere rationality cannot afford, a way of making sense, lacking which we would all be hostages in our own skins.
- xxxii Stevens implies that anything which violates experience and reasoned knowledge (such as a stretched metaphor) is merely fanciful. To me that makes some sense. Cervantes has Don Quixote say, 'Art does not surpass nature', or the poet's knowledge of it (2014, Pt II, ChXVI, 1021). Also, we can interact with and gain knowledge of the world because we are part of it. I posit no ontological gulf between 'mind' and 'body'.
- xxxiii Cohen instances the well-known metaphor from *Romeo and Juliet*, 'Juliet is the sun':  
the corresponding simile "Juliet is like the sun" is itself a metaphor. There is no property literally possessed by both Juliet and the sun in virtue of which Juliet is said to be (literally) like the sun. The property in question, if there is one, is possessed literally by the sun but metaphorically by Juliet. And so Juliet is not like the sun in the way that she could be like, say, other tragic heroines. We might say that she is metaphorically like the sun.
- xxxiv This recalls the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's picture theory of propositions; see below.
- xxxv In the former case she might concoct a better (social, natural) world in the text; in the latter a better home, a home in which she can at least gain the detachment to reflect or by-pass the trauma in art. In either case, the original may persist as an 'absence', i.e. be unaccountably missing where one would reasonably expect it, like the Arab presence in Albert Camus's *The Plague*. It may even turn into an enduring subtext.
- xxxvi Dickens did write poetry, though is of course best known for his prose.
- xxxvii A 'construct' in the minds of readers, though not of course inevitably a literary utopia (in the tradition of Plato's *Republic*, c.380 B.C.E.), whether like More's, Campanella's or Morris's. Cf Thomas More, *Utopia*, (1516); Tommaso Campanella, *City of the Sun* (1602); William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890).
- xxxviii I.e., as an abstraction, the seat of sense perception and its interpretation in the mind.
- xxxix  
*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan*  
*A stately pleasure-dome decree:*  
*Where Alph, the sacred river, ran*  
*Through caverns measureless to man*  
*Down to a sunless sea.*
- The confined sea seems to represent the 'unconscious' source of inspiration. Cf Harman & Rheingold (1984: 9).
- xl See Shklovsky (1991: 6-10 & *passim*) on 'e(n)strangement' or 'defamiliarisation' (*ostranenie*). Cf Freud's notion of the 'uncanny' (*Das Unheimliche*) in his paper 'The Uncanny' (1925). Cf Brecht (n.d. [1978], Ch24), 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting' (91-99). Cf Reeves (1986: 797 and n.4, 808). Estrangement is always critical, if not overtly political. An example is the opening of T.S. Eliot's poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1961: 11): 'Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table'.
- xli A mood is 'a background feeling that persists over time' (Thayer, 1997: 5) but that can mean minutes, hours, days, weeks, or months. Short-lived moods seem often to regulate the making of sections of writing, whether short poems or novel chapters; 'home' is the longest mood of all.  
We might ask how emotions (and moods, see above) relate or associate. A mood is the result both of holistic bodily processes such as metabolism, hormone levels, etc. and the effects of events—such as reading or writing a book—on a person (Thayer, 1997: 5-7). An emotion is more context-dependent. Both may correlate, naturally, not only with interjections of (dis)pleasure, but with linguistic concepts, such as positive states of mind do with affirmatives. Language may thus originate in the stance taken by a person toward the rest of the world (social and natural) as they comprehend it, not just its naming (or labelling) and description. Such a pre-verbal connection sits well with the notion that gesture (Corballis, 2006: 218-219; Corballis, 2009) and 'dumb-show' or mime (a form of acting, outwardly performed or not) underlie communication and thought more generally.
- xlii There is a joke (attributed to Sidney Sheldon) that the blank page is God's way of showing one what it is like to be God. A 'blank page' can loom within any line one is working on, insofar as an author can always go off on a tangent.
- xliii This applies to both poetry and prose, but what is conventionally termed 'poetry' is perhaps more judicious and verbally euphonious in its selection and at once more concrete and more metaphorical or symbolic, though it is quite possible to meld both poetry and prose together in stunning ways.
- xliiii Desiring, lamenting, apprehending, hoping, wishing, and other possibly scene-related motivations to action or inaction.
- xliiii As does the work of many mathematicians, skilled manual workers, inventors, or scientists.
- xlv In moral terms, I think that what is seen as 'evil' is (amongst other things) malignantly destructive of the progressive order found both in inanimate nature and life, and it is that order (of which we all partake) which lies at the root of 'good' or beauty. Beauty is above all a sense of beneficent *power*, one traditionally seen as an attribute of God. Whether one believes in a personal God/dess or not, there is certainly such an order, or the cosmos would disintegrate. For what it's worth, I

- personally reject all dogma which claims that the world or society (or language) is ultimately a congeries (plasma?) of aimless atoms. Let us not live in a world—indeed, it is impossible—in which *only* hope springs eternal.
- xlvi The imagination does not of course make up everything on the spot from moment to moment, but normally has plenty going on already, activity derived perhaps from the ‘unconscious’ and one’s old and recent memories, many which are of course vital to selfhood, and aspects of ‘home’.  
Cf Stevie Smith’s combination poetry, song, theatrical performance and drawing in her composition process (Barbera & McBrien, 1985, Ch12-13).
- xlvii Many of which, such as ‘surprise’, have intention and real-world or imaginal correlatives (see de Sousa, 2014, §3) and may involve moral and other judgments.
- xlviii Coleridge observes that the signs of language may liberate us from what he termed the ‘despotism of the eye’ ([2013], 55), or direct reliance on the senses; but signs are, or engender, conscious (or maybe unconscious) images too. Whether totally imageless thought or symbol-free conscious thought (other than ‘non-cognitive’ emotion) is possible is an old controversy that is still not resolved. See Angell (2007); Piccinini (2006). There *are* those who claim they cannot visualise, who do not experience (visual) ‘images’ whether they are reading or writing, even if they are sighted (Galton, 2000). This phenomenon is called ‘aphantasia’ (Keogh & Pearson, 2017).
- xlx Yeats states that the ‘purple glow’ at noon in the third line of the second stanza is the only ‘obscurity in the poem [...] I must have meant by that the reflection of the heather in the water’ (Yeats’s 1932 recording, Springer, 2012).
- l ‘Originality’ may be decried as a Romantic (and anti-Classical or anti-Postmodern) delusion, while the utterly unprecedented might be incomprehensible, rather like ‘learning to learn’ what we could not recognise and for which there could be no response inherited through our genes (as the stimulus had never before existed). But a progression, gradual or by saltation, might allow for the development of the new (and the means for understanding it) over time.
- li Millen distinguishes between two ‘theories of originality’: creation from nothing, ‘*creatio*, which connotes the creation of something from nothing’ (96) or from inexplicable, God-given ‘genius’ (as alleged by Romantics like Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth), and invention, ‘*inventio*’, from ‘existing parts’, (99). She draws on McFarland (1974). The second is not a predictable or chance recombination (see Boden, 2004: 2-3, above).
- lii Though on the following page he adds, ‘(E)xcellence is the only originality that art considers’ (736). An ‘excellence’, I would say, that may be unique.
- liii Outside the sciences, ‘(N)ovelty and originality do not come from the invention of new milieus, new genres or new modalities. They come from the *how* and the *who*, not from the *what*’ (Fry, 2011: 239-240). Or occasionally, all three.
- liv ‘[...] it is precisely through game-like constraints – as long as these are not too many and too inhibiting – that playful creativity is stimulated to emerge’ (Pope, 2005: 122; cf 24, constraint a ‘necessary condition for creativity’). Shakespeare’s language, pregnant with metaphor, was possibly enhanced by the economic and technological limitations of the stage of the period, the ‘most image-laden theatre of all time’ (Packard, 1992: 7-8); cf Verma (2012) on the limitations yet strengths of radio as the ‘theatre of the mind’; yet also Kermodé (2000: 5-6) on the difficulty, for past and present audiences, of Shakespeare’s language.
- lv For instance, a pen might feature in a scene, and might be used to sign a painting or a cheque—or a death warrant as in Dylan Thomas’s poem ‘The hand that signed the paper’ (2000: 51-52). There is a ‘recontextualising’ border between two such ostensibly similar scenes should they be in the same work. Somewhat similar is the contrast of pen and spade in Seamus Heaney’s ‘Digging’ (1990: 1-2): one is the recalled scene of the speaker’s father, the other that of the speaker—the poet—himself. Or, implicitly, the scene of the speaker in Shelley’s ‘Ozymandias’, and that of the ‘antique land’ from which the traveller hails.
- lvi Bisociation is a pattern underlying some stories (as perceived by a reader). It means to perceive a ‘situation or idea’ in ‘two self-consistent but habitually-incompatible frames of reference’ (Koestler, 1964: 35). The story of the present and a specific, imminent future, centring on a real or fictive threshold, are two such stories which may fit this definition.
- lvii Carroll (1970: 30); cf Alice’s looking-glass. One might also think of the ‘frame effect’ created by crossed fingers. Framing (in thought and perception) creates a new relationship (or frame of reference) between subject and object, one that simultaneously estranges and makes familiar, that constrains and liberates, that impels by impeding. It is naming *avant la lettre*, before the word we now (or will) know exists and has currency; this act is at the heart and hearth of image, story and language. Cf Yussuf (2007), on the use of close-up in film.
- lviii ‘Time’ in the work or in the world. Cf Genette (1980).
- lix Perhaps poetry, in part, is dramatic rhythm and lineation imposed on the ‘natural’ cadences of prose.
- lx The latter fascinated authors like Goethe and G.K. Chesterton (cf Margaret Atwood below). See Cariati (2009). Chesterton (2005: 83-84) loved the proscenium arch, especially of the toy theatre:  
Has not every one noticed how sweet and startling any landscape looks when seen through an arch? This strong, square shape, this shutting off of everything else is not only an assistance to beauty; it is the essential of beauty. The most beautiful part of every picture is the frame.  
(Not that an arch need be square, or every theatre a proscenium one. And ‘beauty’ may be that of a journey.)
- lxi A special case of the perfection of art necessitating the concealment of art!
- lxii Ironically, this internal ‘theatre’ with author participation, this risky self-exposé of the author, is a one-person travelling show, in which she plays before different imaginary audiences as the composition of a work proceeds, even at times risking, if not public censure, then private loss of confidence and legitimacy, rather like that of the narrator Clamence in Albert Camus’s *The Fall* (1956). (She is not strictly a puppet-master if her characters have some autonomy, but then maybe nor is a puppeteer.)
- lxiii Thanks for this insight to my editor (18.5.2015). The term refers here to ‘a practising artist, in any art form, who uses her/his skills, talents and personality to enable others to compose, design, devise, create, perform or engage with works of art of any kind’ (*Animarts* 2003: 9)..It further implies that an author is a social being.

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<sup>lxiv</sup> A term from the neo-Confucian scholar Chu Hsi (1130–1200 AD).

<sup>lxv</sup> Here, awareness of my own mortality and recollections of encounters with old people from my early years crowded in as I began to write. The scene is animated by an ‘idealistic’ desire to arrest unwanted transience, or transform impending death into life, and by the grudging acknowledgement that outside religion such transcendence is (presumably) impossible.

<sup>lxvi</sup> Generally ‘works of art are truly inventions’ and not, on the face of it, discoveries (Hadamard, 1954, xii), but they, like all inventions, are built on discoveries. Hadamard of course recognises this interdependence of discovery and invention (xi).

<sup>lxvii</sup> Thus they may desire to transcend their past, to build a new and better literal home (or restore the old one) in the world. The memory images of origin and safety which the actual home gave rise to are always in transition to a new dream-home, albeit not always enwombed in poetry or prose. All good and purposeful writing to me is a form of internal revolution.

## Chapter 3: In the dragon's lair

### 3.1. The first and last home

Every important beginning, as Bachelard seems to imply (1971: 121; 1994: 6), has a hint of the past, often of childhood; Virginia Woolf is more explicit about the matter (2004: 11), claiming that 'Books are the flowers or fruit stuck here and there on a tree which has its roots deep down in the earth of our earliest life'. Turning images and metaphors into poems draws on the self, born of home, as well as the subject matter of the visualised scene, and the textual universe of 'suitable' poetic diction.

Home, with all its tangles, is the foundation, a complementary idea to Janet Frame's notion of the 'homelessness of self' (Martin, 2004). Home, in this sense, represents an attempt to counter the sense of exile. It gives an important scene much of its piquancy for the poet, and also for real-world exiles who valued and preserved their childhood experiences—such as poet-novelist Vladimir Nabokov, who comments: 'I don't think in any language. I think in images. [...] and now and then a Russian phrase or an English phrase will form with the foam of the brainwave' (2011, 13).

Of course, from early infancy one or more languages tend to colonise the world and its images, to draw experiences into a net, sometimes distorting them in the process, sometimes supercharging and preserving them. Home might then give rise, say, to a poem, such as Robert Frost's dialogic 'The Death of the Hired Man' (2001: 34-40):

'Home,' he mocked gently.

'Yes, what else but home?

It all depends on what you mean by home.

[...]

‘Home is the place where, when you have to go there,

They have to take you in.’

‘I should have called it

Something you somehow haven’t to deserve.’

The centrality of the idea of home is well-established in psychology—for instance in the theories of Jerome S. Bruner, Marie Louise von Franz, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky. The early (and to some, Edenic) years are uniquely formative.<sup>lxviii</sup> In Wordsworth’s Romantic phrase, the ‘Child is father of the Man’ (1984: 246; 2006: 91). This is an expectation common to many biographers, who at times even distort their account to satisfy it (Atwood, 2003: 15-16). But while this early influence may be tenuous, and only partially conscious, it shapes the poet—who examines it explicitly and obsessively.

We see that in another of Dickinson’s poems (2005: 96, no. 207):

I taste a liquor never brewed –

From Tankards scooped in Pearl –

Not all the Frankfort Berries

Yield such an Alcohol!

[...]

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats –

And Saints – to windows run –

To see the little Tippler

Leaning against the – Sun!

Dickinson's seemingly lighthearted quest for mystical knowledge in her speaker's metaphorical, backyard universe is guided by the influence of home and her relatively sequestered but privileged, well-read, 'epistolary' life and literary career in Main Street, Amherst, Massachusetts (Gordon, 2010: 141-146). One accustomed to the 'backyard epiphany' (White, 2014, 229) and to being alone in a tamed corner of the natural world may feel 'drunk' in its presence, and be tempted to parody the Temperance literature of the day (Reynolds, in Martin, 2002: 172-174). Each cubic centimetre of a backyard is not only contained in a domesticated, safe space, it is a particle of the universe and a place of mutable mystery at some level of experience. However, with 'the intense inner event, the personal and psychological' being 'inseparable from the universal' (Rich, 1995: 168), it offers the poet more than the particular:

Opinion is a flitting thing,  
But Truth, outlasts the Sun –  
If then we cannot own them both –  
Possess the oldest one –

(Dickinson, 2005: 560, no. 1495)

Owing to her immersion in diverse scenes, a poet in the act of creation quests after original if subjective insights underlying the familiar.<sup>lxix</sup> She is driven to move along the path of composition by the precious epistemology—or contradictions and struggles—of her particular daydreams, and impelled or compelled to move beyond the relived daydream of home as she has come to understand and feel it.

Home's dragon-truth provides her act of writing with the gift of letting her see the old as the new (and putting it in a new, present context), and of seeing the new at all. Anyone possessing Oscar Wilde's 'creative personality' (Walsh, 1997) needs a 'guiding force' (cf Price, 1953: 342) to progress, the latter being (in social and moral terms) a quest for some way of making sense

of her changing place in the cadenced world, or even for a kind of rainbow's-end 'utopia' (Wilde, 2010b: 11).<sup>lxx</sup> Therein, the etymology of her words is tangled with the roots, or 'lilting house' (Thomas, 2000: 134) of her origins. The poet may move from old home to one re-built or 'sea-changed', like the skull in Ariel's song, or even the 'drowned face' in Rich's 'Diving into the Wreck'; or, to change the metaphor, what was a 'safe' room—one's bedroom as a child, or Hewett's 'sleepout' (1990, 15)—has become a city-in-miniature, from which a real city may be built. The poet becomes an architect, though not necessarily one raised on bitter dole bread with 'weevils in the flour' (Hewett, 1963, qtd in Gregory, 2012), nor, conversely, one trapped in the 'easiest room in hell'.<sup>lxxi</sup>

The imaginative practice of poets therefore draws on that familiar home, an actual home and childhood in society (cf Hewett, 1990), as recalled or half-remembered—or happily misremembered. As our initially preverbal starting point in life, home is daydreamed about 'naïvely', without any conscious intention to use the experience artistically, and 'mythologised'; this is where a 'home' will be invoked. The imaginative transformation of experiences connected to upbringing and home is a primary source of images, and such resonant mental patterns help a writer to focus aspects of current reverie (cf Flaubert, 1866: 98). These experiences are not always specific, formative events during the life of a writer (such as Charles Dickens's trauma) but may play a strong part in her themes and motivation. Margaret Atwood claims that she became a writer after making up a poem while crossing the school football field on the way home, and writing it down: 'after that writing was the only thing I wanted to do' (Atwood, 2003: 14). However, she then adds:

when I look back over the life I led until I began writing, I can find nothing in it that would account for the bizarre direction I took; or nothing that couldn't be found in the lives of many people who did not become writers. (ibid.: 16)

She saw that as her beginning, not perhaps as an author but as a dragon-touched writer of poetry and fiction. It remains plausible that the dream of home contributes, if mysteriously, to

the overall state of mind of anyone who has decided to write—Atwood made up a play and ‘performed’ it at home with puppets at age seven (2003: 9)—and that it is distinctively inflected in the surfacing memories of each writer as they put pen to paper. ‘Home’ influences the poet’s work as it ties her own personal history into the knowledge and experience of her society and its history.

Even the imagistic poems of the early 20th century, intentionally made up of images that were concrete and ‘objective’, may betray such origins (as we see with Williams’s ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’), and Ezra Pound’s famous definition of an image clearly embraces feeling: ‘An “Image” is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time’ (Pound, 1968: 4). His own well-known poem ‘In a Station of the Metro’ attests to an experience in Paris, but his response to that situation was tinged (as I argue later) by deep memory. Of course, his words in that poem do not ‘act as mere placeholders for the reader’s [or poet’s] own memories rather than create new ones out of the poem’ (Mirolla, 2016: 3). Concrete, non-cliché, and ‘indelible’ images—even if ambiguously presented as in a dream—are more effective in evoking similar imaginings in the reader.

This is perhaps true of my nostalgic poem ‘Manuka Pool’:

it is raining time again  
the golden pedal-car rushes in a  
travelling  
unravelling spray  
of rainbow drops  
or broken glass and blue metal  
every mint-ozone day

As one grows up, the images of infancy and others that are permitted to dwell within their primordial company, as in daydream, take on not only a ‘mythological’ but an idealistic or

utopian<sup>lxxii</sup>—possibly even dystopian—quality. Each mind is a flower growing from soil and conditions not of its own choosing. But every mythos of home is really a new (or renewed) home, putting one's upbringing and family, and often society and its 'culture', in some perspective, and planting the seed of a new version of home in the mind (cf Hillman, 1991: 198). The desire to renovate or extend home (or one's lair or territory) will then lie below waking consciousness, filtering the poet's thoughts.

A poem in embryo can start with a stillness born of respect for the fragmentary recollection of that first, mostly forgotten starting point: a stirring within a quietness of mind, a feeling not of quiescence but of imminence and plenitude. That state of mind affords an acrobatic poetic balance to 'think around' the fecund silence the poet wishes to transmute into speech. Then comes a growing, 'kaleidoscopic' impulsion that seeks to order jumbled sense. Words have their own order that must be 'synchronised' to this impulsive rhythm, in part the rhythm of gesture and bodily movement, or of movements observed. If our existing diction and its purposes limit, in practice, what we can say or understand, new terms can always be invented (Rosenblatt, 1994: 168 & n.24, cit. Franz Boas), and new goals formed.

The words and images born during the Hephaestan course of this creative reverie are no 'closed system'. The 'potentiating' daydream images we may start with are the cultivated fruit of earlier 'quasi-experiences' (cf Sadoski & Paivio, 2009; Thomas, 2014, cited above) which animate the author. They are not a static, synchronic or instantaneous sum of definite, recalled and rearranged elements. There is always the possibility of a new departure, a new discovery, and it could well be that chance of life-changing enlightenment which impels the poet to carry on against all odds. Loss or the fear of it is never far away, but that strike of gold can happen even without increasing the potential through new experiences (Boden, 2004: 4).

A poet recalls her first home as an 'inanimate' house and maybe living garden or farm, or workshop beneath a volcano, where she possibly pondered the transition from the safe 'inside'

to the riskier, sense-heightening ‘outside’ (cf Hewett, 1990: 15, on the ‘Pandora’s box’ of the sleepout, ‘unleashing our wildest imaginings’). To be fertile, however, all these practical images need to be regarded by her from that unusual aspect—being seen for that crucial first time.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Viewing them through the ‘wrong end of the telescope’ of distant memory can give a poet a powerful new perspective, a stable ‘Archimedean point’ of leverage. Such ‘canonical’ and nostalgic memories of home need not appear in her texts.

This idea of the scene’s ultimate foundation is not something mystical. A once-perceptual image train,<sup>lxxiv</sup> relived unpredictably whenever one is composing, or a guided and guiding ‘creative fantasy’ (Rothenberg, 1979: 130)—compare a dinghy or dragon boat alternately steered and drifting—does *not* by any means depend upon a millenarian or religious belief in ‘the Image as a radiant truth out of space and time’ (Kermode, 1957: 2). That is, it does not embody the ‘aesthetic’ or ‘Romantic’ image Kermode attributes to James Joyce and Walter Pater. It is very much entangled in space and time. Pound’s definition of an image (1968: 4), quoted above, is closer.

‘Relived’ daydream images may at first be instantaneous or spontaneous, even allied with André Breton’s ‘automatic writing’, but as more or less continuous fantasy they are not confined to ‘an instant of time’. Each is ‘complex’ to the extent that it has emotional or ‘energetic’ force drawn ultimately from one’s childhood.<sup>lxxv</sup> The guided daydream<sup>lxxvi</sup> on its course or path is not static, though it might not always be able to keep up with the life it foreshadows. Authors must slow it down and respond through cultivated habit to its often punctuated flow. In this manner writing can be finely regulated, as with any skilful rhapsode-like or griot-like improvisation.<sup>lxxvii</sup>

### **3.2. Maps and mythos**

The changeable mythos of home is a prime source of ‘quasi-percept’ for the innumerable scenes

a poet could find herself tarrying in on her journey, influenced by—though not exactly the same as—a pre-existing ‘conceptual space’. The poignancy of this journey is expressed in Adrienne Rich’s ‘Song’ (1971, in 2013: 20):

You want to ask, am I lonely?  
Well, of course, lonely  
as a woman driving across country  
day after day, leaving behind  
mile after mile  
little towns she might have stopped  
and lived and died in, lonely

Its subject is initially the real home, where the category of ‘the new’ is first encountered, but that period colours the author’s perception of new possible homes, helping to shape her reveries. As we have seen, it may even develop into a sort of idiosyncratic, personal ‘golden age’—though one somewhat distanced when it comes to writing about it:

The creative writer [...] creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from reality (Freud, 1995: 437).

As Atwood says, ‘every life lived is also an inner life, a life created’ (2003: 7), though one where reality and reverie (in Bachelard’s sense) do not always blur. Home, as seen here, establishes a poet’s notions of what is valuable and valuably new. It therefore undergirds self-consistency, but also makes surprise possible. This is evident in the first, ingenious and nostalgic stanza of Dylan Thomas’s ‘Fern Hill’ (2000: 134):

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs  
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,  
The night above the dingle starry,

Time let me hail and climb

Golden in the heydays of his eyes

The great metaphor, or wellspring of metaphor, the safe (and maybe cornucopian) place of the child at play—or in the lap of an older person and being read to (Wolf, 2008: 85)<sup>lxxviii</sup>—is truly home. Home, origin and sanctuary, is where the expanding ‘endless lens’ of perception and understanding begins, and the writer’s hope—keeping her going even in despair—resides. Emily Dickinson (2005: 140, no. 314) locates hope in the ‘soul’, here the author’s interior life:

“Hope” is the thing with feathers –

That perches in the soul –

And sings the tune without the words –

And never stops – at all –

Hope, however, must be founded on something. It is anchored in the iconic development of ‘home’, which guards the propitious faculty of metaphor for use in scenes. Metaphor (like any other figurative cognition or trope) is a bridge between image and word, on which we may build new notions. It is always directional, referring from one set of words/images to another, though a divergent set, well aware with Rich of:

[...] the loneliness

of waking first, of breathing

dawn’s first cold breath on the city

of being the one awake

in a house wrapped in sleep

(Rich, 2013: 20)

### 3.3. Metaphor

A metaphor is also a live mental model, something that the author is bringing freshly into imaginative being in order to boil down an aspect of the world into words, and confront the reader with them.

George Orwell asserted that ‘the sole aim of [written, not inner] metaphor is to call up a visual image’ (1984: 361), one already in the mind, and one mapping a pan-sensory construct. Metaphor is, in one sense, such a map, calling to mind the peculiarities of the landscape it symbolically depicts. A predominantly visual image will organise a scene; similarly a metaphor can mobilise spontaneous images that seem to erupt ‘beside’ an unfolding text as the author composes it. Any metaphor or word an author chooses may have implications that she does not predict or want; the reader may inadvertently or wilfully ‘stretch the metaphor’ in relation to her text. A metaphor is in itself a (potential) story. The metaphor is never purely ‘written’. It can illustrate a poem, but also illuminate it, and remind us that a literary work is not hermetic. In order to think deeply about the evanescent yet exquisite world we are writing about, we compare one part of real life experience<sup>lxxix</sup> to another, past and present. An example is contained in the lines by Burns: ‘the snow falls in a river, / a moment white—then melts for ever’ (*Tam O’Shanter*, 61-62, in Burns, 1904, 2).

‘Home’, as a ‘great metaphor’, is made up not of other *texts* like some Frankenstein’s chimeras (although it may, of course, incorporate literary allusions), but of living and integrable ‘bits’ of the universe that are part of the poet’s memory, of which the poet is a part. The forming scene and its metaphors, many of them at least indirectly a product of home, may therefore be as familiar, or uncanny, as aspects of one’s own life.

Rosenblatt (1994: 94) maintains: ‘Whatever the relationship between two elements of the [verbal] figure, the essential point is that the reader’s attention be turned toward a qualitative synthesis, cognitive and affective, that can be experienced conjointly’. By yoking two<sup>lxxx</sup> words

or sentences with all their attendant images and meanings, an ingenious verbal metaphor, or ‘parable’ (Turner, 1996: 5-6), can provide an experience of word and image leap-frogging in a more complex and condensed form than in literal or utilitarian language. A poem is sometimes a collection of deeply-felt imagistic metaphors nested like Russian *Matryoshka* dolls. Such alchemy and interleaving of meaning is informed by the dream of home.

Image, word, and motivating feeling meet in the confluence of social and personal history, but lose their strength if daydream and quotidian ‘reality’ are not kept apart in the poet’s mind. One reason for the ‘world of phantasy’ being sharply separated from daily reality (and even the poet’s past) is to protect it from the forces that might destroy or absorb it before it can act to alter that reality. The memory or ideal of the poet’s actual childhood home becomes part-conservatory or greenhouse, containing seedlings that may be planted out intentionally, but only when they are ready, fertilised, etc. As Virginia Woolf knew, such safety and security, indeed ‘a room of one’s own’ (Woolf, 2009)—one *at least* in the head, ‘portable’ and feeding into reverie—is essential to creative life.

Further, Rosenblatt (1994: 93ff) tells us that one cannot explain metaphor or simile purely by an analysis of the text; its full meaning *resides in the reader*. The state of mind<sup>lxxxii</sup> it generates is likely to be one in which the reader (and author as first reader of the words she is producing) has been drawn into associations with home, as well as into the scene and any action depicted in it.

### 3.3.1. Visual to verbal

The relatively detached mental space of the scene also amounts to a state of mind, although not always built by verbal metaphor.<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Within it, the following advice from Aristotle’s *Poetics* might apply:

In constructing the plot and working it out with the proper diction, the poet should place the

scene, as far as possible, before his eyes. In this way, seeing everything with the utmost vividness, as if he were a spectator of the action, he will discover what is in keeping with it, and be most unlikely to overlook inconsistencies. (1997, 32)

Even if the scene is vague in comparison to well-defined shapes, numbers, or words, the poet may, in periods of imaginative chaos, 'return home' to an eye of calm. As Bachelard states: 'the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace' (1994: 6).

Words, figurative or literal, can be just as vague as visions. A vague, fragile and unworldly daydream must be steeped in home to be controlled. Some of its special qualities and content can then be isolated by the poet and brought into focus in more definite, deliberate and 'visual' scenes, whether or not they are then retained in an actual work (cf Rothenberg, 1979: 130-131). The resulting self-transformation will stay with her, so that the act of writing becomes, as Michael Taussig says, a 'mimetic exchange with the world' (1993: ix).

In a poet's recollections, the actual childhood home is the crucible of her early speech, play, and daydream, and eventually the place of her induction into written language. The practice of writing can be seen as equivalent to playing, and improvising on, a treasured musical instrument—with some qualification: the imaginative child wants to use it to make her own stories, plays, or poems, exercising her own judgment, but soon learns that writing, the most conventional yet the most individually regulable aspect of language use, modifies the mind that makes it (Wolf, 2008: 4-7). Similarly, the mature poet, like the child, may feel compelled to interact with and explore (Bachelard, 1994: 4-6) such inspiriting or provoking scenes,<sup>lxxxiii</sup> in order to generate self-organising sentences and poetic lines; and a reader may respond similarly to images evoked by those words.

The socially-inflected text produced in the act of writing is a more or less precise guide to meaning offered by poet to reader; if it is a barrier between the two, it is also a stimulus to

thought (cf Rosenblatt, 1994: 11). From a reader's perspective, a text at any point of its evolution is

an open-meshed woven curtain, a mesh of flexible strands that hold a certain relationship to one another, but whose total shape and pattern changes as any one part is pulled or loosened. One can imagine the reader peering through the curtain, affecting its shape and the pattern of mesh by the tension or looseness with which he is holding it, and filling the openings from his own palette of colors (ibid.: 76).

This metaphor of a mesh curtain contrasts not only with Barthes's wholesale denial of authorial expression (1977: 146), but also opposes the 'windowpane theory' of language, as attacked by Miller (1979), and which sees words as a transparent medium presenting the author's thoughts. In the transaction depicted by Rosenblatt, there is no claim of some praeternatural transparency. The windows of the poet's house, her inner home, are never unshaded for long.

Language is 'at once basically social and intensely individual' (Rosenblatt, 1994: 20). The act of writing therefore involves a *sense* of 'inner' home as a locus of canonical or foundational memories, or apparent 'ur-images'. In this way the transfer of meaning from author to reader might be seen as a 'meeting of memories', even when author and reader are products of different upbringings and cultures. Not only do many kinds of experiences cross cultures, but poems can function as conduits to help such a crossing occur, even if some poetic meanings are altered in the process.

### **3.4. Renovating the dragon's lair**

Throughout the life of a poet, the memories and moods harking back to home are regularly 'renovated'. They even make quantum leaps (with no apparent connecting steps), via reflection and experience. This evolution slants the selection of metaphors and mental images by the poet.

Curiosity is part of any artist's motivation, as she thirsts for something new, or for something

long lost which will transform and renew her state of mind. Thus, the creative act of writing is simultaneously an act of learning and an act of (self-)teaching; the inner 'stage' set up in the writer's mind may also be a kind of classroom. The idea of a newly imagined world is always implicit in the 'old' one, i.e. the present sense of home. Poetic progress requires the author to embrace and understand (or name) bracing newness (the negative 'unknown' to Canetti, see below), and to try to become familiar with it. The process of devising a metaphor is in this way an act of renovation. Further, the mutable mythos of home, and its sway over the poet, makes it a 'house' of recollectable mental pictures<sup>lxxxiv</sup> which can be fashioned into scenes that call forth formative (social) experiences.

### **3.5. Uncertain discovery and ambiguity**

Wittgenstein (1997: 194ff) noted that a single image may be ambiguous—looking, for instance, like both a duck and a rabbit—if one interpretation, 'angle' or perspective is not imposed by a work. However, words sometimes 'caption' images, resolving such ambiguities, at least for the duration of a poem.

Picture and word, sense and reference are clearer from a single viewpoint. Conversely, 'too many meanings' mislead. We can only 'subitise' or grasp so much at once; the short-term memory will hold only a few distinct pieces of information (Miller, 1956; cf Vanmalderen, 1985). This is true whether it is positive or negative. Captions may then not capture. In manageable doses, however, ambiguity of whatever sort makes the reader question; it gives the brain a stimulating spin and can be quirkily fertile, the stuff of quests and new dreams.

William Empson (1947: 3) states that 'the machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry.' The actual world and even the writer's imaginary one—and their possible futures—may outstrip the rendering power of the moving line; ambiguity may come to the rescue:

Yet there are better reasons than that of rhetorical vain-glory that have induced poet after poet

to choose ambiguity and paradox rather than plain, discursive simplicity. It is not enough for the poet to analyse his experience as the scientist does, breaking it up into parts, distinguishing part from part, classifying the various parts. His task is finally to unify experience.

(Brooks, 1949: 194)<sup>lxxxv</sup>

Of course, many images are more involuted than the duck-rabbit cartoon, and daydreams (including that of home) might be claimed to be more ambiguous and otiose than even a vague wording—as per Wittgenstein (1997: 193-229). However, as we have seen, images need not be chaotic. J.C. Nyíri says of H.H. Price, a critic of Wittgenstein:

What determines, Price asks, whether a crocodile image means crocodile, or reptile, or organism in general? “There may be no difference”, he answers, “if we consider just one single image, especially if it is a static image. But there is a great difference if we consider what other images we produce, or have a tendency to produce, along with or after this one.”

([n.]69) What Price here does, then, is to apply the context principle to pictorial meaning (Nyíri, 2000, §5, from Price, 1953: 273; cf Nyíri, 2001; Rozik, 2009: 305).<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

The context principle is still more significant when the ‘thaumaturgic’ or dragon-held poet surrounds herself with three-dimensional images that change,<sup>lxxxvii</sup> or experimentally superimposes one upon another, and inhabits them more or less at will, always in pursuit of something better. A fresh point of view and ‘mode of presentation’ (Frege, 1948: 209-210) is possible each time.

### **3.6. Reverie, cornucopian or not**

Many poems link to visualised locations imagined, valued, and dwelt in by the poet, and the bond between diction and scene suggests how given poems are conceived and made. The more concrete and indelible the verbal image, the stronger and more singular the scene is likely to be to the poet. In the absence of other information, the scene is of course conveyed to the sympa-

thetic reader by the putatively finished text. But reader, poet and language itself are all immersed in the polychromatic social and natural world. All three are marked by hope of continuance.

The cornucopian reverie is essential when the poet faces a blank page or line. Such a reverie is typically comprised of emphatic and sensory patterns driven by pivotal, surprising emotions, and only partially derives from experience and memory; new situations suggest new speculations. One imagines, say, an egg, and who knows what may be inside. Imaginary entities are recalled, inhabited, and empathically arranged as well as rationally manipulated, as the play-like scene forms images and words that may or may not meld (cf Petitto et al, 2001: 35). As Italo Calvino muses:

The struggle of literature is in fact a struggle to escape from the confines of language; it stretches out from the utmost limits of what can be said; what stirs in literature is the call and attraction of what is not in the dictionary (1986, 18).

Yet what stirs may one day be put into the dictionary. Drawn in from the edge of a figurative frame, the poet empathically sets out on an odyssey in a 'cabin'd ship', sailing into what at times is a gulf stream of largely nonverbal images, old or new and in all sensory modalities. These modalities can include 'kinaesthesia' and 'proprioception', which together tell us where the body is in space, how the muscles and tendons strain in swimming or climbing a hill, and so forth; they include the sense of balance, provided by the vestibular system of the inner ear. Through such imagined sensations, one may feel 'really there', or very nearly; the poet as actor-*animateur* must also temporarily 'suspend disbelief'<sup>lxxxviii</sup> (cf Coleridge, [2013]: 152), and be swayed by the 'glamour' and possibly grim playfulness of imaginal writing. The mental images, whether marvellous or prosaic, take us either to what has been banished from consciousness, be that 'social or individual' (Calvino, 1986: 19), or to that which is yet to be discovered.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

It is that lens or prism of memory, anticipation, and consciousness rendered specific to a

work which gives the imaginal space its meaning, value and impetus, making it the ground of literary thought and meaning (cf Rozik, 2009: 305).<sup>xc</sup> When 'in the mood', sometimes after great inner conflict or external trauma, the writer is prompted by the imaginal milieu to 'report' back from it in an impromptu manner. Whatever neural linkage there is between thought, human action and social interaction allows for purposeful daydreaming, joining scene, emotion and word.

If lost for words, she can always 'drift' back into this daydream and seek more—or supplement its flights of (in)fancy or imagination with 'grounded' borrowings from literary or historical sources. (These may indeed be 'improved' upon, as T.S. Eliot contends (1975: 153-154).<sup>xcii</sup>) Then, in the spirit of Shakespeare hunting through Holinshed, Boccaccio, Saxo or Monmouth, and setting pen to paper, the effort of recasting such borrowings may 'prime' the underlying daydream and cause it to re-emerge.

The reader might have to impute the resulting content and its meaning to a dramatic speaker in a poem (Wimsatt, 1989: 5), or a narrator in prose, or even an 'implied author' (Booth, 1983: 70-76), but the relation to the actual author's causal activity is not thereby gainsaid.

### **3.7. Poet and reader, immersed**

Writing poetry is in some important instances an unpredictable and renewing product. It is not a linear extrapolation from what one has read or met in the course of living. Its accompanying daydream is a 'lucid' or self-conscious fantasy, as some night dreams are said to be (Bulkeley, 1999; Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 104-107). That is, the poet-dreamer, while at times suspending intention, is aware that she is 'in' the dream, just as a lucid dreamer may be paradoxically 'awake and asleep at the same time' (Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 104). It therefore demands a degree of what one might call 'critical immersion', comprising both logical analysis and empathy. The author employs the mental techniques of an actor and *animateur*, the latter of course

being one who directs a project from within.

Rosenblatt examines the productive and contextualising (if remote) ‘daydream interplay’ between author and reader. She puts the following question about this interplay: ‘Why cannot we judge the quality *of the transaction* as an aesthetic event, so to speak?’ (1994: 154, emphasis original) This transaction between authorial first reader and secondary reader is what I see as paramount. Although I do not follow Rosenblatt in all of her characterisations of the processes of writing and reading, her interest in ‘both the openness and the constraint offered by the [literary] text’ (ibid.: x) is pertinent here. Hence, although I focus on the author’s (specifically the poet’s) role somewhat more than the reader’s, neither role is rigid.<sup>xcii</sup>

### 3.8. Too much dragon-light

Writing poetry—or even about it—is a quintessentially subjective pursuit and the author’s methods of composition are not always apparent on a perusal of a finished text. Sometimes even the poet is unclear as to what she is doing until the completed work is read by others or by herself some time after composition. While I point to various examples of poetry to illustrate my argument, I cannot be certain what the subjective experiences of the authors may have been when they wrote them. I am forced to make an ‘educated guess’ in lieu of biographical evidence, which is often not available or reliable. In other instances, I have gone on my own personal experience and that of the commentary of others.

A poem is not typically begun with a clear-cut intention (cf Wimsatt and Beardsley, in Wimsatt, 1989: 7). Rather, the author’s purpose tends to evolve in the writing (Rosenblatt, 1994: 186). Without an inkling of that purpose or intent, we as readers or critics must supply our own. To avoid imposing our own construction upon the work, we need to have some intimation of that private purpose, and for that we must often derive the information largely from the text itself (cf Rosenblatt, 1994: 20, 113-130, 164). Marcus Nordlund puts it thus:<sup>xciii</sup>

Since there can be no direct access to authorial intention, we can either attempt to deduce it intratextually, which immediately leads to the mental projection of a contextual author who is separate from his text, or we can piece together contextual information from the outside world. (Nordlund, 2002: 323)

Wayne C. Booth speaks of the 'intricate relationship of the so-called real author with his various official versions of himself' (1983: 71). Prior to publication, a poet *might* have a firm idea of what she is trying to get across, but might still hope readers will see in the work much more than she intended. For any reader, discerning authorial intention is problematic, one's own writings included, the more so where *intentio auctoris* is not open to the author, or is controversial among critics and other readers. Like poetry, literary criticism and 'theory' is not and cannot be an exact science. Fortunately, a poem's worth does not depend purely on what its originator meant it to be, if indeed she had a clear notion at all. Serendipity, 'synchronicity', luck, and unconscious purpose can all play a part. Plenty of plausible guesswork about their own writing process and intentions may also be used by authors in the moment of composition. No one but an *habitué* feels *sure* about where they are going, and that is hardly compatible with originality in any sense.

If we wish to evade contentious or impossible/impractical biographical research, and drawing jejune conclusions from it, then in seeking 'evidence' we must rely on Nordlund's 'deductive' (or intuitive) method, essentially speculating cautiously about the author and how she arrived at the piece in question.<sup>xciv</sup> That position embraces neither the thorough-going, classical 'intentionalism' of critics like E.D. Hirsch Jr nor the 'death of the author' stance of Barthes (1977: 146) and others. It is regrettably somewhat speculative and circular (a writer need not be honest and may be a tease), but as Wimsatt (1989) implies, such circularity seems inescapable in literary theory or criticism. Fortunately, it is less problematic when one is advancing the contention that generative daydreams of scenes of 'home' constitutes the 'kitchen' of creativity in literature.

As readers or critics, we inwardly compose our own tale about the story or poem we read, and about its author. Therefore, constructing Nordlund's 'contextual' or Booth's 'implied' author cannot depend entirely on a fixed idea of a text's verbal framework, as if that could be wholly self-contained. A text is not read in the same way every time (Eco, 1989: 21, 25, 84, etc). Our understanding of what we read—or write—relies on our current but long-cultivated apprehension of the world and, by analogy, the 'world' of the work; also of course on memory, some of which may be largely unmediated by any language or other social code. It depends, as does a lot of our understanding of language itself, on canonical, as well as less 'primordial', images in animated reverie. As to these, '[r]eferential [verbal to imaginal] imagery evoked by language is a form of elaboration that adds an additional layer of meaning' (Sadoski & Paivio, 2009: 74).

In reading, we slip into a fantasy formed from our own images and tell ourselves, or rather *build*, a story closely derived from the poem that has been written, not *completely* unlike Shakespeare deriving *King Lear* from a well-known popular tale,<sup>xcv</sup> or Chapman borrowing from Seneca. The imaginal and emotional (and quasi-substantive) 'addition' to the verbal meaning<sup>xcvi</sup> is what brings description alive. More than an addition, it is a complex equation. Our own memories and reactions are set in a new weave, recontextualised against the background of what we have just read and 'imaged', or covertly acted out, in our minds. This 're-enactment' of our own memory not only guides our construction of the contextual or putative author and her 'world' but also allows us to move closer to that author's stance (*prima facie*), should we so wish. As Sadoski and Paivio claim, 'the referential evocation of images gives form, shape, and substance to meaning'. (ibid.: 74).

Whether the contextual author is anything like the real one, the unavoidable act of postulating such an author, by analogy with our direct experience of others and the world, is constitutive of the literary transaction or exchange. A work of art cannot be wholly autonomous—as though

produced by magic, not labour—yet it is no mere reshuffling of what went before (Hawthorn, 1973: 73).

Although both author and reader have creative imaginings that extend beyond whatever words first form the text,<sup>xcvii</sup> I wish to demonstrate that the ‘quasi-sensory event’ of the relived, relevant daydream is productive for many writers and readers. Since this is an uncertain matter, however, and in order to be on surer ground, I have included some of my own poems throughout this thesis, almost as case studies, since I have ‘executive’ access to them—and I have quoted from some of them already. The poet Valéry once remarked,

I apologize for thus revealing myself to you; but in my opinion it is more useful to speak of what one has experienced than to pretend to a knowledge that is entirely impersonal, an observation with no observer. In fact there is no theory that is not a fragment, carefully prepared, of some autobiography (2007: 62).

Self-revelation adds a dimension of ‘engaged transparency’. As Thoreau wrote at the outset of *Walden*, ‘I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well’ (2008: 2). Like an eyewitness, I can report my own images with a predictable, ‘confessed’ partiality. I can transact with my immediately earlier or younger self, whose images should relate closely to those ‘on the page’.

Georges Poulet argues that ‘every word of literature is impregnated with the mind of the one who wrote it’.<sup>xcviii</sup> The author ‘awakens in us the analogue of what he thought or felt’:

(T)o understand a literary work, then, is to let the individual who wrote it reveal himself to us. It is not the biography which explicates the work, but rather the work which sometimes enables us to understand the biography (Poulet, in Tompkins, 1980: 46; cf Wolf, 2008: 7; Nalbantian, 2003: 3-5).

The ‘biography’ here, as I have observed earlier, does not guarantee biographical accuracy, nor can biography tell us what the text ‘means’ at any point (Rosenblatt, 1994: 125), but it is implicit in primal images evoking or resonating with, the reader’s own ideas of home.

I am examining an ostensibly narrow area: the meeting of image and word in the mind of the writer/reader as if on a street from one's childhood revisited. I am trying to appraise the function and value of remembered, motivated images to creative *poesis*, not to demonstrate that all authors rely on them equally.

This is not to deny that critical immersion in the dream of home, and the resultant composition, are experimental and risky, and require hard work and courage. Indeed, with such immense effort of concentration required over a long period, creative 'genius' even borders on mental disturbance: '(G)reat wits are sure to madness near allied, / And thin partitions do their bounds divide', writes Dryden in *Absalom and Achitophel* (2012, 18-19). Like the protagonist Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* (1948), those who talk to themselves, who argue with 'nobody', are thought crazy. But as Horace declared (Carmen XII, Ad Virgilium, in Horace, 1856, 98-99), *Dulce est desipere in loco* ('It's nice to go mad in the right place').<sup>xcix</sup> That place, I believe, is the imaginal scene that derives from enduring home.

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<sup>lxxviii</sup> Neither are we born as Lockean *tabula rasae*, since in practical life 'nature' and 'nurture' interpenetrate at every point (Rose, 2005: 72, Ch6; also, 1973).

<sup>lxxix</sup> Cf Carrington, quoted by Bond (2011) below.

<sup>lxxx</sup> Death, as Ernst Bloch conceded, is the 'hardest counterblow to utopia' (sometimes translated as 'the harshest anti-utopia', as in Hadomi, 1995: 85). But that is perhaps a prime reason for the notion of any utopia or idealised realm, including the 'end of the rainbow'.

<sup>lxxxi</sup> Cf Peter Porter, 'The Easiest Room in Hell' (2010: 172-173). We can expect more than Limbo from poetry, more (but not less) than a neap tide of feeling and value.

<sup>lxxxii</sup> In the sense that our lives and society need a map of the world with 'utopia' on it. In his signal pamphlet 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', Wilde opined:

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias. (2010b: 11)

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> An element of *ostranenie* (though often of positive value) exists in a true observation, since perspectives and their objects are infinite. (Take a painter painting a non-still life; every quiver of a leaf or eyelash is strictly speaking a new picture.)

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Or stream, to William James (1890: 239-240):

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.*

<sup>lxxxv</sup> The resonant (allusive, 'connotative') images I have in mind have shape and weight and movement, and as a result are mainly visual and/or tactile, though do not rule out taste and smell. They bear meaning, whether profound, nostalgic, or flippant; they are found in intelligible and somewhat predictable contexts; they are not just random or static mental pictures (cf Sadoski & Paivio, 2009, Ch3), or simply pictures at all. What counts here is not so much their sensory modality, but that they focus the author's (and reader's) interest and attention, and that they go on doing so in various ways, rather like recurrent moods, brief or not.

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Cf Kaufman (2011): 'Current neuroimaging research supports [Jerome L.] Singer's idea, proposed in his 1966 book, that daydreaming is the default mental state of the human mind.' See also Kaufman & Singer (2011). Significantly, the Argentinian essayist and poet Jorge Luis Borges states, if too narrowly: 'But after all, writing is nothing more than a guided dream' (1973: xi). Similarly, Rosenblatt argues that (for the reader, at least) the 'literary experience' is analogous to a

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dream, but not wholly, since it 'is always anchored in the text' (1994: 133).

lxxvii As the work progresses, the daydream itself can become more predictable, too much so, till the half-spent author may feel the need to 'drift' again, or have a break (or make use of a randomising method). The reverie may be interspersed with periods of less apparently 'drifting', more deliberate, logical or 'verbal' composition, and periods of reflection, research and editing that bolster the act of writing.

lxxviii Wolf argues:

Through stories and books she [the three-and-a-half-year-old child] is beginning to learn a repertoire of emotions. Stories and books are a safe place for her to begin to try these emotions on for herself, and are therefore a potentially powerful contributor to her development. At work here is a reciprocal relationship between emotional development and reading. (2008: 85)

I would add that 'beginning to learn a repertoire of emotions' should be qualified: she is learning how she may respond to the circumstances depicted in what she hears. She will not forget.

lxxix Experience initiated by ourselves or not.

lxxx Or possibly joining more, but the process of comparison then becomes unwieldy.

lxxxii This 'state of mind' (incorporating images) is engendered under the stimulus of the juxtaposed literal and figurative elements of the figure, its tenor and vehicle (Richards, 1965: 96ff), such as Burns's loved one, and rose, respectively.

lxxxiii On nonverbal metaphor, see Feinstein (1982): with a purely visual metaphor, both tenor (she prefers 'topic') and vehicle employ visual or topological analogies (ibid.: 50-53). Of course, verbal metaphors appeal to the same underlying topologies.

lxxxiv See Rosenblatt (1994: 42-43) on William James and 'selective attention' towards certain 'thoughts or elements of consciousness', which then as objects of interest seem 'independent of the general stream of consciousness'. See also James (1890, I: 284-286).

lxxxv Mental images, but, like paintings to a painter, not just flat or still—indeed, not just simply visual. Cf Whitman, quoted from Schwiebert (1990: 16).

lxxxvi Scientific theory may be said to attempt a unification, the grail being the 'theory of everything'.

lxxxvii See Vanmalderen (1985) and Mandelbrojt (1970, §I: 19). Also Nyiri (2000, §3):

I find it difficult to swallow that Wittgenstein, who was a movie addict, and who regularly employed the film metaphor especially in his middle phase, did not make use of the idea of animation when discussing pictorial representation. At any rate, one can confidently assert that an animation showing a man walking up the hill does not look just the same, not even to a Martian, as if he were sliding downhill.

The reference is to Wittgenstein (1997, I: 139, 54.) One's interpretation presumably depends on how many 'clues' one is given, whether these are imagistic, verbal, or anything else. No interpretation will be perfect: for instance, a person attempting to climb the 'down' escalator may appear stationary, but further clues will show the observer that they are hardly standing still.

lxxxviii Cf the provisional transparent images of Koene (2009: 18), where detail may be 'filled in' as needed: 'To me, the word dog usually calls up a vague colourless flexible shape that may or may not get colour and further details, equally easily to be erased again, which I suppose is more or less typical'. Also, cf cubist paintings like frozen cartoons representing movement through multiplication of perspectives.

lxxxix The allure of literary imaginal world-building is fatal in Jean Baudrillard's catastrophic society immersed (or drowned) in the simulacra of cyberspace, etc. See Kellner (2014, §5-6).

xc Literary or other influences, and explicit intentions, condition the exercise in arrangement ('word recombination' and invention) that eventuates, but it ultimately seems to come from the discovery-experience of home, or attempts to transcend that.

xcii 'Thinking' thus implies two main properties: representation of things in the mind and manipulation of them in absentia; that is, thinking takes place when representations are disconnected from actual experience. Following this line of reasoning, [Susanne K.] Langer states that images are 'our readiest instruments for abstracting concepts from the tumbling stream of actual impressions. They make our primitive abstractions for us, they are our spontaneous embodiments of general ideas.'

xciii From his Essay on Philip Massinger:

One of the surest of tests is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion. A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest. Chapman borrowed from Seneca [and, if Matthews (2006) is anything to go by, Eliot from Chapman!]; Shakespeare and Webster from Montaigne.

Eliot, unlike, say, Dickinson, was a 'poet accustomed to borrow consciously from books' (Smith, 1950: 258).

xciv To paraphrase the great Indian economist B.R. Ambedkar, a division of labour need not mean a division of labourers (1936, §4).

xcv Cf Lye (2000, para 1, #4).

xcvi Though bolstered where appropriate and possible by evidence from diaries, interviews, letters, notebooks, variorum editions (cf Wallenstein & Burr, 2002), and analyses of the poet's 'influences' among predecessors and contemporaries. The virtual as against the real author is not *self-sufficient* in supplying the meaning of a text.

xcvii One found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain*, the anonymous play *King Leir* (given that Shakespeare didn't write that), Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Book II, Canto X), and so on.

xcviii That which may reflect the knowledge contemplated in the pre-compositional stillness, and need not be 'emotive', in the sense of being corrosive of reason.

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- xcvii Since imagination is a lifelong torrent not 'measured out with [verbal] coffee spoons' (Eliot, 1961: 13).
- xcviii As Doris Lessing avers, 'It seems to me that we're always in our books, quite nakedly' (1999, para 32).
- xcix Also translated 'it's sweet sometimes to play the fool', or 'it is pleasant to be frivolous at the appropriate time'.

## Chapter 4: Charting the dragon's unchartable country

### 4.1. Cartography in the dark

A poet going 'mad in the right place' relives images within the 'aura' of home, then modifies these and generates new images of valued scenes. Further, the shifting memory complex of home is where the notion of 'the new' is first encountered (as if, as it were, on a childhood street). And both newness to the child and newness in general may barge their way into one's work—perhaps stealthily in the case of Adrienne Rich's 'Dreamwood' (1989: 28), which serves to illustrate the process in action:

In the old, scratched, cheap wood of the typing stand  
there is a landscape, veined, which only a child can see  
or the child's older self, a poet,  
a woman dreaming when she should be typing  
the last report of the day. If this were a map,  
it would be the map of the last age of her life,  
not a map of choices but a map of variations

Its novel aspects, however they come, can be steered in the direction the poet wants:

[...] poetry  
isn't revolution but a way of knowing  
why it must come.

*Valued* newness to the child and newness *per se*—what Boden refers to as “psychological” creativity and “historical” creativity’ (Boden, 2004: 2)—are not as separate as they sound when expressed in a poem. In other words, the poet can never be sure that what in a previous time was new has yet had all the newness wrung from it. There may still be more to discover, or to

invent—as exemplified in Rich’s idea of the poet ‘typing’ the ‘last age’ of her life. The momentous ‘new’ in a poem is often only a rejuvenated version of what is also ‘old’.

The act of writing is further complicated by the fact that the poet’s reading of other material stirs up or ‘transfers’ images, ideas, and attitudes that take their place within her interested reverie of ‘seeing’ and ‘being’. Even poetic meanings are open to the world and inhabited, ‘intentional’ daydreaming<sup>c</sup> has the potential to set off concatenating image trains, adventitious but formative emotion, and resulting poetic lines. These can each be as alluring as sparks over water, and individuated as snowflakes. This lonely interaction, integral to the act of poetising but often at war with the workaday, can contour the dream of home, which in turn shapes the act of writing. It is ongoing, though not circular. For example, Rich’s words about the ‘typing stand’ stir sensations (even echoes of revolution:) that a socially aware and empathic reader recognises even when the associations or ‘connotations’ they bring to the poem from their own experiences are significantly different from Rich’s.

In ‘writing out’ salient bits of that reverie, the poet (‘the child’s older self’) is borne first of all on an ‘articulate flux’ of recollected pan-sensory mental patterns from their ‘childhood street’, a flow that often carries the scent or stink of home. She then automatically or deliberately selects concepts, poetically valued word-meanings, from the ‘nested’ images she engages, bearing in mind the ‘conceptual spaces’ (and gaps) of her society and the semantics of the language in which she writes. Subsequent re-draftings, intuitive or intellectual, plus critical re-immersions, will inform whatever eventuates on the page.

These re-immersions are *critical*, not forays into mysticism. Intelligible (though not ‘single’) vision is crucial in ‘steering the dream’. ‘In constructing the plot and working it out with the proper diction, the poet should place the scene, as far as possible, before his eyes’ (Aristotle, 1997: 32). Ideally, perhaps, one should see clearly (a kind of internal *ekphrasis*) before, say, muddying the waters deliberately, as a poetic device.<sup>ci</sup>

Indeed, to choose from daydream and subsequently write ‘from’ or ‘to’ that selection convincingly, the poet needs to see well enough to participate mentally in (and improve) the often embryonic or ‘yearning’ scenes that she prepares from her dreaming. She can then interact from a single point of view or ‘frame’ at the time of building the ‘theatrical scenery’ of her work, and begin to impart the legitimating atmosphere of home and its consequent memories to what she creates.

#### **4.2. Reading in the dark**

The poet is also a first reader. She strives to articulate the dream of home—sometimes in hostile surroundings, like Rich’s poet struggling to remain a gainfully employed typist in her poem at the outset of the chapter. There are many readers and many types of reader, including casual reader, close reader, and critic. But the poet-reader is closest to the poetic text and its subjective, guided dream undercurrents—occasionally *too* close, lacking the perspective to see the text ‘as others see it’.

While her writing of the daydream might start out as a trial and error process, when sentences don’t ‘just flow’, a poet is soon playing off her immediate imaginings against the undertide<sup>cii</sup> of home and the text she currently has in place. The ‘wheat which is trying to ripen’ will be ‘harvested’, as Bloch puts it (1995: 118). As we have seen, this often modifies the generative daydream itself. Within that progressively interactive or ‘dialectical’<sup>ciii</sup> activity (cf Trotsky, 2007), there are two fundamental kinds of first reading.

Rosenblatt (1994: 186) states of authorial reading:<sup>civ</sup>

I have been specially interested in differentiating two kinds of “authorial reading” during the written transaction: the first, expression-oriented, involves reading to test what has been written so far against an evolving inner purpose, and the second, reception-oriented, involves reading the text through the eyes of potential readers. When communication is the aim, the

first must provide a criterion for the second. This parallels the reader's experience in reverse, on the one hand testing an evocation for its inner coherence and relevance to the text, as distinct from, on the other hand, seeking both intrinsic and extrinsic means to relate this evocation to the author's intention [...]

For a poet (or other author), both expression-oriented and reception-oriented readings—exercises in speculative second-guessing/re-experiencing<sup>cv</sup>—apply to every first draft of any new material too. This activity is guided by the imagined boundaries of the scene in question, not simply by the formal relations between sentences or lines. Images not specifically denoted but merely implicit are often crucial, at least to the poet. These boundaries do not determine the poet's output rigidly; authorial reading of both types also permits the poet to discard old images and invent new ones without feeling at sea as she does so. The images are a more or less 'endless lens' which can usually be re-situated in a wider imaginal context, or a wider logical and verbal one.

Both kinds of reading employ a generative daydream, whose stability or wholeness depends on the poet's self-evolved 'conceptual space'—idea complex, or 'structured style(s) of thought' (Boden, 2004: 3)—grounded in home. She may be lifted and driven by her memories of the home that reared her and perhaps the 'new and improved' home she is consciously<sup>cvi</sup> trying to build, whether that is about living alone in a 'bee-loud glade', or something more ambitious.

#### **4.3. The bright road home ...**

In the mind of the re-reading author, the words on the page and the images they evoke will come for a time to dominate the ongoing daydream of home that helped to engender them. Original images thus come to be preserved in the re-reading author's daydream, too, as if in a kind of liquefiable amber. Sometimes the daydream of home is permanently changed by such images.

In what follows I refer to one 'built' and one 'preserved' set of images-within-images of an aspect of my own 'home'. This relatively recent poem ('London', see Appendix) was at first hard for me to analyse, as it is (like myself) a living organism; I am not dissecting a corpse. (That is less the case with some other works of my own included herein.)

'London' is a melange of personal and social 'scenes', inaccurate and heartfelt as a child's fantasy. It recalls childhood events—some unclear to any reader but myself—such as once being shown 'anodised' metal in compulsory metalwork class, half-recalled pre-pubertal images of 1960s singers on television, old maps of the British Empire viewed half-innocently, and my erroneous and fleeting nine-year-old's notion that London was the world's biggest metropolis.

A poet, as she works, immerses herself in her own social beginnings viewed through the lens of memory. My 'child's-eye view' or dream of London (from the perspective of my later years in Australia) is hardly veristic, or that of a real exile, but that is not the point. It is a greenhouse 'creation' of itself, a particularly overt, resuscitated home. It displays 'naïveté recalled in sophistication', by analogy with Wordsworth's 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' (2005: 251, n.50).<sup>cvii</sup> Daydream might sometimes be delusion,<sup>cviii</sup> but a poet, a dreamer, need not worry about that as she knows that her daily dreamwork<sup>cix</sup> will afford glimpses of her desires and her identity through whichever disguise she adopts.<sup>cx</sup>

The 'superannuated spotlit singer' in one fleeting, imaginal scene stands for the period. Grown old, she is still good at what she does, still 'informing' and in a way altering my mythos. Her music may not be to modern taste, but it was once in tune with the new generation. While in the midst of this daydream, I am made to feel that daydream is—or should be—the repudiation of rapacious empire, including the empire of mediocrity. If nothing else, it 'blasts / away the goblin cobwebs' from the soul.

For Gaston Bachelard, home is no less than an 'instrument with which to confront the cosmos' (1994: 46). 'The house [or city in imagination] acquires the physical and moral energy'<sup>cx</sup>

of a human body' (loc. cit.), as can a book.<sup>cxii</sup> The house, or any other kind of home, fancifully pictureable as an inverted book, is a 'supportive psychic system under the same roof' (Hillman, 1991: 202). So, in a way, is the imagined yet remote city of my poem, even if it is no New Jerusalem. Here in a nest of images-within-images we will possibly bathe in 'the freshness of the early world' (Arnold, 2007: 229-230)—or, at least, a fresh vision of an old world which, in my poem, is 'stark and dreadful and anodised in the aluminium light'.

We need not fully endorse or experience the Wordsworthian, Romantic vision of recalled childhood bliss in order to argue that poetry is first encountered and engendered in childhood, and not only retains traces of its origins but seeks to recreate or surpass them. On this question of creative rather than simply personal origins, Kirkby (2010: 4) agrees with Stephen Greenblatt (1988: 7) when he 'cautions against the dream of finding "an originary moment, a moment in which the master hand shapes the concentrated social [and personal] energy into the sublime aesthetic object"':

That quest, he argues, is fruitless, for 'there is no originary moment, no pure act of untrammelled creation': 'In place of a blazing genesis, one begins to glimpse something that seems at first far less spectacular: a subtle, elusive set of exchanges, [...] complex ceaseless, extended borrowings and lendings' (all internal quotes from Greenblatt, 1988, 7).

If Greenblatt and Kirkby are right,<sup>cxiii</sup> and apparently inexplicable moments of creative flow can occur, it is perhaps this 'movement of metaphors, emblems, well-worn stories and tropes "from one culturally demarcated zone to another"' (loc. cit.) which allows signs of aesthetic originality to transpire. Creative ideas can emerge, and new worlds with them. Home, with all its anxieties, poignancies and contradictions, confronts the literary cosmos like an observatory in an earthly haze and both conserves and changes with it.

Under that psychic roof of Hillman's, immersed in home and its myth, a dreaming poet should discover her own powers of making. In the best cases, she does so while nurtured by her first loved ones. The house or hovel or city then seems to be a protective membrane of 'mimetic'

exchange with the rest of society and the non-human world in which it is set; its 'hearth'<sup>cxiv</sup> is an energetic, 'central bonding flame' (Hillman, 1991: 203).<sup>cxv</sup> As such, home provides us with images and metaphors, ideas that are potent and legitimate, while its violation epitomises the ultimate degradation of one's humanity and the struggle against that. That is crushingly demonstrated by another prose work, *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison (2007), as discussed below.<sup>cxvi</sup>

Elizabeth Bishop rose above separation from her original home, the mental breakdowns and early death of her mother, and then molestation and attendant violence by her Uncle George (Pierpont, 2017). Sylvia Plath *may* have experienced molestation from her Uncle Frank<sup>cxvii</sup>, but that is speculative and highly controversial<sup>cxviii</sup> (see Connell, 2002; Shilling, 2013; and of course, Plath's famous poem 'Daddy', 1968: 54-56). John Berryman apparently woke one morning and saw his father shoot himself outside his bedroom window (see Hoffman's Preface in Berryman, 2004: ix; also Berryman's Dream Song #143 and Dream Song #145, 2004: 56-57). All three were profoundly damaged by their experiences: two became alcoholics; two committed suicide; yet all three flourished as poets. More important here than what precisely happened is what each poet conceivably felt compelled to take from their past, and the only accounts that generate a sense of genuine and knowledgeable intimacy with their experiences lie in the poems they wrote (Shilling, 2013). These not only demonstrate their creative power, but also show the valued and sustaining 'newness' that each of these poets could wring even from disaster.

Tragic or not, the infant's isolation behind the protective walls of the home is never unconditional or absolute. It is the opposite of asocial.<sup>cxix</sup> It is a private story but of public importance. That fact is a principal reason why singled-out snatches of daydream—or cries in the night—can become socially significant episodes or scenes, and why writers can leave the eggshell confines of home and find readers whose own experiences will resonate with what they have to say (cf Suppes, 2009).

Actual home, be it house or Hobbit-hole in the ground, is almost as crucial to our development as the womb, if not a practical extension of it. 'The houses of childhood all have this mythical quality lost under the mists of time', claims Dorothy Hewett (1990: 8). They seem to stand at the early stage of the self that later merges with the world, including in literary transactions.

The absence of home is terrifying. It can have a 'conservatising' effect by making the unknown, the 'new', unbearable to contemplate. As Elias Canetti puts it (1978: 15),

THERE IS NOTHING that man fears more than the touch of the unknown. He wants to see what is reaching towards him, and to be able to recognize or at least classify it. Man always tends to avoid physical contact with anything strange. In the dark, the fear of an unexpected touch can mount to panic. [...] All the distances which men create round themselves are dictated by this fear [...] the fear of a sudden and unexpected clutch out of the darkness.

Not all of us feel persistently beset by self-destabilising images. Now and then we anticipate sudden enlightenment, especially, perhaps, if our real-life home and upbringing has encouraged our minds to be receptive and fertile. But in the face of a defamiliarising, sometimes paralysing, fear, society itself seeming more a wilderness, home can be a sort of self-imposed house arrest or protective custody. Home is not merely a mythology of the house, as we can tell from 'London' above, but of its 'location'—and not just whether it is the 'worst house on the best street', or vice versa. It needs to be transformed from a cell into a hospitable cabin, the kind that enables autonomous control.<sup>cxx</sup> Whether this was true of the actual home or not, its mythos may become a literary locus, a symbol, subject to conscious manipulation.

Conceptions and their symbols enabling—or communicating—moral, political, and social judgments may themselves begin with the relatively isolated boy or girl's<sup>cxxi</sup> sustaining experience or inward sense of home, and radiate with them across social divides yet to be 'domesticated'. Or, contrariwise, they might originate in the feared or actual tearing away of childhood's physical or psychological sanctuary. The familiar and understood, or the harmlessly new, are

‘existentially threatened’ by the loss of one’s original bearings. The act of writing requires freedom and needs to call up a kind of living home, the very antithesis of loss and negation—and summoned less obsessively than the pathologically self-reliant protagonist of Canetti’s *Auto-da-Fé* (1984), carrying his vast library about ‘in his head’.

There are three versions of the old story about leaving home, David Malouf asserts in his essay ‘The Traveller’s Tale’ (2015: 1-4). The first is the comic tale where the folk hero leaves home, has adventures and solves riddles, then returns home again; the second is a tragic account in which he leaves and never returns, remaining an outcast forever wandering; and the third, partaking of both tragedy and comedy, is one where he leaves home and finds an ‘emergent’ home. The third applies to the accomplished poet or writer more broadly. Her home is re-built from the ground up; it is endlessly ‘made new’ in Pound’s ‘modernist’ sense, but always retains its earliest stones.

Creating adroit and ultimately ‘homespun’ yet new imagery often seems the *raison d’être* of much poetry. Paradoxically, that applies especially to iconoclastic or revolutionising works, concerned with what is termed ‘the bigger picture’; they seek to smash false and cynical images and replace them with more authentic ones. As we mature and become more widely read, home comes to mean more than the shrunken house of childhood; we realise that not everyone knows everyone else, and later the world broadens to include the city and its hinterland, the ‘nation’ and its region or alliances or empire, and the earth itself, and far beyond that. ‘The Universe’ is added to our address. Renovation in that case may become revolution.

Or we may go inward. William Packard, who sees images as ‘the heart and soul of poetry’ (1992: 31), quotes Anne Sexton asserting, ‘You’re not a poet without imagery’; images, she says, ‘come from the unconscious’ (ibid.: 32). An image, like a map, brings power. The unconscious has grown in the domicile we came from. Its images (more than tropes) seem to be

present when our minds are elsewhere, occupied with the minutiae or struggles of actual existence. But they are not disjunct from such struggles, nor from emotion or reverie (cf Shklovsky, 1991: 1). They help to originate work, though like Sexton's, they may be strange and wonderful, or horrible, 'confessional' evocations of unsatisfactory and patriarchal homes (or hospitals) that are more like prisons:

I must not sleep  
for while I'm asleep I'm ninety  
and think I'm dying.  
Death rattles in my throat  
like a marble.  
I wear tubes like earrings.  
I lie as still as a bar of iron.  
[...]  
I'm all shot up with Novocain.  
This trance girl  
is yours to do with.  
You could lay her in a grave,  
an awful package,  
and shovel dirt on her face  
and she'd never call back:  
[...]  
Presto!  
She's out of prison.

(from 'Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty)' (Sexton, 1999, 293-294))

Even images conveying the *lack* of a secure home, without evoking a better one, could lend themselves (as here) to creativity. In other cases, they may seem anything but fey, being fully-conscious, banal, enervated, or socially downtrodden, and yet in some respect crying out for improvement (and having poetic potential too):

The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six o'clock.  
...  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps.

(Eliot, 1961, 22)

The 'smell of steaks' lingers in the mind of the reader too. It signals velleity, neurasthenia, gratitude for small mercies, buried frustrations, or lack of ambition. The stanza's drab fragments fascinate uncomfortably. They possess the wistful charm of a modern ruin. Eliot presents here in naturalistic lyrics a down-at-heel *home*—though not immediately his own, however embedded the poem is in obscure early experiences<sup>cxxii</sup>. This first 'Prelude' was written while Eliot was at Harvard in 1909-1910 (Smith, 1950: 254) and recalls the streets and crowded tenements of Boston's South End, which in their familiar economic and spiritual emptiness cry out for betterment.<sup>cxxiii</sup> Here, any ambitious and in Greenblatt's sense 'originary' (1988, 7) notion of a new and better existence evoked by author in the reader is at best a dim star above the smog.<sup>cxxiv</sup>

The working-class tenements reek with the minor satisfactions of the temporary evening cessation of alienating work and city life, at least for those not cooking the steaks.<sup>cxxv</sup> The inhabitants are as enthralled as Sexton's Sleeping Beauty. They work hard and fruitlessly, then

rest in a spartan, unenlightening, but oddly comfortable prison: America. Figuratively, the desert is not far away:

And when all the world came back  
And the light crept up between the shutters  
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,  
You had such a vision of the street  
As the street hardly understands

(from 'Prelude III' (1961, 23))

In both Sexton's and Eliot's poems the image complexes are interior (in a psychological sense) but naturally incorporate mundane and unpromising things—in 'Briar Rose' the marbles, earrings, iron bars, needles, Novocain, the grave, dirt, and prison: "imaginary gardens with real toads in them" (Moore, 1967: 267). Morrison's Sethe, though, in *Beloved* (2007), has fled a worse place than either, the slave plantation ironically named 'Sweet Home', which, far from 'improving', has degenerated from an imposed, paternalistic 'utopia' to a sadistic hell-hole following the death of its owner. As 'soon as Sethe got close to the river her own water broke loose to join it' (ibid.: 98); after the birth, that strange and estranging Nativity scene, despite the squalor of the surroundings and the dystopian evil of the 'peculiar institution', there is hope in nature itself, albeit a nature—or 'state of nature'—that the characters have been reduced to by the progressive society in which they live, furnishing England's mills with cotton:

On a riverbank in the cool of a summer evening two women struggled under a shower of silvery blue. They never expected to see each other again in this world and at the moment couldn't care less. But there on a summer night surrounded by bluefern they did something together appropriately and well. A pateroller passing would have sniggered to see two throw-away people, two lawless outlaws—a slave and a barefoot whitewoman with unpinned hair—wrapping a ten-minute-old baby in the rags they wore. But no pateroller came and no preacher. The water sucked and swallowed itself beneath them. There was nothing to disturb

them at their work. So they did it appropriately and well. (ibid.: 99-100)

The idea of home, and a new home, is invoked for both mother and child.

#### 4.3.1. Mapping the interior

As pointed out above, to name may be to caption or label, but also to select the label, choose where to put it, and why. It is to contain. As such, it is always contextual. ‘Paris’ is not just a word, even a ‘meaning’, but a living city both of realities and dreams. Or, to choose a plainer example, a bicycle might be named, described, or rather ‘presented’ (cf Pound, 1968: 6) for the reader’s interpretation, and later its front wheel filmically foregrounded, perhaps spinning after its rider has taken a plot-related tumble. Extensive naming<sup>cxxvi</sup> can achieve ‘transfer’ of an equivalent image in a receptive reader, especially if what is named is itself reasonably coherent.

Names may sometimes give form to chaos, or cover over an allegedly pre-social ‘Chaos’ (Gabriel Rockhill, in Castoriadis, 2011: xviii+n.37). But preverbal/pre-social reality is not wholly chaotic; if it were, language and understanding would never have arisen (Price, 1953: 8).<sup>cxxvii</sup> Names are categories<sup>cxxviii</sup> and/or co-ordinates, as well as points for anchoring and emphasising grammatical expressions. During composition, they derive from the meeting of the poet’s mental images with the rather ‘Raggedy Ann’ system of existing language. Some kind of ‘rectification of names’,<sup>cxxix</sup> or readjustment of language to reality as it is experienced, is arguably a primary task of poetry too.

Of course, to bestow a name is to distil a value, not *just* to label. It is an open-ended activity that finds its most heightened expression in poetry, and tends to isolate or set apart, to celebrate, to sacralise or make holy—in a sense not necessarily connected with religion. It is to identify and identify with (or against), and to do so within an inner scene. Naming *images* may nevertheless be a magical or superstitious procedure. Or, more respectably, a ‘psychological’ one. An image, as we have seen, can be inhabited by character, poet or reader. In magic, religion, or

science and technology, such image-labelling names are meant to bring the ‘occupant’ power, for good or ill. In poetry they may span all of these. The reader may well be changed by the text built upon them (cf Wolf, 2008: 7-8, 155-162). A remarkable poem, once read, can enlarge one’s consciousness permanently, be it John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* or Christina Rossetti’s ‘The Goblin Market’.

Milton and Rossetti immerse their readers in images that will lodge in the memory. As Suzanne Nalbantian argues, ‘artistic expression in whatever form is a supremely human mechanism for retaining memory’ (2003: 5), and retaining a memory of experience is one of the purposes of naming. Image-laden art is a device for preserving the living memory of home, but also for showing how we might revivify the world, why ‘revolution [...] must come’ (Rich, 1989: 28) in poetry or society—which signals a renewal or rectification of names too. Imaginal distillations of memory help to form new meanings and categories. They include figments, wild and unillusory as Wordsworth’s wild daffodils that ‘flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude’ (Wordsworth, 2006, 219).<sup>cxxx</sup>

Daffodils, said to be flashing upon the inward eye on the couch at home, then and now, become more than daffodils; they become poetic names, which, however, are not *arbitrary*<sup>cxxxi</sup> labels or frames for arbitrary objects, but devices of mnemonic power, power to share thoughts and do work—as much as coins, tools, or bullets. Daffodils, in imagination, are no longer just daffodils. Names give order to chaos.

Nevertheless, names and words more broadly are not just a shareable system of useful abstractions. As with metaphor, ‘Always there is the human being mediating between the linguistic symbol and its referent’ (Rosenblatt, 1994: 41; cf 93ff, qtd above). To that end, she continues:

Without falling into the extreme intuitionism or subjectivism of some recent thinkers, and without reifying ‘consciousness,’ students of language should inquire more deeply into how the abstracting and conceptualizing activities involved in the use of language are related to

the stream of feeling in which they are embedded (ibid.: 42).

The stream of feeling is one that motivates and organises a path of composition.<sup>cxxxii</sup> The ‘verbal symbol activates something within the reader’ (Rosenblatt, 1994, 41-42) and vice versa. Emotion as an integral part of that ‘something’ is inevitable within human social interaction, including dialogue and publication. An author (or reader) may judge what is to be accepted or rejected in a poem ultimately on some fine gradation of emotion admixed with imagination and knowledge—Hemingway’s ‘built-in, shockproof, shit detector’ (Hemingway, 1958, 89). This kind of judgement and the transfer from author to reader possibly have their origins not simply in home but in evolution.

Rozik (2009, 306) asserts that preverbal humans, like apes, probably ‘imprinted’<sup>cxxxiii</sup> messages on their bodies when they wished to communicate. That is, in various ways they imitated the feelings and desires and propositions they wished to put across—perhaps along with pointing at things. Their ‘facial, aural and gestural’ expressions presumably corresponded to spontaneously-generated mental images. Words, or sentences, later became attached to these acted-out images: ‘in order to become an established cultural medium, mental images require a material carrier<sup>cxxxiv</sup> to enable the communication of their signifying function’ (ibid.: 307).

The mediation of language explains why an imprinted image of an object and the verbal sentences used to describe it are equivalent. [...] a word does not relate primarily to a real object but to its correspondent image in the brain, which explains the spontaneous use of one for the other (ibid.: 310).

The ‘imprinted’ image might reflect a perception of the world, but whether it does or not it is always potentially part of a subjective scene that can be altered subjectively; that is, a dormant new reality. Naming it gives it a set of co-ordinates, and also opens it up to another cultural dimension.

Turner (1996: 141) has a similar view to Rozik, but focuses on the stories that tend to spring from (some) images:

Stories have structure that human vocal sound—as sound, not language—does not have. Stories have objects and events, actors and movements, viewpoint and focus, image schemas and force dynamics, and so on. [...] Sentences come from stories by way of parable.

Analogical like the image of an object or referent, a parable is to Turner the ‘projection of one story onto another’ (1996: v, 10f). It creates grammar for voice—and text—partly from ‘image schemas’. This grammar governs names and thus the naming of aspects of the scene. Image schemas are incorporated in such stories.

A parable, like a name, also requires an audience, composed of prospective ‘secondary readers’. For this audience, or readership, the author as *animateur* may ‘imprint’ on her characters and situations those messages and stories from her evolving dream of home that she deems relevant.<sup>cxxxv</sup> In this she wants audience participation, covert at least; like a dramaturg or director, she is organising her readers not just to recognise or reconstruct images from their names but to ‘act’ internally too.

While many contemporary poems do not contain an explicit narrative, they nevertheless have a pattern of ‘objects and events, actors and movements, viewpoint and focus’, as distinct from their vocal sound or of lineation, sentence structure, even grammar, etc. Such infectious patterns inform the poet’s language, pique the author’s curiosity, and facilitate naming and (de-)familiarisation<sup>cxxxvi</sup> in memory; they derive ultimately from the open-ended real world and the poet’s recollections, through covert ‘imprinting’ and acting, constitute the poet’s perceptual or initially secondhand universe, as in my ‘London’:

[...] like echoes in a whispering gallery,  
my father’s northerner legends of  
muddy eel and pork pies,  
Ma Barton the ‘film moon’  
and dirty coal skies of ’52,

are now served.

That succession of vaguely connected scenelets may, like a daydream, stimulate the creative ‘histrionic’ labour of poet and reader alike.

For the poet, some or all of these factors combine in accordance with a specific play of moods or a rush of variegated feelings. In the above extract from ‘London’ I present a ‘menu’ of precious but bittersweet memories to be savoured, not wholly my own. This is not owing to a simple appetite for nostalgia; it is a poignantly ironical glance at a time when even opponents of the British Empire (such as my father) could feel affection, indeed love, for its hoary capital.

Emotional sentences such as those emanate from the situations and stories found in the new ‘dream of home’. The ‘stream of feeling’ identified by Rosenblatt above (as well as mood) gives value and context to what is named. And since mental images resemble percepts, various outstanding or selected attributes of an ‘endless’ mental image are economically referred to by an authorial line of text as the *animateur* unfolds and appears in her internal playlet.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> This applies equally to the mirroring of a moving image.

In ‘London’, the nested mental representation of red buses seen or heard of as a child, becomes ‘I am awed by / tall red buses’ (lines 22-23). Any sentiments stirred in the reader by the phrase in context will help throw into relief those aspects of the imaginal scene that are implied or suggested. Such interested transduction calls on an approximate analogy—in English, at least—between word arrangement and object (image) arrangement (cf Nyíri, 2000, §4-6), the latter generally giving rise to the former. Even if sentence and image may both be somewhat fuzzy, we as primary or secondary readers can cobble together a set of names from what we read.

Naming images consists of burrowing into a scene and imaginatively marking out the attributes of the constituents of its nested image complex ‘*avant la lettre*’, together with the vantage point and evaluative stance from which it is viewed,<sup>cxxxviii</sup> i.e. the birth of new context, of new

poetic language. Where these refer directly to the mythos of home, the practice might be called 'naming home'. My reason for feeling I have attained this in 'London' is that taking it apart analytically feels like vivisection.

A single scene pictured from life, subtly tintured with the familiar-yet-numinous (Neumann, 1971: 84) quality of home (in that it embodies birth, and life itself), also lends a quirky cohesion to my poem 'Dresden china' (see Appendix for the full text):<sup>cxxxix</sup>

While at the wheel,  
I saw a young woman  
flick a plastic ring,  
making bubbles  
at the traffic lights  
as she crossed;  
they were rainbowed in the sun,  
like ball lightning they danced  
on the rising wind,  
she was unconcerned  
when they fell in the traffic

This remote encounter not far from my actual home, I myself in my father's station wagon, and the woman crossing on foot a few cars ahead—not jaywalking, but not looking at the traffic—seemed a kind of 'gift', of chance or, as some might say, of Jungian 'synchronicity'. It conferred a fey sense of the particular upon an unrepeatable incident. I felt pleasantly at sea. As an encounter—albeit one-sided, as I doubt she noticed me—it represents the kind of eventuality which derails one's thoughts when they have got stuck in habitual modes of thinking.

On my way home, I crossed the threshold briefly into daydream, and into Valéry's 'poetic

universe' (2007: 62); my thoughts seemed, as I waited in my car at the lights, to be operating on a species of 'dream logic', beyond my conscious control. As I recall, I had been feeling hopelessly middle-aged and superannuated until then. My father, featured in 'London', was to die the next year. The woman was the creative 'exile', braver than me; frankly, I felt a bit jealous, stuck in 'my' vehicle when in truth I would rather have joined her.<sup>cx1</sup> She was a young adult behaving quirkily and perhaps proudly, like a child, and so—in poetic or theatrical terms—was not quite of the humdrum world; some of her symbolic magic must have fallen on me. Yet in the background of my dream scene there was the ghost of a hopefully unrepeatable firestorm, the whiff of the crematorium, reminding us that we are all exiles, and that a brave face is not enough.

The poem came swiftly on the page, though I cannot remember whether that was just after the incident or later on. The woman and the situation had been 'named' as part of an imaginal scene I judged to be important, ready to be written about; whether she herself would have seen things that way did not much matter, and I'll never know. The poem and its genesis is now part of my own personal mythology, even if it is not as deep within my 'heart's core' as 'London'.

How does a poet give a name, or rather a system of names, a 'reputation', to a scene coloured and nurtured by home? One way is to feel her way into her own private past. Far from the narcissism or egoism one might expect, in confronting her origins and mortality she may initially feel a tremendous awkwardness and even embarrassment, like a budding actor rehearsing in their bedroom or walking out onto a proscenium stage in a dress rehearsal, or in a first performance where the audience is mercifully invisible owing to the 'fourth wall' of footlights. Because the mythos is so 'close' to her she experiences great trepidation at the thought of allowing others to know about it, yet is compelled to, like one who has experienced great joy or trauma. The sense that the resulting scene is exquisitely inviolable, like a new baby, is a natural response. Therefore, attempting to 'perfect' her text and communicate her vision to a putative

readership will require the greatest effort.

But names require an audience and an actor too. They sustain communication, as does the need to preserve a memory ‘for posterity’, to create a memorial, to possess that memory and knowledge in a way that seeks to give others the privilege of sharing in it. The conviction that the delicate and ephemeral must be preserved for posterity—like mountains, ‘forever’—is also one that poetic naming can initiate. Subjectively, it is the even more powerful *opposite* of saying that an experience is so exquisite one could just as well have died then and there.

Even so, the ‘captioned’ scene(s) we read about have the shifting balance of the sea-anchor, moving from one disposition of elements to another while retaining poetic integrity. ‘Nothing of him that doth fade / But doth suffer a sea-change’ (*Tempest*, I.ii.402-403), though characters are rarely meant to be dead and need not turn from man into reef—consider Rich’s ‘Diving into the Wreck’ (2013: 24) and the diver’s cognitive sea-change:

First having read the book of myths,  
and loaded the camera,  
and checked the edge of the knife-blade,  
  
I put on  
the body-armor of black rubber  
the absurd flippers  
the grave and awkward mask.  
  
I am having to do this  
not like Cousteau with his  
assiduous team  
aboard the sun-flooded schooner  
but here alone.  
  
There is a ladder.

The ladder is always there  
hanging innocently  
close to the side of the schooner.  
We know what it is for,  
we who have used it.  
Otherwise  
it is a piece of maritime floss  
some sundry equipment.  
I go down.

The known gives birth, underwater or otherwise, to the unknown. Whether in the poet's mind before she sets down her work, or bred in the reader as he reads, each scene 'morphs' into the next, or merges like one soap bubble into another, but maintains the work's coherence via the names and principal images that hold the text together, if less overtly than the horizontal line in the Devanāgarī script. Gradually a 'new' home materialises, often manifest only fitfully in the text. Much of it is in the poet's memory, potential for future texts.

The diction of many poems is *papier-mâché* made from memories of imaginings stirred by family stories and scraps or multitudes of knowledge gained later, given coherence by the dream of home. Those familiar stories may be supplemented by those from folk tale and more 'elevated' literature. In examples given earlier, Shakespeare, Eliot, and Morrison reach into their own imaginations but also depend on social or historical knowledge, a good deal of it from books. Sexton in her 'confessions' has also drawn on folk tale, but her 'unconscious' work seems a well of disturbing memory. Its images and its names (of things as real as her consciousness of them and as her living body at the time), anchor her poem.

#### 4.4. Launching the dragon boat

In the words of a text, a reader tries to discern the images that have crystallised into them within the head of another. As pointed out in my second chapter, the pragmatist G.H. Mead saw language as taking its meaning from the ‘imagined completion of an act’ (Sadoski & Paivio, 2009: 37):<sup>cxli</sup> According to them, he held that

Language incites imaginings of the physical or mental events it signifies and, by extension, the consequences of those events. The one who produces the language and the one who receives it each in imagination completes the acts of which the words are the incipient motions. Meaning arises from the imagined consequences and implications of the acts, whether or not they are ever realized in actuality (loc. cit.).

Mead drew on an idea reminiscent of a particular sense of *energeia* (actualisation), an Aristotelian term with many meanings (Chen, 1956; cf Greenblatt in Kirkby, 2010, 4) but interpreted by Greenblatt (1988, 6) and Kirkby as ‘the ability of language to cause “a stir in the mind”’. Speech, after all, is a type of action, sometimes a type of conflagration.

Literary language formalises this relationship but remains within the realm of thought and not consequential outward action (e.g., in a play, the actor playing Macbeth does not actually murder the actor playing Duncan). Poetic language goes farther by making such fiction endlessly recountable (Valéry, 2007: 64). We, as first or second readers, reconstruct its form so that its astringent or cathartic scenes—its guided dream—could flourish again in our minds.<sup>cxlii</sup>

The human being (poet, or reader press-ganged into furtive acting) mediates between the linguistic symbol, or sign, and its referent. In such ‘mediation’ the symbol connects with a life. And as anyone who is neurotic knows, ‘acting things out in the mind’ brings on real emotions, an ‘internalisation’ which in some cases can be best realised in art and literature. They are not then mere substitutes for action, but, should they point to or incite analogous action, actually amplify it. Or as Rosenblatt explains ‘transaction’ (1994: 21),

The transaction is basically between the reader and what he senses the words as pointing to ... The paradox is that he must call forth from memory of his world what the visual or auditory stimuli [of the text] symbolize for him, yet he feels the ensuing work as part of the world outside himself. The physical signs of the text enable him to reach through himself and the verbal symbols to something outside and beyond his own personal world.

The ensuing ‘new world’ of the work seems separate from the reader’s immediate subjectivity because it is formed through a response to stimuli that normally emanate from what we understand as reality, from society-in-nature (of which ‘culture’ is the mercurial, ideational, and sometimes ideological, aspect). It is on this journey that creativity blossoms. We, author and reader, are always travelling back to the new or renovated home as we gingerly take steps towards a new nightfall, also hoping that in the morning we will be re-defined. This paradoxical, partial completion of an act in *reading* links poet and reader—or, to put it another way, reader and first reader; writing stretches the self. The paradox also implies a re-unifying purpose, function or end, a point given to the ‘transcendent’ act or ‘what he senses the words as pointing to’ (Rosenblatt, 1994: 21), implicit in any poetic image or pattern.

That difficult completion might be compared to Aristotle’s ‘unity of action’ in the *Poetics*, VIII-X (1997: 16-19); it may be incorporated into a stage-like or filmic stream of distillations or figments which creates its own imaginal, patterned space. We complete the act that gives a scene meaningful, dynamic unity, in our minds. The real home joins an ideal home that in various guises is past, present, and future. That is a process, path, or series of *acts* which also seems to work in reverse, i.e., from image to word. But writing, especially beginning a piece of writing, is not just about converting from one to another. Somewhat like the performance of a play, it is at the same time an exchange of energy between author and reader and back again (McNamara, 2014; cf Rich & Filreis, 2005, after Muriel Rukeyser), though at a spatial and temporal remove not found between actors—or an *animateur*—and audience. A relived reverie is an energetic mental entity, or rather process, the energy being perhaps ‘mitochondrial’, that

of body and brain. Its energy is poeticised or artistically focused emotion and understanding (cf Valéry, below). Its potential derives ultimately from home. A significant name in a literary text may well be redolent of home, and suggestive of a new one, or a succession of them. The very name 'London' in my poem above is not predominantly a reference to the capital of England (although it does make reference to that city); rather, it is primarily an awestruck commemoration of speculative origin. If you have a history, even a bloody one, you may have a future.

#### **4.5. The flaming path of energeia**

The dream of home is like groundwater, all-permeating, sometimes under pressure. The unconscious is a well or rather artesian basin of easily accessible or less accessible memory, modified by our appropriation or condensing of experience. Each poetic thought and scene, each reader's interpretation, could seek such depth. We are all in some manner joined at the root.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard says that 'all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home' (1994: 4-5). The imaginal scene becomes an 'inhabited space' in the mind. The 'path' to its rendering in written form can become a submarine voyage of secular transcendence. As it can 'carry you away', its focus requires energy in the sense of effortful direction from the author, even if it is devoid of people—the more energy the more disparate the elements to be focused may be, leading to ongoing movement in the poet and her text. Hence the difficulty of producing a poem like 'London', a city I knew in childhood mainly as the 'mythical' place of my own origin, knowledge at once sacral and fragmentary.

In *The Poetics of Reverie*, Bachelard relates only certain images to poetry. As Picard explains:

To Bachelard, when the image is a poetic image rather than a fragment of a freely-floating reverie, it acquires a positive value because of its controlled use in the poem (Picart, 1997: 66).

That is, it is concentrating, but constructive energy, gunpowder wrapped in the right way to produce fireworks. To Rosenblatt, similarly,

The concept of selective attention is central to my definition of the aesthetic experience. It is helpful also in eliminating the notion of a necessarily conscious choice. The selective process operates in weighting responses to the multiple possibilities offered by the text and sets the degrees of awareness accorded to the referential import to the experiential process being lived through (Rosenblatt, 1994: 43).

Both writers and readers are creatures of their various interchanges with recalled and present *experience* whose value-laden and perhaps habitual interpretations are not wholly under conscious control, while future ‘presents’ and poems are not easily predictable. But a poet sometimes reads critically, more as a receptive secondary reader, in order to aid an editing of her own work, or to feel out intuitively its strengths and weaknesses.

Rosenblatt (1994: 22-23) distinguishes between an ‘efferent’ reading—a stance where the reader (or author-reader) means to take something away from a text, such as knowledge or practical information, including that needed for creative revision—and an ‘aesthetic’ reading, where the reader intends to become immersed in its dramatically unified scenes and formal beauty. ‘In aesthetic reading, the reader’s attention is centred directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text’ (ibid.: 25), which includes the subtle permeation of home. Rosenblatt adds: ‘(H)ence my phrasing of an efferent or an aesthetic *stance*, since that term suggests a readiness to respond in a particular [...] way’ (ibid.: 43).

The energetic, emotional, relived reverie and its images, spaces and scenes, all harbouring hallowed names, are then more or less suitable to be translated—or more accurately, transduced—into language, which conserves the energy put into rendering it as ‘information’ for transmission to others.

Language frozen as text<sup>exliii</sup> is the ‘musical score’ of such image trains or flows (Rosenblatt, 1994: 13), where each imagined note provides the ‘context’ for the next phrase. Valéry sees

language as having poetic value beyond its communicative use<sup>cxliv</sup> and, in my view, Valéry is correct in claiming that it is transformed into *potential* ‘modification or interior reorganization of the person to whom one is speaking’ (Valéry, 2007: 63). It becomes a sort of verbal surplus, a set of ‘dried images’. Like energised seeds, cultivated or wild, these can sprout in various related ways every time they are read, and the author’s text plants a new garden in the mind of the reader.

The childhood home, together with its cosmic reverberations, is the ‘mother lode’ of such controlled and exchangeable images, of distilled pan-sensory experiences in memory. It returns with affecting, primordial, yet domesticated glimpses, such as ‘[t]he moon rests on the stable roof, like a great ruby bubble’ (Hewett, 1990: 7), or my own personal memory of the yellow moon so huge on the horizon that it made me jump when I turned around. That earth-centric moon—perhaps with its ‘traditional’, maternal or feminine symbolism?—intrudes in a number of my own poems—and, for instance, in the following poem it ‘must not die’ (see Appendix for full text):

          window

          under weatherboard

          pane sharp against the

          mackerel sky

          mirrored in it

          a garden of warped fences,

          small pear trees and

          the hollow sea tossing

          [...]

now I lie  
sleepless,  
surprised by the cold gold moon of four  
that must not die.

These recalled perceptions (the poem dates from 1985, the earliest experience from 1958) are woven into potent, peopled daydreams which, we remember, are potentially able to ‘involve all the senses’ (Mitchell, 1984: 507), and in which we (author and reader) necessarily participate as we name and recognise.<sup>cxlv</sup>

The moon also figures as an ironically remote marker of home in Amy Lowell’s chilling 1914 poem, ‘A London Thoroughfare. 2 A.M.’:

Opposite my window,  
The moon cuts,  
Clear and round,  
Through the plum-coloured night.  
She cannot light the city;  
It is too bright.  
It has white lamps,  
And glitters coldly.  
  
I stand in the window and watch the moon.  
She is thin and lustreless,  
But I love her.  
I know the moon,  
And this is an alien city.

(Lowell, [2015]: 17-18)

What makes a feeling compelling is that sense of ‘being there’, but also realising that one has been there before, and is now progressing. When one recollects and relives a singular impression, the reverie image is not just a memory, it is an experience that has somehow started again—like remembering a childhood jaunt, say—and then riskily trying to repeat it in the here and now (risky in emotional terms at least). It might turn out well, but either way it will be unique, in a sense ‘new’. Everyone recognises and remembers the moon in some context. That is the essence of distilled and transferable cross-modal experience, the relived image in daydream memory, the subterranean home that names. We recall these representations that are a part of us, and are then impelled to build others in the light of them. The mood, like thinking of the moon, is at once nostalgic and forward-looking.

#### **4.6. Fixed by a name on a map**

Entering a scene allows a writer to work relived memory (in part, the generative daydream of home) and its once-perceptual images into poems. Such mental apparitions, real yet not real, seem part of that inborn capacity that permits us all to begin to learn and then to learn better. It is through the valued image-patterns of the scene, and her lucid *participation* in them, that an author names and thus records her work. ‘When we name a thing we change it’ (Hawthorn 1973: 30) as it fixes that ‘thing’ as a past ‘moment’ in time and space, as well as in some way understanding, classifying or recreating it;<sup>cxlvi</sup> what we call an object or a personal identity is a mutable phenomenon (Trotsky, 2007). The venture of naming, or proclaiming, brings this complexity to the world.

An image is usually a vibrant pattern of internal sensation, in the case of visual images, of lines, colour and light that have a significance—i.e., with a history. It gains its value and impulsion from the cultivated ‘temperament’ kept alive by home. When I recall a certain smell, a

half-memory becomes fuller as I write, including a wooden desk and chalk and a short-wave radio (a thing I personally had never previously heard of and which, when I did encounter it, wouldn't work), and something else—a whole other world of the past, *autre temps, autre moeurs*, a world in which I was eight and my mother was mopping out and dusting temporary classrooms at the Canberra Grammar School. That 'furniture' found itself in a poem called 'Boys Grammar':

the hallowed  
chalk dust of the church school  
my mother cleaning  
my mother cleaning  
by night temporary  
barrack-like  
classrooms  
unswept since the War

And so I 'named' that formative experience, which was both my own and yet not quite my own—simultaneously a depiction and transformation of home.

Some mental images formed initially by objects we perceive (such as 'hallowed' chalk dust) may have little human association outside their social and locational setting; also, like some tools (Harmand et al, 2015), they seem to have existed before spoken language (Jackendoff, 2002, 2006). They are in other words 'prior', a link between consciousness and the world it emerged from<sup>cxlvii</sup> as the child's acquisition of language progressed. They emanate from the real world and connect that to the daydream world. Consciousness is not just the apprehension of the self in the cosmos, but of the new. The new and the old must both be named.

Daydream and other mental images tie the shadowy realm of 'sign' to the concrete universe of the referent, like a city to its hinterland. They make language live, and allow its engendering



we generally require (valued) images.

The capacity of the human being to evoke images of things or events not present, and even never experienced, or which may never have existed, is undoubtedly an important element in art. It is especially important in the experiences generated by speech and by verbal texts. Yet this imaginative capacity is not limited to art but is basic to any kind of verbal communication. (Rosenblatt, 1994: 32)

Every one of these images, where linguistic and poetic meaning meet, can be occupied and explored, or exploited. As they say in Italian, *se non è vero, è ben trovato*.<sup>cxlix</sup>

I use the term ‘mental image’ without digressing too far on how such ‘images’ (let alone reveries) are stored in or manifested by the brain, or what precisely they are (Thomas, 2014). I am more concerned with how they are ‘(ap)perceived’, occupied, relived, and made use of by the inner thespian, and how they continue in conscious or unconscious activity, bridging the two, particularly with regard to artistic and literary practice. They have a ‘representative’ and thought-enabling function within a social ‘exchange of energies’. The following rhythmic lines from ‘London’ evoke a suggestive set of figures which are at once abstract, somewhat cartoonish typifications and concrete memories (originally of my late father from his childhood and early adulthood, but filtered in the past through my naïve childhood mind):

flat caps and barrow-boys and  
razor gangs at Elephant and Castle and                      down the Old Kent Road ...

Ultimately, the poem ‘London’ is about that place of nostalgia barely remembered from infancy. It is about a birthplace and a *source*, but a source still bubbling with both abstract and concrete possibility.

#### **4.7. The dragon’s naming ‘transaction’**

Naming reduces the world but expands the reader. A reader may feel ‘charged’ by it with meaning and power; he resonates to images induced by the field of text because he can relate them

to analogous, authentic, recollected experiences of his own—as can occur during personal conversations.<sup>cl</sup> Rosenblatt (1994: 11) describes the process:

The reader's attention to the text activates certain elements in his past experience—external reference, internal response—that have become linked with the verbal symbols. Meaning will emerge from a network of relationships among the things symbolized as he senses them. The symbols point to these sensations, images objects, ideas, relationships, with the particular associations and feeling-tones created by his past experiences with them in actual life or in literature.

Verbal symbols seem arbitrary, but what they come to mean is not. We cannot arbitrarily *impose* a meaning, for even 'assignment' of one to a random sign must call up some external or unconscious source of meaning. A reader after *substance* will seek to 'transact' with a writer of such substance. In some ways that transaction resembles the way a writer re-reads her own work, and it should help to explain why a reader is attracted to this or that poet. But a writer finds her own world therein and has the privilege of modifying it in the text.<sup>cli</sup>

Such a meaningful, inspiring network of verbally symbolisable relationships involving repetition, pattern, image and language, enabling the making of 'representational' form, are intrinsic to home as an harbour of poetic understanding (cf Price, 1953, Ch1). Both author and reader are born with a capacity to learn about the world through three-dimensional, moving images or models, then to create them; both interact with their environment or *Umwelt* in a way that mutually if unequally modifies both subject (or its 'endless' image) and object. Each therefore negotiates an imagined 'irreality' in a similar manner, via the medium of the literary work.

Who can predict, though, how the following lines of mine from 'London' will strike a reader, or what they will seem to have named:

My desires tilt at nostalgia like salmon  
fighting their way up a tubular aquarium,  
a hundred storeys bright

and burning like the Crystal Palace

This bizarre image of desires as the famous Thames salmon ‘fighting their way up’ a huge, bright tube (as bizarre as some modern London architecture, or the glitter of its financial house of cards) might bring to mind the surreal conflict between going home *again* and going *back*, between renaissance and reversion (Hillman, 1991: 200-201; Malouf, 2015: 1-4), anticipating regression; yet home is where *you are yet to go* (cf ‘where you have never been’, Le Guin, 1975: 52)—actual home as it is now, with crucial bits missing. It is set beside the tragicomic image of the Crystal Palace, the famous, once-revolutionary (and temporary) glass structure built originally to house the Great Exhibition of 1851<sup>clii</sup> and which burned down in 1936, when my father was a child living in London. The Crystal Palace, designed by a gardener and essentially a great glasshouse, was a symbol of technological advance, imperial might and capitalist enterprise, and a building, many felt, of great beauty. When it burned, an age burned with it. (My father, much later, became a botanist.)

As children (especially those safely ensconced and ‘transacting’ within a secure home), we learn to form and interpret (and name) images we find meaningful, using at first some innate capacity to mimic shape, drama and movement. For communication’s sake, the simplification and stylisation (‘encoding’) of our perceptions seems to begin preverbally in an infancy suffused with images—and all languages build on that (Mandler, 1994: 68). So, I would infer, does our acumen for entering our own mnemonic ‘working models’ of the world, a talent which lends itself to fantasy as well, or that mix of the two which is planning or designing. Of course, later images and situations ‘imprint’ themselves on us—an illness, an accident, the start or end of a ‘blued and purpled’ romance, the loss of a loved one, joys, griefs; the process continues once learning has been made possible, but the real-world home is where it all began.<sup>cliii</sup>

An example may be found in the young Helen Keller’s experience by the water-pump (cf Wolf, 2008: 83) when, in an ‘*aha!*’ moment’, she first realised how (finger-spelled) words and

sensations 'linked'. This went beyond any mere re-hashing of previous childhood experiences.<sup>cliv</sup> She later wrote:

Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! [...] Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. (Keller, 2003: 102-105)

Susanne K. Langer (1957: 62-63) also quotes this passage and states:

it became possible with the discovery that "w-a-t-e-r" was not necessarily a sign that water was wanted or expected, but was the name of this substance, by which it could be mentioned, conceived, remembered.

In other words, it gives an inkling of a whole *system* of such substances (and not only experiences)—an overview, a relivable reverie (cf Wolf, 2008: 83). Helen Keller was liberated as a path into society opened up for her. Names are grafted onto the rootstock of such experiences; so, therefore, is any system of names also grafted to that rootstock. The language of baptism, for example, requires a genuine, transactional 'relation of conceptions to the concrete world, which is so close and so important that it enters into the very structure of "names"' (Langer, 1957: 63).<sup>clv</sup>

'Occupied', inwardly-enacted and strongly-felt images, and any apprehension of pattern or rhythm 'fix' this relation. A word in a sentence is a conception, a map that is used to 'transact' with perceived reality, a reality furthermore perceived by one who is part of that reality—or fictive reality in the case of the author at the edge of the 'work-specific' inner spotlight. But then so is a relivable and relived, imaginal reverie. The latter partakes of 'representational form', so that it can be named, which is to map thoroughly and definitively. It is not, however, simply an abstract schema or ambiguous 'mental picture'; rather, it is the ongoing stuff of both feeling and thought. It is at the grounding of organised, historical words, which include the self-

penned 'script' of the actor-writer.

Such daydream-like yet nameable images provide the value and the goal or 'point' of a poem or story that seems worthwhile enough for a poet to work on, and that a reader can care about. The goal is not fixed while the writer is still working, but beckons like a rainbow or mirage. Generating new poetic writing by imaginatively diving into such non-narcissistic reflective pools may amount to travelling towards an ideal goal, a refurbished or revolutionised home. With a major project, it represents a new stage in the life of the artist, the outcome of any successful 'naming transaction'.

For that reason, 'entering the image', like stepping out onto the 'stage', refashions the 'soul' of the poet, so to speak. In her waking (or working) dream, a poet can change—possibly revolutionise—an aspect of the self every time she follows a compositional path. In Yeats's words,

The friends that have it I do wrong

Whenever I rewrite a song,

Do not consider what is at stake;

It is myself that I remake

(aphorism qtd by Packard, 1992: 138).

This is one reason the artist's personal place and time of origin is pivotal, and of interest to the malleable recipient. Good ('original') poetry is rarely a matter of fortuitous or shallow-minded recombination of prefabricated words, or even sentences. Equally, it is not concerned with the individual regardless of more general concerns. A writer moves through an imaginal, peopled geography that may be natural, rural or urban (or marine, extraterrestrial, and so on)—in each case with its own history. Every relevant aspect of reality can be inspected and either praised or found wanting, or improved, as it is turned towards the poetic or narrative purpose of the author. Naming through scenes is quest, and sometimes conquest. It may conquer the isolation of the atomised individual, giving a voice to the voiceless (or the silenced).

A scene (or daydream), wherein we distil and examine experience in cross-modal images, is often a place of secure innovation where we may be free to observe, contemplate, feel, discover, and act. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley recalled:

my dreams were all my own; I accounted for them to nobody; they were my refuge when annoyed—my dearest pleasure when free (1988: xii-xiii).

A 'heightened state of consciousness is highly pleasurable and it is both similar and opposite in form and function to [night] dreaming, a reflection or a mirror-image state' (Rothenberg, 1979: 132). An especially productive daydream—including the scene deployed in poetry—is such a heightened state of consciousness, and it is usually an uplifting, 'powerful' place to *be*. But one's daydreams cannot be wholly shut off from the world; or vice versa.

Joining and dwelling within images has the potential to teach any one of us to become an actor, author, or artist. It can assist us to name objects and actions and characters in relation to ourselves. It is a skill that underlies the social (interactive) and cultural (ideational) similarities between author and reader, but also the differences. (I can perceive myself within the endless lens of my perception and that of others; so might you.)

The individual 'self' is real, but also in a profound way trans-individual, specifically social, and natural (a component part of biological and physical nature). Each poet and reader, or poet-reader, is thus a product of and producer of a tiny fragment of the universe we live in, and more so of the imaginary universe we create 'in azimuth' to it. And while the future outcomes of such 'taking on' or 'donning' of a world are never quite predictable, they can with effort be recorded.

#### **4.8. The kitchen oracle names the dance of trees**

Home-grown, transformative images are often (re-)discovered as archaeological fragments, as in this brief 'interview' I had with my editor in 2014 in a Tuggeranong coffee shop. Here is an excerpt from what was recorded of that interview:

Even if you're unconscious of it, childhood is where creativity is born; even an evil childhood. We all return to it, even when we don't know it. A special light is seen through the eyes of a child.

As an adult I will analyse it, as a child I just bathe in it. A special intensity of light, trees, creeks, rivers, the Monaro. Going fishing, glittering fish; excitement, smell. The smell of fairy floss will take me back to the Cooma Show; Proust's madeleine. Smell of porridge with brown sugar and milk; fires, smell of childhood. Sense of smell directly links to memory; cf James Hillman, smell doesn't lie.

You can't write of youth in a juvenile poem; my own adolescent poems very savage; I didn't trust my own creativity, I was terrified of it, until I met Michael Dransfield [in the loony bin!]<sup>1</sup>—and he died, that 'wasn't very useful'. Bob Brissenden, Alec Hope, Robert Adamson, Mark O'Connor all helped me to 'own' my creativity; but until I met Dorothy Hewett at 18 I wrote 'with a male gaze and a female edge', excuse the mixed metaphor! At school Mother Celestine helped me become a writer; kept my juvenilia and it was sent to my father after she died. Met Judith Wright later, Many literate women in my family. All provided by 'female gaze'.

'Kitchen poem' [see below]<sup>2</sup>—I wrote this at the age of about 30, before my sister Gail died; minutiae of women's lives. The kitchen is the centre of the house; all women. Dorothy was jealous of it, she saw such 'domesticity' as a weakness. She felt the lack of strong women in her past. As a child, I looked through kitchen window, drank tea, watched the world go by.

These personality-shaping memories possess a writer because they exemplify that writer at their most authentic, and most vulnerable. Light, say, can have a special quality not because it is intense, beautiful, symbolic, or reminiscent of something, though it is often all of those things; it is special because it extends our consciousness in highly specific ways.<sup>clvi</sup> It connects us literally to the dance of the universe.

Kate McNamara's iterative childhood experiences gave rise to two unpublished poems that closely relate to that notion. One is 'Cooma':

Mum is saying  
‘It’s the life of the bloody kitchen!’  
peeling the potatoes    peeling  
By the window worlds pass  
the curtains have never moved.  
Steam rises from the sink  
cats roam in the hall  
Walking home from the convent  
I come to the creek bridge  
willows trail in the water  
Let the dance of trees begin.

The dancing trees so ‘named’ are a *tableau vivant* providing a glimpse of a liberated life that could—and does—go on outside the main/male stream of society, beyond convention and the stasis that the ‘life of the bloody kitchen’ or even the convent school represented for many western women and girls in that era. The trees dance, though they are rooted to the spot. The bridge into the dragon lands is not yet crossed. The poem represents an ‘outsider’ who spends much time inside, who ironically finds the ‘outside’ of nature a liberation from the confinement of kitchen and church school, from *Kinder-Küche-Kirche*. Though the *focus* of the kitchen might embody Eliot’s ‘still point’ (see below), one is surrounded by pirouetting leaves or waving branches that spread out like a galaxy from the kitchen window of consciousness, both figuratively and literally.<sup>clvii</sup> The women are either trapped in triviality, the eye of the storm or the hub of the universe—or all three. Once recorded in text, the figurative dance of trees never ends, surviving even the death of the author.

The other unpublished piece is ‘The Kitchen Poem’:

Only the oracle of the kitchen

knows the female mysteries  
teapots and brown bread  
vegetables singing as the  
iron pots hiss  
Rituals of laughter are not  
beyond us nor broken tears  
By the wood stove the cats  
are always watching  
each procession  
and the ceremonies of love.

Teapots, brown bread, vegetables singing and iron pots hissing, it might be objected, are not essentially 'female mysteries', but the 'oracle of the kitchen' speaks in riddles and irony, and in this setting, and to a child, they most certainly are. The poet gives a voice to that child, who could feel but not articulate such things at the time. The language of a kitchen—its songs, rituals and aromas, and its central wood-fired stove—is that of sustenance; and here its hierophants are the women of the family, set apart in these domestic tasks from the rest of the community. There is, too, a primal and social kind of mystery about the hearth, the primordial campfire, the *focus*, the 'still point of the turning world' (Eliot, 1971, 15)—an apparently eternal present where (in each poem, as among the most short-changed of the labour force) the women prepare the food that makes all work possible.

For a child, the kitchen—full of promise and warmth and 'the ceremonies of love' and transformation—is perhaps where some of the best dreaming may be done, and some of the best ideas cooked up. And the generative dream, normally a daydream, is the kitchen—and kitchen garden—of creativity.<sup>clviii</sup> (Laziness in a place of great activity is the mother of invention in more ways than one.)<sup>clix</sup> It has its parallel in the wider society with what was once called the

'lap of social labour'. It is similarly the source of what is new, the 'right place' in which to 'go mad', the strange 'meeting of image and word' on the familiar childhood street, the new dream of home.

Let the dance of trees begin.

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- <sup>c</sup> And extrinsic reading, together with her day-to-day experiences.
- <sup>ci</sup> I.e., in an estranging, reducing, recontextualising frame, perhaps comparable in function to the ancient 'grid method' employed by painters. The grid method uses graph-like squares to divide up a painting (and the inward image of a painting) in order to aid the making of a pantograph-like copy—or a new work based on the old (cf Moorehouse, 2006). It relocates the consciousness of the artist at points of equivalence uniting old and new: point A in the original is equivalent to point A' in the copy, and so on. An inspired or critically immersed writer might, where it seems worthwhile, emulate some mental version of this.
- <sup>cii</sup> Emotional or intuitive where not fully-recalled, a 'half-memory'. It could be a memory 'of the body', an 'implicit' or 'procedural' memory (cf Nalbantian, 136: 150), possibly one of an 'attitude' in the literal sense or of performing some action in a now-forgotten context.
- <sup>ciii</sup> See Hawthorn (1973, especially 17, and 18ff) on the subject-object dialectic. Hawthorn cites Graham Hough, *An Essay on Criticism* (Duckworth, 1966), who in turn quotes William Richter, who said when he hears the word 'dialectics' he reaches for Occam's razor (17)! If disciplined by enough contextualisation I think the notion (whether Socratic, Hegelian, or Marxist) can be acceptable.
- <sup>civ</sup> She presumably refers to the re-reading of the text *after* the first setting of it down, during both of which an author 'reads as she goes' for feedback according to chosen criteria. One is also 'reading', of course, as each word is set down. We can contrast her 'efferent' versus 'aesthetic' readings (1994: 22-23), n.162 below.
- <sup>cv</sup> Margaret Atwood talks of the 'doubleness of the writer *qua* writer' (2002: 32).
- <sup>cvi</sup> Or perhaps unconsciously—but that is more the case with a 'naïve' daydream, with no *conscious* intention of artistic purpose.
- <sup>cvii</sup> Wordsworth (2005: 251):  
I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, similar to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind and in whatever degree, from various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment.
- <sup>cviii</sup> Although hostile critics might recall that no one can be known by others 'from the inside'. Self-knowledge too is limited, as you can read your own mind, so to speak, but not all of it at any given moment. Some of it may be illegible, though less likely the (good or bad) images of home, perhaps. On the other hand, the endless lens of memory may capture views of the home we wished we had had.
- <sup>cix</sup> Without connotations, necessarily, of the Freudian disguising or distortion of forbidden desires (within night dreams). See Freud (1995: 28-29).
- <sup>cx</sup> This is also evident in prose. In James Baldwin's novel *Another Country* (1963), the character of Eric appears in a film watched in the cinema by himself and his friends, and though he behaves differently to the Eric they know (and they can gaze upon his face on the screen as they would not be able to in real life), he reveals more about himself 'in character' — 'a character-within-a-character'—than he normally would.
- <sup>cxii</sup> And social energy. Cf Kirkby (2010: 4):  
In his discussion of "the social energy encoded in certain works of art [that] continues to generate the illusion of life for centuries," [American literary critic Stephen] Greenblatt cites Aristotle's concept of *Energeia* [*Ἔνεργεια*], the ability of language to cause "a stir in the mind" (*Negotiations* 7, 6). Greenblatt is interested in energy as a rhetorical term whose significance is social and historical: "I want to understand the negotiations through which works of art obtain and amplify such powerful energy" (7).  
See Greenblatt's n.5:  
George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, in *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1904) 2:148. See, likewise, Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie*, in Smith, 1:201. The term derives ultimately from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (33.2.2), as interpreted especially by Quintilian (*Institutio* 8.3.89) and Scaliger (*Poetices* 3.27).
- <sup>cxiii</sup> This may be why many readers feel insecure with an insubstantial, interchangeable, corporate-controlled ('Digital Rights Management') electronic representation of one. In old-fashioned parlance, a book carries a 'soul', perhaps one's own.
- <sup>cxiiii</sup> Cf Moorehouse (2006: 23-26) as below.
- <sup>cxv</sup> The metaphorical synthesis (Rosenblatt, 1994: 94) between 'focus' and 'hearth' is lost in English, but Johannes Kepler (1604) used the former in a 'mathematical sense for "point of convergence," perhaps on analogy of the burning point of a

- lens', and Thomas Hobbes introduced it into English in the 1650s (See Online Etymology Dictionary, 'focus', at <https://www.etymonline.com/word/focus> (26.11.2017)).
- cxv Hillman allows for a broader sense of family such as can be found in a kibbutz or farm.
- cxvi The escaped slave Sethe in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (2007) gives birth to the child Denver in a leaky rowboat on the southern bank of the Ohio River, while Shakespeare's houseless King Lear defies the storm and his usurping daughters on the desert heath. In neither case were their former 'homes' ideal—compare the violent upbringing of Hilary Mantel's ex-working class hero Thomas Cromwell (2010, 2013)—and transcending them is an overarching goal. Or, for a slightly different symbolic take on the matter, see Robert Frost's 1915 work 'The Death of the Hired Man' (as above), where the rural labourer, being single and homeless and evading the cold charity of his wealthy, city-dwelling brother, comes back to his former employer's farmhouse to die.
- cxvii Of course, she may have felt as an eight-year-old that her father 'abandoned' her, which was brought back to her at an emotional level when her husband (Ted Hughes) seemed to have done the 'same thing' (Mondragon, n.d.).
- cxviii Elaine Connell claims:
- I have read all of Sylvia Plath's published work including her journals and letters. I cannot find one piece of evidence to support the preposterous notion contained in Lester's poem [Sandra Lester's 'Candy Cotton Kid And the Faustian Wolf'] that Sylvia was molested in any way by either her mother's brother or any other male member of her family. Both her grandfather and her uncle played a large part in the young Sylvia's life especially in the years following her father's death, but there is no suggestion anywhere in her writing that anything vaguely improper took place with them.
- cxix Individual predicaments are embedded in a particular social arrangement that at best imbues capability and confidence, whose aims, divisions and contradictions are not necessarily that of each person or collectivity within the whole.
- cxix Perhaps the 'Tardis' is the main reason for the staying power of the television serial *Dr Who*.
- cxxi Or, for that matter, the experience of 'girlboys' and 'boygirls', as e.e. cummings puts it in 'You shall above all things be glad and young ...' (2007: 67)..
- cxviii On the influence of his *reading* on Eliot's poetry, see Smith (1950: 258): 'Eliot used Philippe's novels, as he used [Dostoevsky's] *Crime and Punishment*, to integrate a mood, and only in small measure to assist his phraseology'. Smith refers to the naturalistic works of Charles-Louis Philippe, particularly *Bubu de Montparnasse*, which Eliot read in Paris in 1911.
- cxviii Adams (2015, para #2):
- The Eliot family were upper-class Unitarians from New England who moved to St Louis, Missouri, before the birth of Tom. Born in 1888, young Tom grew up in a bubble of Puritan gentility in the commercial bustle of a polluted Midwestern city. Long before Tom became an expatriate American in London, he had already lived his life as an outsider.
- Cf his youthful tendency to 'haunt the slums', in 'To Catch One's Eye' (Shand-Tucci, 2012, #17)..
- cxviii The whole poem barely admits of any notion of 'betterment', whether centering on Eliot's Christian faith, gentrification, progress in the 'Progressive Era' or 'utopia' in some sense, let alone strikes, socialism, or revolution.
- cxviii Steaks are evidently fairly cheap in this part of the world. (Not bison steaks, of course.)
- cxviii Intelligent captioning of a memorable mental image and the corresponding organisation of such 'captions' in written lines or sentences. Not, however, an attempt to reproduce exactly the techniques of a painter or diagram-maker in literature.
- cxviii 'Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist of creating out of void, but out of chaos', said Mary Shelley in her Introduction to *Frankenstein* (1988: xv); but the initial chaos, or at least a fuzziness when it comes to nuts and bolts, perhaps lies in the relationship between the mind and external matter.
- cxviii Or represent rough and open groupings that are not strictly logical subsumptions, such as 'kitchen things', 'hateful thoughts', etc. All language is a work-in-progress.
- cxviii Confucian or not.
- cxviii His wife Mary Hutchinson contributed these lines, which pull the poem together; he considered them its best and acknowledged her authorship (MacGillivray, 2006, n.2). His sister Dorothy Wordsworth, a poet and diarist herself, wrote evocatively of their fateful walk by the lakeshore on April 15, 1802 (1971: 109-110; MacGillivray, 2006, n.1; Moorman, 1965: 27): her journal entry fed into the poem, itself written in 1804.
- cxviii Where 'arbitrary' means random or whimsical (Keach, 2004: 1-6). Human choice in 'Name-giving' needn't be whimsical. Words, from one perspective, are social 'tools' (Borghì & Cimatti, 2012: 22, 25), and are shaped by their purpose and history.
- cxviii As it does vision and the other senses.
- cxviii I do not mean in the automatic, irreversible way found in birds, who treat the first object they encounter after hatching as a mother figure. See the works of Konrad Lorenz in particular.
- cxviii In a specific context, the material carrier continues the naming process because it enables rough synchrony between the author's image and the reader's. It reflects the momentous spatial and temporal cohesion of the society and half-known universe to which both belong, and 'in' which both evolved.
- cxviii Generally, the readership meets the authorial first reader only as a contextual author, whose work of naming is the product of deft interaction between actual author and the imaginal space(s) or scenes which she has 'acted' in, further solidified as text to be brought once more to life (Rosenblatt, 1994: 14-16). So the audience participates in the word-image interplay. That is, the textual medium, and the social co-operation necessary for its functioning (but also spurred on by it) permit writing and reading to participate in a cycle—or spiral—of (trans)action. Here the influence of others ('literary' or not) and the word-image spark-cascade of creation combine.
- cxviii Recurrence in pattern aids memory, but so does the unexpected, shocking, novel, etc.—see Yates (2014).
- cxviii Whether as the 'star' or a fly on the wall. Even an 'omniscient narrator' must 'feel into' her characters and their predicament, unless presenting the monologue of many poems, where the 'setting' is all. (Some of 'London' alludes to

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things, and obviously 'place'.)

cxviii Cf Frege's 'sense', containing the 'mode of presentation', above.

cxviii Published in *My Cat Eats Spaghetti* (Ginninderra Press, 2000); I wrote it on 17 February 1999 after witnessing the singular incident at the junction of Northbourne Avenue and Ipima St in Canberra. I rewrote it in 2015.

cxl I felt a similar feeling recently in the Canberra Centre when slapping at discs on a wall as I passed (now removed, these were plastic and changed colour as one touched them); I looked down and there was a little boy grinning conspiratorially at me, and then he did the same thing.

cxli Cf Richards (1965: 19) and Kirkby (2010: 4) on Stephen Greenblatt's notion of 'social energy' in literature. See note above, where Kirkby quotes from Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations* (University of California Press, 1988).

cxlii Valéry (2007: 64):

The poem, on the other hand, does not die for having lived: it is expressly designed to be born again from its ashes and to become endlessly what it has just been. Poetry can be recognized by this property, that it tends to get itself reproduced in its own form: it stimulates us to reconstruct it identically.

cxliii Symbols which can be absorbed silently or recited sub-vocally or aloud.

cxliv Comparable to Rosenblatt's 'effluent' versus 'aesthetic', the Latin terms *utile* and *dulce* ['useful' and 'agreeable'] (Kermode, 1957: 11), or (to an extent) Frege's 'referent' versus 'sense'. The latter is more a matter of how a term ('the morning star' etc.) came about, and how its referent (Venus) is approached, rather than how a reader (including the author-reader) may respond to it.

cxlv For instance, author and reader could stand on the brink of a precipice; or at the shoulder of (or in the mind of) a tyrant plotting to exterminate his enemies (or maybe remain at a remove from that scene, as in the case of Dylan Thomas's line 'The hand that signed the paper felled a city', in Thomas, 2000, 51-52).

cxlvi Cf Wallace (1980: 338) quoting Coleridge (1978, II: 249):

According to his definition in *Aids to Reflection*, words reveal the creative, active mind as it distinguishes between real things and mere artifacts of sensory receptors: "Now when a person speaking to us of any particular object or appearance refers it by means of some common character to a known class (which he does in giving it a name), we say, that we understand him; that is, we understand his words. The name of a thing, in the original sense of the word name (*nomen, νοῦμενον, το*, intelligible, *id quod intelligitur* [what is thought of]) expresses that which is understood in an appearance, that which we place (or make to stand) under it, as the condition of its real existence, and in proof that it is not an accident of the senses, or affectation of the individual, not a phantom or apparition, that is, an appearance which is only an appearance.[4]"

Also Kizer (2000, n.pag.):

A poem of mine called "Twelve O'Clock," which was published in *The Paris Review*, was based on that principle of Heisenberg's that you can't look at a subatomic particle without altering it. Equally, you cannot meet someone for a moment, or even cast eyes on someone in the street, without changing. That is my subject.'

cxlvii Trifonova (2003) on Bergson versus Sartre (images and perception of reality).

cxlviii 'A mental state is conscious when there is something it is like to be in that state' (Chalmers, 2002, §2: 2)—which is a definition as circular and unscientific as any literary criticism, since 'it is *like to be*' (my italics) almost certainly implies consciousness (and feeling or judgment) of what it is like to be.

cxlix = '[even] if it's not true, it's well-conceived' (or, '... it ought to be', '... it's a good story', etc).

cl Yet being an aspect of image and pattern, it incorporates the extra-human.

cli A reader may of course be a writer too, though not merely by virtue of being a reader. If he modifies the text he is reading, he can lose track of it and confuse it with his own thoughts. Communication disappears.

clii Dismantled and re-built in Sydenham, South London, it was opened in 1854, 100 years before my own birth.

cliii From my Introduction: 'The (imperfectly) relived perceptual images and verbal interactions of the first few years metamorphose in memory; they come to bear a 'mythological' or foundational quality, along with newer ones that are permitted to dwell within their company'.

cliv It made use of self-empathy, a learning to empathise more generally, extending concern for the self to others and other things that may be intrinsic to consciousness.

clv That need might be met to some degree by direct 'imaging' of and physical interaction with one's surroundings, such as described by Temple Grandin (1995, 2002), Net F. Koene (2009) or Nikola Tesla (2011: 9-11; cf n.20). Cf Fürth (1966, especially Chapter XIII), on the nonverbal thinking of those people born deaf who never truly learned spoken or sign language (also n.34). None of this gainsays the importance of social semiotic networks (linguistic, mathematical, diagrammatic/cartographic, etc.). But representation is not a simple parallelism.

clvi I do not mean that it is a product of the mind in a philosophically Idealist sense.

clvii 'As is made clear in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the room can be both prison and refuge.' —Jeremy Hawthorn, 'Travel as Incarceration: Jean Rhys's *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie*' (in de Lange et al., 2008: 64).

clviii 'Dreaming's an art', said Gwen Harwood in 1980.

clix The scene may be entered through 'loafing'; see Whitman, 'Song of Myself' I (1947:,23):

I loafe [sic] and invite my soul

I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass

## 5. Blankly surprised by the dragon's gaze

### 5.1. Building the dream scene

'It is the pen which dreams. The blank page gives the right to dream.' So says Bachelard (1971: 17). On the other hand, the Australian poet Michael Dransfield believed that nothing was as terrifying (though potentially transforming to the author) as the blank page (in McNamara, 2013: n.pag.). The featureless 'blank page'<sup>clx</sup> can look more like an abyss than a map, and stares back. In the right mood, however, the poet trusts to its dragon's gaze to refresh her mythos of home. She then creates anew in some detachment from it (cf Bruner in Gruber, Terrell & Wertheimer, 1967: 11). The 'characters' (the author's relations) in McNamara's two poems discussed in the previous chapter perform almost ritual activities that stretch back millennia; yet we are reminded that they transform water and vegetables into elements of social life. Sea-changes abound, as they also do in my poem 'London'.



The poet in such a situation can be compared to René Magritte's painter (left), who studies an egg while painting the bird, in 'Perspicacity' (1936). Making poetry starts within the embracing dream of home, building the first imaginal scene of a work 'on' the blank page, but poetic reverie extends it beyond personal memory. Owing to that reverie the page is actually no 'blanker' than the scratched wood of the typing stand in Rich's 'Dreamwood' above. It has depth and history in imagination, and is no mere 'pop-up'.

The three-dimensional extension of scope encompasses, for instance, multiple meanings of word or image—maybe old and new meanings, and even those which 'bisociate' or juxtapose 'two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference' (Koestler, 1964: 35-38), as when 'getting' a joke or solving an anagram. Temporal or historical depth can count as well. Language may be revitalised by scenic recreations emanating simultaneously from home and

from outside of home. 'London' still has 'salmon / fighting their way up a tubular aquarium, / a hundred storeys bright / and burning like the Crystal Palace', the very Thames warring with capitalist industrialism.

In his battle to produce a painting in the situation in which he finds himself, Magritte's painter must perspicaciously go beyond the appearance (and description) of the egg itself. The egg, which is numbingly familiar, must become a figure of his creativity, 'laying' the bird, though actually it could be a bird or a turtle or a crocodile. The painter's actions are grounded in his perception of an object with imagined potential, drawn from memory. They are coloured by his experience, knowledge, and assumptions—he paints a bird, not a snake or a platypus. He does not rely on the mere 'mixing' of previous images; nor should a poet rely on the shifting sands of words that refer only to other words in some arbitrary fashion (Barthes, 1977). And naturally the painter goes beyond any childhood encounter with eggs, producing something framed or guided by his experience but also 'made up'.

The poet, the 'child's older self', is in a similar situation. Her renewed dream of home—which takes on the form of 'new memories' born of those within the older dream—is and continues to be a virtual place of artistic sustenance. Her imagination involves an analogous perception (cf Moorhouse, 2006), or the memory of a perception, extended in time (or imaginary time) and imaginary space. Her trees dance, and then so does everything else. The resonant scene may fill a whole daydream, or a segment of it. It could be part of a sequence or nested within an animated *Gestalt*. If a 'construct', it is not mechanistic, and rarely 'random or whimsical' in William Keach's sense (2004: 1-6). It seems to have a 'life of its own' and its own 'laws of motion'. It can startle, but then fades. Clune (2013: n.pag., para #3) asserts:

Beset by what Aristotle calls "the feebleness of images," writers struggle to copy those dynamics of actual perception muted by imaginary perception (4). This "counterfactual" drive gives rise to ingenious techniques designed to give literary images something of the vivacity of the flowers, skies, and faces we encounter in everyday life.

Mental impressions are generally ‘feeble’ by comparison to actual perception—but relatively more vivid when they mutate (or are moulded) into new and intriguing configurations—yet they are nevertheless compelling, in the way visual artworks can be—even a sketch that merely suggests what it intends (McKinley, 2014). They are percepts derived from or validated against the ‘history’ of home. They *may* be muted when first apprehended by ‘imaginary perception’, but will usually then be enhanced by embellishment over time, either in the mind or on the page. They join with a mythos. When and where they fade, they can be redrawn like cave paintings, renewed but subtly modified. What matters to most of us is this ‘everyday life’, or indeed the more extraordinary aspects of life, and not the dim infundibularities of conventional grammar, or grammar shorn of a relatively vivid and sometimes talismanic connection to the real world.

The ‘struggle to copy those dynamics of actual perception muted by imaginary perception’ is facilitated for both poet and reader (parties in Rosenblatt’s transaction) by the fact that literary reverie may hark back to the earliest significant perceptions, which can mature into a cornucopia of new ideas for the artist.<sup>clxi</sup> Its distilled or condensed images call forth a story (cf Moorehouse, 2006). According to Rozik (2009: 314),

Artistic fictional worlds reflect an alternative nonverbal mode of thinking that is grafted upon the spontaneous faculty of the psyche to produce mental images and manipulate them in thinking processes.

Such ‘images’ are really the seeds (or eggs) of new (day)dreams. Or, to quote Ursula K. Le Guin, from her rather sardonic Introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1976: 5), ‘The artist deals in what cannot be said in words. The artist whose medium is fiction does this in words. The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words.’ (Cf Calvino, 1986: 18.)

Stories, in verse or prose, are ‘complex dynamic integrations of objects, actors, and events’ (Turner, 1996: 10). Most words in sentences point to the original situation (or an image of it),

and are never original in themselves. Language is a vast reciprocal map, not its territory (Korzybski, 1933; Rich, 2013: 23). In conjunction with mental images, it lets a poet observe then search for matching or 'rhyming' shapes (of 'flowers, skies, and faces', or thirty-storey hotels, cf Levertov, 1965: 422), rhythmic trajectories of movement, or events in her own memory, and then allows her to devise 'counter-prototypical' similes or metaphors.

## **5.2. Surprised by dragon fire**

Daydream images are protean, yet have sufficient consistency to spark off or trigger<sup>clxii</sup> surprising (novel, valued, and penetrating) verbal correspondences, whether in the context of the scene or not. By immersing herself, a poet may find herself 'on a roll', able to follow confidently the internal coherence and social currency of a poetic idea that suggests energetic paths of poetic development, often converging. Pictures and their attendant sensory complements then suggest words, which set off trains of interweaving images, and so on. These all claim the poet, piquing her desire to explore them through quest and question, harmony or judicious 'discord', pattern and story. While not all finished works start with them, the surprising images that hover about the outset of the best acts of writing are—or should be—both serendipitous (cf Kennedy, 2016) and enduring.

When it belongs to a generative daydream, and the poet is in a state of mind resembling Wordsworth's 'tranquility',<sup>clxiii</sup> a single image may set off one or more subjective paths of composition. These paths might run from word to word, image to image, etc., creating 'spark trajectories' from the dream of home into a new dream, for a whole poem or story. The poet follows such paths by taking on (or carrying on) the 'character' or 'identity' of the work (Hawthorn, 1973: 3) that she has made, as well as that of individuals and objects ('images within images') within its scenes. She is bound to experience surprise, uncovering things she did not know were implicit therein, or connections that were not apparent before. Through this discovery they are

named or ‘paralleled’ in text. This semiotic activity, for the author, is a kind of completing of her own imaged and felt dramatic action.

An example, again from my poem ‘London’, is the faintly sarcastic image of ‘colonial opals’ scintillating over St Paul’s Cathedral. After I had started the first draft (including the allusion to Blake’s poem), I pictured the dark curve of a roof and stars overhead. These were stars—though hardly southern stars—distant in space and (my) time yet watched by me, gazed at as though by an astronomer’s (or astrologer’s) eye, perhaps observing the sky for signs of God. They were not simply stars, but also a sort of composite memory of stars seen since I was small. I was put in mind of ‘Australian’ gemstones—Coober Pedy opals—and wrote:

a chilly cavern of colonial opals  
over St Paul’s open-eyed globe  
privileged but eternally curved

As so often happens, the image definitely appeared in my mind before the lines, having its own names and a context and point furnished by my nostalgia and the desire to encapsulate and transcend my original associations with the image. Thus, (mostly) pertinent words crowded in. Those words in turn brought their own imagistic and linguistic/literary ‘baggage’ (and less imagistic notions, including the legendary ill-luck of opals), which I could select from and rearrange, some internal coherence and social currency being present, so that acts in imagination could be ‘completed’ in writing. I could shift from words to the original inhabited mental picture and back again.

This irreverent poetising did not come first and mechanically ‘trigger’ the whole work; it emerged as I began to write about ‘my London’ and then provided the melancholy impetus to go on. It was the ‘first honest image’, a humorously stereotyped fantasy of the (nevertheless fog-free) night sky over the capital, and of the cathedral, whose own ‘eye’ (though not of course roof, as with the *oculus* of the Roman Pantheon) is always open. Immersed in a daydream, I

was myself observing the city from afar, not having been there since 1958; that is what gives the poem its oddly detached quality, reminiscent of old sepia 1940s postcards. It is not remotely intended to convey a convincing picture of the city, but rather to turn my memories into something unpredicted and new. And it is not exactly nostalgic. The lines ‘born in you / I barely know you’ refer to an ‘alien’ mother,<sup>clxiv</sup> figuratively. Home, whether actual or mythological, is never wholly familiar; in either case, a new piece of knowledge or realisation might change one’s whole evaluation. The realisation I had at the time of writing the first draft was that, despite the nostalgia (which is the awareness and visceral rejection of loss and death), I was dealing with a matter almost wholly of the present and future.

This is the moment when continuing an act of writing may plough (or, like an archaeologist, dig up) a fresh field, and become spontaneous. It is the point at which either reportage or planning become an impediment to writing. On the subject of planning, Canadian author Margaret Atwood once told an interviewer:

When I’m writing a novel, what comes first is an image, scene, or voice. Something fairly small. Sometimes that seed is contained in a poem I’ve already written. The structure or design gets worked out in the course of the writing. I couldn’t write the other way round, with structure first. It would be too much like paint-by-numbers (Atwood, 1990, para 32).

In poetry, ‘paint-by-numbers’ would crush the creative, capricious and wild (but not untheatrical) spirit even more than the *gloop gloop* of iambic pentameter ever did (Kenneth Koch, 1956). While rhythmic and rhyming strictures often offer scope for ingenuity, a rigid framework can often be more gallows than scaffold. The latter is unlikely to have produced this well-known, unbalancing piece by Atwood (2005: 1):

you fit into me  
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook

an open eye

For an author, reliving or re-animating a passage of poetry on revision offers some of the risky freedom or *embarras de choix* of that blank page, but with a little less of its anxiety. Any constraints that have become restraints can be dissolved: orderings of words, now hackneyed and dead, one's own or not, may be purged, updated or replaced, in a way the poet cannot predict. One is in the happy position of both having structure yet not being bound by it. With 'structure first', especially perhaps in poetry, one's creative freedom is fettered like that of an assembly-line worker soldering components to a circuit-board. A certain constraint (Pope, 2005: 24, 122) can whet the desire and intensify the ability to invent, but if the structure loses its provisional character and becomes a tyrannous template then invention is strangled at birth. An author, deprived of their confronting daydream by the need to meet the template's preordained pattern—a daydream populated, say, by the embarrassing sandwiches your beloved mother made for you in infants school, the fart-and-chalk smell of high school classrooms, or a chance sighting in the supermarket of an old acquaintance—may then be 'dumbed down' into a clerk, scribe, or secretary (cf Barbera & McBrien, 1985: 188-190; Smith, 2015: 119-124).

The often painful desire or need to 'encapsulate' (and perhaps exorcise) our daydreaming life may be universal.<sup>clxv</sup> We may need to join, be immersed in or envelop something or someone else as a (character from a) 'surprisingly new home' in order to grasp the unattainable, such as an earthly elysium or immortality. The need seems intrinsic to making literature, including poetry. While a literal or figurative subject-object *distance* is required for intelligent description and control of one's material (as stressed by Aristotle's simile of the spectator, 1997: 32), the very opposite is *also* needed in order to understand and appreciate what is being written about, and thus to proceed to the 'renovated home'. Distance, as part of absence, makes the heart grow fonder.

The English philosopher Edward Bullough, in a classic paper (1912), describes a fog at sea and its astonishing and alarming effects on passengers (in the days before radar and satellites). To spatial and temporal distance, he adds 'psychical':

It is a difference of outlook, due—if such a metaphor is permissible—to the insertion of distance. This distance appears to lie between our own self and its affections, using the latter term in its broadest sense as anything which affects our being, bodily or spiritually, e.g., as sensation, perception, emotional state or idea. Usually, though not always, it amounts to the same thing to say that the Distance lies between our own self and such objects as are the sources or vehicles of such affections (Bullough, §5).

Organising vision gives clarity and allows for logical manipulation, while obscurity forces us to speculate and imagine; speaking very roughly, the former state might be compared to film, the latter to poetry. Our affections, in Bullough's terms, are held apart for inspection as though they are foreign bodies, yet by definition they are part of ourselves. This contradiction must be overcome in all serious, creative observation. We must see all, be all, yet select what is relevant.

For Chekhov, the best way to describe an invented scene and its action (which usually leads it on to further scenes) was to avoid commonplaces and when writing, to 'snatch at small details, grouping them in such a manner that after reading them one can obtain the picture on closing one's eyes' (Macauley & Lanning, 1964: 126-127). We can see examples in his plays, such as *The Cherry Orchard* (Chekhov, 1959: 331-398). In the final scene, the loyal, 87-year-old retainer Feers mutters to himself (after finding he's been locked in the doomed house of his masters):

'Locked. They've gone. [...]' [Sits down on a sofa.] 'They forgot about me.'

A few beats later he says to himself:

'My life's gone as if I'd never lived.' [...]' [Lies down.]'

He then lies on the floor motionless, and presumably dies. With him dies the old, cruel Russia, and outside we hear axes being taken to the beloved, useless cherry orchard. The dialogue is in

one sense ‘commonplace’, but it is anything but clichéd.

In an act of disciplined and contextual introspection, always somewhat opportunistic, one must ‘pluck the eyes’ out of a perceived—or indeed subjective—scene (perhaps refined through being ‘relived’ as detailed action in the course of re-drafting, as that action is pared down to what is relevant to the broader action) in order to plant a triggering or unexpected image in the receptive reader. Such spontaneous and pregnant details are of course weighted in value, be they literal or metaphorical, concrete or abstract. They gain that weight because of their social meaning and currency, and how those matters strike the reader, and because they are often situated not just within a poem but in a ‘tradition’ stretching back to one’s cultural origins, or to the valorised descent from those origins (as with Eliot’s ‘East Coker’, (1971: 23-32) or even my ‘London’).

This accounts for the indispensable, *critical* role of such ‘domesticated’ yet open scenes in original composition. Walt Whitman may have had a faith in productive images similar that of both Pound and Atwood. As John Schwiebert describes:

EVEN IN HIS EARLIEST NOTEBOOKS—for instance, in the pre-1855 unpublished poem “Pictures”—Whitman evinced a powerful interest in the pictorial aspect of poetry that was to remain with him throughout his career:

In a little house pictures I keep, many pictures hanging suspended—It is not a fixed house,

It is round—it is but a few inches from one side of it to the other side,

But behold! it has room enough—in it, hundreds and thousands,—all the varieties;

—Here! do you know this? This is cicerone himself;

... And there, on the walls hanging, portraits of women and men, carefully kept....<sup>1</sup>

In the 1856 “Spontaneous Me” (LG, 103) he suggests that all poems are “merely pictures”; and in an 1871 note he asserts that “In these Leaves, every thing is literally photographed. Nothing is poetized, no divergence, not step, not an inch, nothing for beauty’s sake

[sic] no euphemism, no rhyme ...”<sup>22</sup> (Schwiebert, 1990: 16; caps, footnote markers & italics original)

These, then, are not simply visual and two-dimensional sketches hung in a house that the poet-guide can enter and show to others. They are asserted to be ‘carefully kept’, recorded memory-scenes and situations, though undoubtedly they are also a careful selection of what the poet has encountered and what he regards as artistically valuable ‘resources’ for future works. The ‘little house’ of his mind might contain ‘memory places’ (Yates, 2014: 17-18) that assist the poet to marshal his inspirations. Plainly, it is a house, gallery, or ‘memory palace’ (Spence, 1985: 1-3 & passim) that may add to its ‘hundreds and thousands’ at any time. It is a storehouse, or sometimes Faustian lumber room, of helpful images (‘image, scene, or voice’), its foundations sunk into the bedrock of home.

What sort of promising and incipiently active image (moulding Hemingway’s ‘first honest sentence’ or a poetic line) might sow the seed of a new textually-mediated work—or any major or minor part of it? It might be anything that gives a point to the author’s strivings and focuses them sufficiently for a confident beginning, but which satisfies and impels, or impels through impeding—promoting, like the grit in the oyster, the production of a pearl. Such were the surreal ‘ball lightning’ soap bubbles in ‘Dresden china’ which I spotted as I stopped at the lights. (I had seen the real thing once in 1978.) It might be an encounter, inner or outer, that once again gives the author the momentary balance of a surfboard rider, heading to shore across the sandy edge of a frame, as when one wakes staring at a picture—the once-naïve dream of home suddenly turned towards the current literary concerns of the poet, as happened when I wrote ‘London’. Anything (including dialogue and expository narration) that has its origins in home and its broadening compass as we have grown and matured, and contains the familiar, the recognisable and the reportable, is of use as we edge toward the unknown.

### 5.3. No vicious circles

The poet's surprising response to the image is not predictable even to the poet. It might incorporate acting, illusion, delusion, 'suspension of disbelief', or just plain madness (albeit 'in the right place'). However, it must (and can easily) avoid the stasis of any vicious (as against virtual) circle inherent in the Droste effect<sup>clxvi</sup> of the imaginative self becoming part of the scene it imagines, much as the memory is the memory of an earlier self-in-the-world—the so-called homunculus problem that posits a kind of infinite regress attending to perception (trounced by Pinker, 2008: 73).<sup>clxvii</sup> However, although we may watch ourselves as if in a movie, or as we act in a play, we do so only fitfully. We may write or speak but cannot truly *think* in paradox. Progress in any field often consists of escaping or resolving paradox (or contradiction), including when we submerge ourselves poetically in the ramifying mental gallery of our daydream of home.

Any uncontrolled regression or unresolved contradiction is incompatible with imputing thought; gratifying fantasy is a will o' the wisp, but guided, controlled (Le Guin, 2004: 273-275). Literary imagining is covert acting while writing and directing at the same time, and, like a theory to Valéry, an often oblique, prepared fragment of autobiography—typically a story about the mnemonic dream of home, and concomitant new dreams.

### 5.4. Made rich and strange

A poet or other author is frequently advised (as by Horace's *Ars poetica*) to start *in medias res*, in the middle of things. But which 'things'? Capturing 'ideas' is like sieving snow or saffron. A poet's choices in her path of composition are coloured by the rainbow play of a *metamorphosing* reverie with a largely unpredictable life of its own. A girl makes bubbles that fall in the traffic, and we readers (primary and secondary) do not know where she came from or where she will go, but we know it matters imaginatively.

Susan Sontag (2007: 211) comments (originally of the author Nadine Gordimer, but it might cover poets too):

A great writer of fiction both creates—through acts of imagination, through language that feels inevitable, through vivid forms—a new world, a world that is unique, individual; and responds to a world, the world the writer shares with other people but is unknown or mis-known by still more people, confined in their worlds: call that history, society, what you will.

A kindred dual procedure applies to poetry. Both new and old worlds have their imaginary and real aspects; both evolve in mind and text and actual interaction, or at times make—or seem to make—‘revolutionary’ leaps. A renovated dream of home has taken in current impressions and apparently consummates (or overthrows) the old, as can be seen in a small way at the end of ‘London’. Through the fitfully rewarding attempt to relive the initially new, and to treat it as if it were home, the ‘made strange’ becomes the familiar. However, the past ‘home’ remains, however renovated it may be, and the world and the self face the newly constructed and sometimes estranging border between home as it is now imagined to be, the historical past, the present and the future. This border must be crossed when creating further poetry, and the accompanying voices are ‘like echoes in a whispering gallery’ (there can be no real living in the past, only in a present and future transfigured by that past).

Being ‘at home with’ something—in poetry, this ‘something’ has its own ‘time and space’—is not simply a pun or metaphor; it means being familiar enough with it to feel that it rightfully belongs (or ought to belong) to those strands of experience that stretch back to one’s debut on earth—and, further, that it may be intrinsic to the human condition. Without that feeling of familiarity, a poet could lack the confidence or conviction to build a new world (on paper, let alone in reality), especially with so little external encouragement given to many poets.

The new (phase of the) dream of home is not simply a reaching back into the past. ‘London’, for example, is more than that, since it returns to the present, where the speaker is situated ‘now farther than ever from salty dogfish and soggy chips and London Pride and the endless pink-

map gloom / of the Biggest City in the World'. To try and make a new home at this distance should promote a certain 'estrangement' (see above) or surprising 'alienation' in poet and reader. On 'alienation', Popescu (2010: 2) says of Brecht's so-called *Verfremdungseffekt* (distancing, alienation or estranging effect, or *V-effekt*):

the V-effekt extracts the *spectators from the trance of 'living' the play and imposes a distance which activates the capacity for analysis, criticism and decision – allowing for a double perspective: uncovering the contradictory nature of events and the historical cause of social mechanisms (thus making them appear rationally changeable).*

In some respects, this is like Bullough's notion of 'psychical distance'. Brecht wants the audience to set aside emotion and consider a scene intellectually, not merely to undergo catharsis or the *frisson* of encountering something (perhaps refreshingly) 'foreign'. It allows the poet to 'think around' the subject and scene she is writing about without losing the sensitivity to its power to stir or bestir emotions (strong emotions often being the product of painful shiftings of one's mental homeostasis in response to changes in the self or the external world.) A writer or reader can see its 'contradictions', or tendencies within it that might bring about or necessitate transformation; for example, 'London' and its speaker's memories might prompt a reassessment of more recent experiences.

The absurdity and sarcasm of my poem's sardonic references to 'pink-map gloom' (compare the inverted 'chilly cavern' from the second verse) and 'biggest city' in the lines quoted above is perhaps 'alien' enough to wrench us out of the present and into a past that was clearly four-fifths imperial daydream and propaganda (though whether those references will successfully illumine the reader politically, as Popescu claims for the 'V-effekt', is another matter). So what is the present, and what of the future, for the speaker or the reader? Both are left for the latter to ponder—bearing in mind that there are of course different kinds of 'big', especially in the mind of my speaker (a character in the poem) as a child.

This 'alienation' or recontextualisation is not quite the obverse of *readerly* immersion or

empathy. The former might be a pulling back from the object, the latter a drawing nearer, but both are intellectual as well as emotional. Whether one or the other dominates during the writing process depends of course on artistic judgment, but *that* is informed by both one's formal knowledge and the emotionally and intellectually confirming imprimatur of home—or rather what the poet has made of it. A poet can slide along the scale from one to the other as she pleases, entering the scene or observing it from afar (as with Aristotle's 'spectator'). Or she may even achieve both at once, since alienation and empathy surely differ in the author's mind and the reader's; for example, my poem 'Dresden china' will probably seem 'distant' to the point of obscurity to those who do not know what 'Dresden china' is, and/or have never heard of the incineration of Dresden, Germany, in 1945. There may be 'no tears in the reader' if there are none in the author (Frost, 1960: n.pag.),<sup>clxviii</sup> but these tears must still be communicated, and that depends to some extent on the nature of the audience and whether the author is able to accommodate them.

The poet too must be 'entranced' as she *relives* and thereby almost inevitably modifies the malleable daydream, old into new, but she must not not be so captivated that she cannot stand aside from her own metamorphosing creation in order to 'report back' to a reader, or switch between different paths of composition (word to image, word to word, etc.). At any point the poet can try to start afresh and dredge up other ideas to change the text,<sup>clxix</sup> in words with a naturally social (in 'London' inescapably political) and communicable meaning but also steeped in personal, imaginal history. Yet to accomplish anything 'on paper', this process of recreation and renewal must at some stage end, and the act of composition transcend itself, along with poet and reader.

Writing suspends a poet thoughtfully between old and renewed home, and that place of suspension is the 'blank page'—the site of passage from image to text.

## 5.5. Filling a blank page

As I have stated, reliving a ‘passage’ of fiction or poetry offers again some of the risky freedom of that blank page. The soap bubble shimmer of daydream, with its scenes that strive for originality, charms the text into shape; home as ‘lair’ or sanctuary has the potential to effloresce into the new.

For Isabelle Allende’s character Eva Luna, the blank page can resemble ‘a sheet freshly ironed for making love’ (2009: 224). It can be a canvas of opportunity for the poet, as for Margritte’s painter above. In the beginning is more than the word, more than that ‘first honest sentence’, and more than the image complex suggested by specific words or lines. Before words, the ‘blank page’ must be the proscenium of an imaginary theatre (cf Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 8-13) and entering a scene may be ‘epiphanic’: the point at which a poet realises she has fallen through the surface of the blank page and is now ‘within’ it feels like a sudden realisation or bold new orientation that carries her above the burden of dreary and uncoordinated detail she might otherwise feel mired in. This kind of *poesis* requires courage emanating from a generative daydream of home (or its ‘naïve’, undirected precursor, or its perspicacious successors) and the faith in oneself that it inspires.<sup>clxx</sup> Like Eva, a poet (or author of fiction) could begin to feel a ‘pleasant tickling in my bones, a breeze blowing through a network of veins beneath my skin’ (Allende, 2009: 224), a sensation preceding creative labour.

In order to provide the poet with the impetus or compulsion to go on and finish what she has started, instead of just remaining agog—and in a way that will command the attention of other readers—she needs a fecund beginning that pulsates with the kind of strongly felt images that set in train our momentous understandings in infancy. Adrienne Rich (2003: 4) notes that poetry is an ‘awful bridge rising over naked air’ which at first seems like a ‘continuation of the road’. Such an affective beginning must nevertheless contain a vision of the work’s prospective goal, an ‘end’ to entice the (author-)reader along. The author extends (her dream of) home, always

half-aware of the world outside—in any scene she is half-immersed like a surface-skimming skindiver. As Eliot writes in ‘East Coker’ (his ‘ancestral home’): ‘In my beginning is my end’ (1971, 23); and ‘[i]n my end is my beginning’ (ibid.: 32).

To illustrate inner theatrics filling the blank page, I will instance the complex birth of a very short and well-ordered, though story-free, poem. Ezra Pound writes of the transformative genesis of his celebrated *hokku* ‘In a Station of the Metro’ (essentially an elaborate but single metaphor) in his essay ‘Vorticism’:

Three years ago in Paris I got out of a ‘metro’ train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child’s face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion (Pound, 1970: 86-87).

This is the poem in its first published incarnation:<sup>clxxi</sup>

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :  
Petals on a wet, black bough .

Here the ‘sudden emotion’ breaks through whatever conscious thoughts preoccupied him before stepping out of the train.<sup>clxxii</sup> It has ‘shock value’, the many faces being petals, while some stand out even from that mass. It seems to resemble the all-pervasive emotion that one might feel as a child, rapt at seeing something resplendent for the first time;<sup>clxxiii</sup> a mild trance or ecstasy (in which one nevertheless remains in control). Pound’s chance experience becomes a unique memory, recording perspective, fact, and meaning. The poet has to ‘transduce’ from image to word, and he is motivated to make the effort:

And that evening, as I went home along the Rue Raynouard, I was still trying and I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation ... not in speech, but in little splotches of colour. It was just that—a ‘pattern,’ or hardly a pattern, if by ‘pattern’ you mean something with a ‘repeat’ in it. But it was a word, the beginning, for

me, of a language in colour. (ibid.: 87)

Like all radiant works Pound's short, Imagist poem emerged through an image/word 'path of composition' and has an 'identity' or 'personality' of its own (Hawthorn, 1973: 3). It is not unlike a special yet unidentified voice that is heard, focused and resolved over the hubbub of a cocktail party—a mental pattern that was apparently taken on before the words appeared. As with actual perception, it plays ambiguously with figure and ground: the faces stand out in the crowd; the crowd contrasts with the station platform. As readers we engage with it as we would with any initially surprising 'apparition'.

In some ways, the 'finding of the expression' might be related to, but more 'serious' than, 'getting' an anagram or joke through a sort of a defamiliarising epiphany (see Koestler, 1964: 35-38, cited above). For Pound, stepping out of the carriage onto the platform must have been a little like stepping out onto a stage: the poet—assuming, I think justifiably, that Pound is the speaker—became part of a focused scene, as though the people on the platform were fellow-actors (those within his immediate purview, at least). The memorable impact of his 'sudden emotion' and the 'triggering image' became the entry—through a looking glass—into the scene. This scene became part of what we might call Pound's dedicated theatre of mind, albeit a fascinating *tableau vivant* rather than an active play.

Pound's poem and its metaphor are as slippery and fragile as a personality, like an eel in an eagre, or those tantalising (and ambiguous) half-memories and sensations that seem to hark back to some earlier mental state which we cannot quite reconstruct in our minds but which suggest (replenishable?) veins of significance to be mined anew. But it also has the quality of an illustrated impression, part sense and part feeling (and I would claim that no feeling is entirely without concrete content, even if the content may defy full conscious formulation). The author's command of language and *Sprachgefühl*<sup>clxxiv</sup> is presented with all this to 'fix' it on the page.

Once in textual form, though, a ‘distance’ creeps in. There is, peculiarly, both psychological distance and a strange propinquity between subject and object in this poem. It is suddenly a live ‘picture’ which may be examined by a reader from all angles and points of view, including ‘from the inside’. Such is the tiny scene’s power. As Chilton and Gilbertson (1990, 231) put it:

Rather than giving us an equation or a comparison, the poet gives us, as Pound writes in ‘Vorticism,’ an image that is ‘itself the speech. The image is the word beyond formulated language.’

The image here is not exactly moving but gives the illusion of a kind of movement as the reader enters and re-enters it through many readings of the metaphor.

Further, this is a metaphor of beguiling impermanence, turning doomed but beautiful faces or figures into petals before its audience’s eyes. It is one suggestive both of brevity—in form as well as content—and idealised visual harmony, a glimpse at fleeting, Imagistic ‘perfection’. It says nothing that might indicate a desire to preserve, yet were these beautiful faces not remarkable and affecting to the poet he could not have written about them with such paradoxically enduring sensitivity:

In a Station of the Metro [‘final’ version]

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.

Pound came upon the ‘apparition’, he says, as he emerged from the underground railway carriage, but does that mean the experience was a surprise akin to ‘seeing a ghost’, unearthly, or bizarrely subterranean? The ‘wet, black bough’ is the station platform he saw (recalling a morgue slab?), though many sorts and shapes of ‘bough’ fitting that vague description might appear in the reader’s mind. The image’s ambiguity stimulates thought and imagination.

This verbless ('timeless'?) yet commanding *hokku* stares down mortality. As we can appreciate, the 'apparition' of beautiful faces is 'dying' already, like fallen blossoms or fading flowers of youth (cf Poulet, in Tompkins, 1980: 46, qtd above), although even if they weren't, the moment would not last, and nor would one wish it to. Yet the work does preserve the sudden, surprising vision (real, but seen in a heightened way) of resilient grace in the relatively harsh setting of the then-newish Paris underground (and the poet's sudden discovery of a 'language in colour' later). It presents, and we feel,

an intellectual and emotional [psychological] complex in an instant of time. It is the presentation of such complex instantaneously that gives a sudden sense of liberation that we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art (Pound, 1968: 4).

Like any masterly haiku, it insists that we read it again and again.

There is a similar pre-textual experience of internal drama in the Allende character mentioned above (Allende, 2009: 224): Eva, just starting to write (albeit in prose),

began to remember events that had happened long ago [...] Little by little, the past was transformed into the present, and the future was also mine; the dead came alive with the illusion of eternity; those who had been separated were reunited, and all that had been lost in oblivion regained precise dimensions.

A new world may begin with a renaissance or a resurrection.

*Contra* Barthes (1977: 146) on 'mixing writings', we cannot always codify experiences well enough to capture them adequately, let alone entirely, in words (aspects of 'Semiotics' are considered at greater length below). With words divorced from images, and without the human (at least authorial) presence that is mandatory in imaginal theatre, we could not even begin. In 'John Wilkins' Analytical Language' (1942), Jorge Luis Borges quotes G.K. Chesterton on the limits of language:

Man knows that there are in the soul tints more bewildering, more numberless, and more nameless than the colors of an autumn forest [...] yet he seriously believes that these things

every one of them, in all their tones and semitones, in all their blends and unions, be accurately represented by an arbitrary system of grunts and squeals (Borges, 2000: 232, from Chesterton, 2007: 88).

Metaphor tests the limits of language and is one of the figures of speech that is the visible result of the daydream-alchemy of poetry, expanding everyday perceptions. The essentially preverbal inner theatre is needed in order that perception and feeling may produce coherent, poetic language and action. This is, however, an imperfect process. A poem may never wholly ground and generate its language in all significant aspects of its subject matter.<sup>clxxv</sup> Returning to the roots of language (albeit, for a poet or novelist, in an imaginary setting) involves the author in a critically empathic but adventitious relationship with what she writes about. In order to practise a literary art to the full, one must go beyond ‘the shells of thought’, as Ezra Pound calls them, after Remy De Gourmont<sup>clxxvi</sup> (Pound, 1970: 87); ‘the thoughts that have already been thought out by others.’

Any mind that is worth calling a mind must have needs beyond the existing categories of language, just as a painter must have pigments or shades more numerous than the existing names of the colours (ibid.: 87-88).

The world constrains or conditions the subjective scenes a poet invents and the names these evoke. Naming the scene on the blank page depends on the world and its rhythms.

## **5.6. The scene and simplification**

Like a graph or map, sensitively-designed sentences can present a simplified, clear picture or ‘thought experiment’ that aids the testing out of alternative ideas, scenes and narratives, though a poet should never forget what is being simplified. Such reduction can be seen as negative or positive. Blanchot (1993: 336) states:

Flaubert [...] just a hundred years ago [...] confided his difficulties to Louise Collet: ‘The

plasticity of style is not as broad as the whole idea, I know. But whose fault is it? The fault is that of language. We have too many things and not enough forms. This is what tortures those who are conscientious.’

[...]

This corresponds to Levi-Strauss’s hypothesis that art is essentially reduction, the elaboration of a reduced model. Except that, far from feeling distressed by this, Levi-Strauss cheerfully describes all the advantages afforded by the reductive power of both the plastic arts and (as he implies) language. (‘Being smaller, the totality of the object seems less formidable; because it is quantitatively diminished, it seems qualitatively simplified; this quantitative transposition increases and diversifies our power over a homologue of the thing.’)

There is always more to home than meets the eye (or any other sense-organ), and a reduced inner-theatre ‘model’ is an abstracted facet of the poet inhabiting—and being inhabited by—the object of her poetic attention; yet for the sake of text, that object must be slimmed down to what Susan Sontag’s door will allow through:

Writing is a little door. Some fantasies, like big pieces of furniture, won’t come through (Sontag, 2012: 27).

## 5.7. Poetic moments

In this mental cartography, an intuitive cognisance of what feels like ‘destiny’ can impel the poet along a given path, acting sometimes as a catalyst or trigger. It may even bring forth a new image—albeit one perhaps steeped in the memory and incubating warmth of actual home—that sweeps her away, though through subliminal motivation and not divine *afflatus*. Such moments of dragon-like poetic insight represent an intelligent convergence of unconscious and conscious intent, or ‘guiding force’ (cf Price, 1953: 342). In some phases of composition this might include the poet contentedly mapping minutiae under a microscope.<sup>clxxvii</sup>

The quest for the catalyst, for *l’image juste* (if there is just one), or the right space in the right

*mise en scène* seen from the right angle at the right time must often be ‘surreptitious’, hidden from the workaday conscious mind. It is a body-and-soul endeavour. A prematurely-structured search (devoid of Keats’s ‘negative capability’, 2001: 492), such as Atwood’s ‘paint-by-numbers’ above, forecloses imagination. A certain precarious mental poise is ideal as we set the first, hopefully ‘honest’ mark on the canvas of the blank page—going mad in the right place—or feel strongly that we must go back to edit or rewrite it. At any time, the poet may need to relive the relevant or ‘reduced’ aspects of the generative daydream in order to gain or regain a sense of plenitude and potential, in one image or a nested complex of them.

### **5.8. Surprised into naming**

The act of writing good poetry reaches across a metastable border into Valéry’s ‘poetic universe’ (2007: 62). The poet pauses, perhaps like Blake’s lost traveller (2002: 99), dreaming of a destination ‘under the hill’. To bring about what Coleridge thought the ‘best words in their best order’ (Coleridge, 2005, *Table Talk*, 12 July 1827) the poet must conjure up a unifying or compelling image that she may ‘enter’ empathically (an image always ‘estranging’).

This slanted sort of empathy can take in the subtlest elements of the scene and its language—including any fictive manifestations of thought, logic and gesture—as though they were a trail of faint objects seen sidelong in a telescope. Together with unpredictable or ‘left field’, ‘corner of the eye’ or ‘half-memory’ poetic moments (cf Harman & Rheingold, 1984: 2-3, on unbidden recall), it might parallel or recall hypnagogic transports and (involuntary) ‘waking dreams’—or the light of early morning, that vulnerable light seen by the child who has just begun to walk, glinting like the rays of a lamp on chairs and table-legs as on tree-trunk and crown. Through it, the poet—perhaps with a distant eye on her audience too—is able to sneak up on a new meaning without being snared by her current preoccupations and prejudices.

When a poet inhabits that sphere engendered by her poetry, she takes on a new, virtual identity, like one who has moved to a new country. She does so while retaining the ghosts of the old, throwing herself open to prospects inherent in the scene that become apparent as it unfolds. It might intrigue or bring anxiety, like the practice of keeping a dream diary. As Adrienne Rich (in Rich & Filreis, 2005) states:

One of the great functions of art is to help us imagine what it is like to be not ourselves, what it is like to be someone or something else, what it is like to live in another skin, what it is like to live in another body, and in that sense to surpass ourselves, to go out beyond ourselves.

Once the author has stepped or insinuated herself like a thespian into the dragon's scene, the names and their histories that emerge '*avant la lettre*' are not likely to be predictable results from uninspired word rearrangement.

Consider the following gem by William Carlos Williams (1991, Vol. II: 158).<sup>clxxviii</sup> It deals with an emergency, something which 'comes out of the blue', like Venus emerging from the waves.

The Hurricane

The tree lay down  
on the garage roof  
and stretched, You  
have your heaven,  
it said, go to it.

In this ambiguous, sarcastic, but pithily imagistic piece (*vide* Burt, 2002), the speaker is apparently an eyewitness (the empathic but critical poet 'within' the scene?), placed on the other, dangerous side of an imaginary threshold. Unless we bizarrely imagine the tree to be 'talking'

to the garage roof, the eyewitness is addressed, and thus the reader. The elemental and overwhelming blasted, desert heath energies of wind and gravity (common in dreams, day or night) incite an atavistic fear in witness and reader. The witness is at first, perhaps, dissociated and in a delayed reaction transforms a tangible fragment of natural disaster into an offbeat personification worthy of folk tale.

Surprisingly, instead of collapsing banally with a crash as the title might foreshadow, the tree lies down in a leisurely manner on the garage roof, and stretches. All is surreal and strange, illustrating the often anthropocentric 'realism' of personal drama. Then, continuing the conceit, it sneers in its death throes: you have your heaven (unlike me, your doomed deliverer), so 'go to it'. Again, this is not a development or 'path of composition' one might expect if the poet Williams had not in some sense placed himself in the scene and rendered it both dialogic and emergent—a whole or *Gestalt* more than the sum of its parts, a surprise with awful meaning—though other constructions could no doubt be put upon these tightly-structured yet equivocal lines.

The scene's sense of creative surprise is not confined to the behaviour and fate of the tree, or even the witness. The normality of what we might reasonably conjecture characterises motorised suburbia<sup>clxxxix</sup> (that supposed 'heaven on earth') is being turned upside-down. This is no Eden (though no Pandemonium either). The wind is not cultivated in bassoon or clarinet. We are confronted all at once—yet phlegmatically<sup>clxxx</sup>—with the enormity and emergency of the storm, the exposed theatre-in-the-round of human perception and 'theatricalisation', and the horrifying prospect of new *homelessness*, or imminent extinction. The tree is a tree of knowledge, yet like a gallows or a gibbet, a 'tree of death'. The poet is aware—who is not?—that thought and its shifting object are not linear progressions easily representable by lines of scanned text.

To speak poetically of an object or situation one must feel into it, *become* it (adopt an unfamiliar identity), as in P.B. Shelley's 'The Cloud' (2002: 301-304), or with McNamara's speaker

and the dancing trees, or H.D.'s 'Oread', in which the text may refer to the undulations of ocean or forest, or the mountain-nymph speaker comprehend 'waves' as familiar 'pines' (Doolittle, 1986: 55; see also Louis L. Martz's Introduction in the same volume, xiv):

Whirl up, sea—  
whirl your pointed pines,  
splash your great pines  
on our rocks,  
hurl your green over us,  
cover us with your pools of fir.

The ambiguity (or polysemy) of the text is a compression of meaning rarely possible in everyday language.

In 'The Hurricane', the admonitory falling tree apparently becomes conscious, and its impossible words reverberate in the minds of witness and reader. A natural response to this novel absurdity (and the absurdity of solid things blowing around, and of sudden immortality) is a gale of laughter.<sup>clxxxix</sup> Yet, after achieving, simultaneously, artistic distance and identification, allowing poet or reader to choose meanings judiciously, Williams goes one step further. In the closing lines of the unwanted (implied witness's) 'epiphany'<sup>clxxxii</sup> (though foreshadowed by 'lay down [...] and stretched' which of course suggest agency, if not humanity), gives the mutual experience, like the tree, a *voice*, and a name. As a result, the scene is dreamlike and disconcerting rather than amusing.

Chaos is depicted in strangely ordered terms, albeit as hostile; it is an order which will render one's own life a chaos. The 'name' emerges from the experience; it is not a glib label, but has authenticity. It might help us describe future encounters of that sort as being like or unlike 'that hurricane poem of William Carlos Williams'. The granular experience of the poem will ensure it is no mere simile, certainly if you have escaped by the skin of your teeth to tell the tale—or

someone has. In this respect, a good writer is like Sherlock Holmes in 'The Speckled Band' (Conan Doyle, 1987: 125), *unbending* the steel poker. Drama is often the art of pulling off a risky action at the right time—and action includes speech. It makes words work unusually well. It entails being part of a situation, feeling that you could be swept away, personally. The 'suspension of disbelief' is always at some psychological level, simply belief.

Of the 'story-telling', meaning-making, ordering person (which must include a poet), Rothenberg observes (1979: 130):

His thoughts may rove freely, but he is constantly alert and prepared to select and relate his thoughts to the creative task he is engaged in. He is oriented to discovery. Although he is not necessarily aware of doing so, he relates elements in his free-flowing thoughts to the dramatic themes, characters, situations, or to the visual forms, sound patterns, theoretical issues, and mathematical formulae he is struggling with.

Responding in this free associative yet disciplined and critically empathic manner to the imaginal scene, and to the text already produced, a poet arranges a select, finite number of evoked 'elements'—lines, sentences, metaphors, the so-called 'best words in their best order', or Williams' tree falling in filmic slow-mo on the garage roof in words—and produces what she judges to be an optimal grouping or organisation. Indeed, she shapes a new context, makes a new, 'idiosyncratic' and valued textual whole (Boden, 1996: 75-76). When read (while writing), this in turn might also renew the daydream of home. It is highly unlikely to merely repeat an order that has gone before.

### **5.9. Dragon-engaged rearrangement**

The poet 'leaves home' to dwell and act in the patterned scene that a poem of hers evokes, one that may well *feel* dangerous, or at any rate genuinely contingent. She explores and roughly maps it like anyone in a new place. Creative labour is often fortuitous and provisional, unlike

that in much of the workplace, and rendering and possibly rearranging a text,<sup>clxxxiii</sup> with its organically-complex meanings and kindled imaginal ‘content’, can in the right mood produce a new and better (or, where intended, darker) vision of home.<sup>clxxxiv</sup> Coleridge did this in 1798 with the poem *Kubla Khan* after the famed interruption by the ‘person on business from Porlock’ (see Coleridge, 1967: 295-297, writing of himself in the third person). After taking an ‘anodyne’, presumably laudanum, while reading about the Khan and his ‘pleasure-dome’,

The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awakening he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved.

After this the pesky person from Porlock knocks at the door, the poet contended that he could never quite recall the whole dragon-like vision, despite strenuous attempts to do so. The ‘fragment’ begins:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.

Such *poetus interruptus* and rearrangement—motivated by germane interest and critical immersion or empathy, and here also by perusing a historical text—was evidently enlivened by the use of a hallucinogenic drug, but is nevertheless an example of what may happen when a poet is ‘inspired’.

Of course, *poesis* is not all divine *afflatus*. As observed above, the author may well rearrange

various categories (characters, images, incidents, motifs, lines, sentences), permuting and combining them: elements 'a, b, c' have a finite and predictable number of permutations ('a, c, b' etc.), but combining them with *brio* in groups of greater or lesser value and repeating elements '(a, a), (a, b), (a, c)', and so forth, produces boundless, unpredictable variety.<sup>clxxxv</sup> Michael Studdert-Kennedy and Louis Goldstein defend this so-called 'particulate principle' in linguistics, chemistry, and in general:

According to the particulate principle, the only route to unbounded diversity of form and function is through a combinatorial hierarchy in which discrete elements, drawn from a finite set, are repeatedly permuted and combined to yield larger units higher in the hierarchy and more diverse in structure and function than their constituents (Studdert-Kennedy & Goldstein, 2003: 235-237).<sup>clxxxvi</sup>

Whether the 'only route' or not, it may pertain, *mutatis mutandis*, to thought and memory, and thus to poetry and what may be an unconscious sifting of memory leading to sudden recall. It should also be remembered that the 'elements' (mental images, lines, sentences, etc.) in question may be immense in number (or in principle infinite), though the sample to be shuffled will not be infinite. Though sounding 'mechanistic', the process is not simple. It may indeed set a 'liberating condition' to making poetry: such recombinations of words are not only potentially limitless, but also (given the value hierarchy) *meaningfully* so.

Complicating matters is the fact that the initially vagabond and later more refined image patterns of any daydream are not always made up of 'discrete' or logically-subsumed elements, and they have a more or less obscure history: the remembrance of trees falling in storms, trees talking in fairy tales, sacred rivers and measureless caverns, things past, present and future. With poetic language, such rearrangement will require the re-establishment of appropriate prosodical and grammatical 'connective tissue'. For example, a composing poet could begin with a line reflecting image and purpose, then modify it to fit sense and form. She steers its development.

In thought, both paths identified by Coleridge—‘correspondent expressions’ and ‘images [...] as *things*’—combine and, like fugitive sparks, cross epistemological ‘borders’ from the known to the lesser known. If the poet imaginatively situates herself within the nested picture and searches, perhaps for a sort of ‘grail’ or ideal image or poetic scene—temporarily deluding herself, it might be said—then a distanced or abstract symbolic thought becomes in *some* ways like Gerard Manley Hopkins’s ‘inshape’ of imagination. She ends up immersed, feeling as much in danger of the hurricane, say, as the witness or the captive reader.

As mentioned previously, the ‘discrete’ elements are both non-verbal and verbal, and include words, lines, sentences, mental images, scenes and character identities, whether in the mind or ‘on the page’. But these hierarchical units, used to make or gauge progress along the steeple-chase-paths of composition, are mercurial. Proteus himself could not hold them down. In Williams’s ‘The Hurricane’, there is a shift from the visual shapes of action<sup>clxxxvii</sup> (the tree ‘lying down on the garage roof’) to memorable taste or odour (implied smell of rain and taste of ‘fear’) to voice (the tree’s) to strong emotion (astonishment, terror). Like the poet-witness, the reader comes away with anything but an analytical equanimity.

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind

Cannot bear very much reality.

(T.S. Eliot, ‘Burnt Norton’ (1971: 14))

In art at least, we are sometimes better at bearing the realities we create than those imposed upon us.

As a go-between, an embodied relation, text too must be realised in the mind, and unlike real-world activity it has no independent existence except as marks or sounds. Its meanings and sensory effects are generated through a writer’s participation in a ‘closet drama’.<sup>clxxxviii</sup> Understanding a poem requires, as with prose, that its reader should not only meet its linguistic challenges, but stand in the midst of its inner landscape in order to do so. In that landscape, images

are not only nested but may be implicit, a matter of milieu: the tree on the garage roof is a microcosm of suburbia in a storm; the faces in the Metro are petals on one black bough in an unseen forest that is able to be conjured up by a reader; the stately pleasure-dome rises above caverns by the sea. Similarly, my poem 'London' and its 'cavern' are scraps of juxtaposed memory floating high above millennia. Arranging these layers and divisions is like shuffling currents in a river.

The 'particulate units' of text (lines or sentences), arranged to produce qualitative effects on the reader, are created by the author and modified by both 'interlocutors'. Others have also remarked on the surprising nature of engaged rearrangement—or of something like it. Marianne Wolf, referring to Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), states:

One hundred fifty years ago Charles Darwin saw in creation a similar principle, whereby 'endless' forms evolve from finite principles: 'From so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.' So it is with written language. Biologically and intellectually, reading allows the species to go 'beyond the information given' to create endless thoughts most beautiful and wonderful (Wolf, 2008: 16-17).

Ursula Le Guin (1990, 194) maintains that to follow the path of 'written language' that Wolf refers to, and to write well or creatively, an author (perhaps intuitively) does not simply get an 'idea' ('some sort of mental object', *ibid.*) into their head from somewhere, turn it into words and write it down. Instead: 'The stuff has to be transformed into oneself, it has to be composted, before it can grow a story.' A writer combines the 'patterns' of sound; syntax and grammar, including of larger units than the sentence, into what ultimately becomes the whole 'work'. That consists of images, or 'what the words make us or let us see with the mind's eye or sense imaginatively' (*ibid.*); ideas, or 'what the words and the narration of events make us understand, or use our understanding upon' (*ibid.*); and feelings, namely, emotional or spiritual experience 'in areas of our being not directly accessible to or expressible in words' (*ibid.*). We also get pan-sensory images from our environment.

Naturally, we know that all these patterns may be unstable or hazy. We have seen that such patterned 'elements' are not perfectly discrete or logical. Humanised images themselves alter according to how the author steers her scenes along self-blazed trails of composition. The poet stands within the 'landscape' of the scene and can manipulate what she sees and feels with ultimate reference to herself, which is also usually the way she addresses language. Images are not linguistic or poetic meanings as such, let alone purely the product of words, but correlate substantially with each while partaking deeply of the sensory world. From our vantage point we may imagine another's point of view, and thus discern what we understand of their poetic intentions and its attendant ambiguities. Is the tree in Williams's poem 'The Hurricane', that angel of death, commanding the witness (insultingly or wistfully) to 'go to' his heaven, or is it referring mordantly to the circumstances that simply threaten to propel that witness across a celestial threshold?

Many of these cognitive transformations implicit in the act of writing are inconclusive and 'non-linear'; the whole process is not wholly reducible to its occasionally nebulous yet essential parts. The patterns of language and of feelings (including the sound, or look, of words) must be felt or intuited and thereby gain creative impetus; they must be lived as they give rise to "endless" forms [...] from finite principles', such as hurricanes and other surprises on blasted heaths.

Writing, then, involves not simply 'production' but self-surprising invention, the creation of 'the new (home)'. That is what both critical empathy and creative estrangement are primarily about. Quasi-mathematical permutation and recombination are not the 'only' routes to 'unbounded diversity of form and function', not just because creative or poetic 'arrangement' means more than that, but because no pattern of thought is a closed and thus finite system sealed off from the changing universe. The 'particulate principle', as a guide to unbearable reality, can be used to create new wholes from a (somewhat) fixed supply of 'elements'. However, the *eidolons* of the generative daydream are ultimately irresolvable because, like consciousness and

the cosmos, they are always evolving, leap by leap.

### 5.10. Language and Poetry

The salutary attempt to ‘go to your heaven’ and arrange the ‘best words in their best order’ requires the author to perform meticulous work on the nominal units of generated text. But what has gone above has sought to show that the meaning of a poem’s text, and thus the creative point of the act of writing, cannot or should not be reduced to a purely verbal, formal, or ‘se-  
miototic’ analysis of its words in sentences and paragraphs, or certainly not a simplistic one—as for example with Weinsheimer, who sees a character as a ‘segment of text’ (1979: 187).<sup>clxxxix</sup> It is always the product of a certain ‘living out’, and must always be ‘lived back into’, problematic as that is when a different person is attempting it.

I do not reject semiotic theories<sup>cx</sup> *per se*, since they can help us to distinguish what is on the page (the medium) from what is intended or interpreted, and what the reader gets from what the author had to give; but nor do I treat literature and language (let alone ‘thought’) as mere complexes of ‘signs’. While, in theoretical terms, a sign such as a word has an ‘arbitrary’ relationship with its object or referent, the act of writing with such ‘signs’ demands a participatory vision that embraces a mental map or scene, as I have discussed. A literary work is also grounded in the author’s socially-inflected, unifying mental syntheses of various aspects of an unfolding ‘structure’ raised ‘in imagination’ and designed to ‘transact’, however obliquely or laterally, with aspects of empirical reality.<sup>cxci</sup> In this way it is connected to a certain solidity, somewhat like a floating island.

Through daydream and its interplay with the ‘worldly’ medium of language, when linguistic ‘particulate’ units (textual or linguistic signs) are selected and recombined in poetry, the scene will colour the language that evokes it. In temporal terms, linguistic signs can function within both a ‘serial’ (diachronic or historical) and a ‘parallel’ (synchronic) network. This might be

compared to Rosenblatt's mesh curtain metaphor for text (1994: 76). As Rozik observes:

*Language deconstructs [or 'analyses'] real objects according to certain rules and enables their reconstruction on the level of representation by reversing those rules—thus reflecting the original referential unity of objects. Despite the linearity of language, therefore, a verbal sentence should be read as a synchronic unit, by virtue of its representing a holistic referent in a world (Rozik, 2009: 308).*

This interested reconstruction applies, when it works, to the scenes described by language generally and poetic language specifically—for example, to a cat sitting on a mat (or in the act of catching a mouse), something we form a 'full' or unifying picture of once we've read (or anticipated) it; and this is equally true of a scene of an old man dying.

Rozik applies 'syntax' to images and the attempts to convey them by means other than mime:

*In contrast to verbal syntax, imagistic and iconic syntax is pictorial in the sense of the spatial and temporal coexistence of both the subject and the predicates—with each predicate forming an iconic sentence (ibid.: 308-309).*

One way or another, imagistic or 'iconic' text is almost always 'illustrated' by its relationship to life experience. For example, the simple English sentence 'the cat catches the mouse' tells of a localised dramatic action over time, one with its own sanguineous rhythms.<sup>cxcii</sup> It might be the title of a story, poem or story-poem, and it may stand in, analogously, for some human conflict. When that story is drawn out in recorded words and remembered images, both spatial and temporal components of the picture and, more importantly, its dramatic conflict, with all that might mean, are to a significant extent preserved in grammatical sentences for re-animation by a reader.<sup>cxci</sup>

In Dylan Thomas's poem 'Do not go gentle into that good night' (2000: 148) the focus is on the emotional, moral and metaphorical levels of inward conflict:

*Do not go gentle into that good night,*

*Old age should burn and rave at close of day;*

*Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

The poem conveys and animates the idea that human dignity is implicated in the life-death struggle and that we should not, as it were, take death lying down. The words, or linguistic signs in the poem, are significant because of the way in which they explore and dramatise a real-life situation that every sentient adult knows about and is obliged to confront. The poem cannot overcome death, but it can speak eloquently to the human desire to stand against mortality and speak out.

Creative writing could excite that urge to imaginatively transcend both home and that other 'fine and private place', to use Andrew Marvell's phrase in 'To His Coy Mistress' (in Kenner, 1964: 457-458). Subject becomes object, which then becomes a new subject. The importance of linguistic signs rests in their potential to 'map' the actual world, perhaps even parts of it we do not yet know.

In *Wolf Hall* one of Hilary Mantel's characters observes of another, 'her eyes are the colour of water, where her thoughts slip past, like gilded fishes too small for hook or net' (2010: 503). These sorts of 'thoughts' will be familiar to most readers and are like the implicit stuff of poetic lines and 'connotations', their meanings deriving from their pan-sensory distillations in memory. Poetic language is not some autarchic entity which 'deconstructs' or synthesises without nonverbal mentation (literal or figurative). A sentence may not always substitute for a mental image, but sentences and poetic lines summon such images (cf Davidson, 1978: 47). And, prior to that, the daydream image summons language (cf Sadoski & Paivio, 2009), which is joined to the world it refers to and is capable of further enriching it. In a larger sense, the meaning is always prior to the symbol; the world and the image came before humanity and before speech.

Further, even a simple phrase, sentence, passage or *story* may accrue meaning because it is

embedded in general or scientific knowledge, or in spiritual stories or beliefs, or in community memory or folklore, or in historical tropes. The example of ‘a poem should not mean / but be’, from Archibald MacLeish’s ‘Ars Poetica’ (1985: 106-107), is part of a much larger ‘picture’ that includes historical disputation about the value of poetry itself, since it is MacLeish’s answer in 1926 to Horace’s *Ars poetica* (c. 19 BCE) and Aristotle’s fragmentary *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE).

*A poem should be palpable and mute*

*As a globed fruit,*

*Dumb*

*As old medallions to the thumb,*

*Silent as the sleeve-worn stone*

*Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—*

*A poem should be wordless*

*As the flight of birds.*

\*

*A poem should be motionless in time*

*As the moon climbs,*

*Leaving, as the moon releases*

*Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,*

*Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,*

*Memory by memory the mind—*

*A poem should be motionless in time*

*As the moon climbs.*

\*

*A poem should be equal to:*

*Not true.*

*For all the history of grief*

*An empty doorway and a maple leaf.*

*For love*

*The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—*

*A poem should not mean*

*But be.*

A poem should not ‘mean’, or merely signify; it should *be*, in all its suggestive ambiguity. Nor can it exist in a vacuum; it is a part of the world it refers to (implicitly, at least). To mean, to be, or to live, is also to become. Living out a scene is a becoming too. MacLeish here apparently extols an ‘art for art’s sake’ stance, but the import of his poem cannot be reduced to ideology. Imaginal scenes are central to it, through and through. In the poem’s last couplet the spatial position and logical relation of individual words indicate whole categories or levels of meaning, each of which brings its own horizon-enveloping imagery, emulable shapes and shades of action. This is ‘connective tissue’ and much more. It draws one in like a mandala, and stimulates our empathic imagination.

Each word on its own has a dictionary meaning, but once it is used contextually and socially—in an organic ‘combinatorial hierarchy’—it has the potential to mutate:

*A chief cause of misunderstanding [...] is the Proper Meaning Superstition. That is, the common belief—encouraged officially by what lingers on in the school manuals as Rhetoric—that a word has a meaning of its own (ideally, only one) independent of and controlling its use and the purpose for which it should be uttered. This superstition is a recognition of a certain kind of stability in the meanings of certain words. It is only a superstition when it forgets (as it commonly does) that the stability of the meaning of a word comes from the constancy of the contexts that give it its meaning (Richards, 1965: 11).<sup>cxciiv</sup>*

Due to the vital, imaginal quality of language, at least for a Romantic like Percy Bysshe Shelley, ‘A single sentence may be considered as a whole [...] a single word even may be a spark of

inextinguishable thought' (Shelley, 2002: 515)—one that can both 'be' and become.

We understand *words* through imaginable referents. Owing to the shifting ambiguities inherent in language, though, 'we understand each other, and ourselves, only thanks to our rapid passage over words' (Valéry, 2007: 61).<sup>cxv</sup> In other words, we as readers may maintain and continually refer to our growing and 'constructed' scenes through a cognisance of the way in which meanings swiftly move and morph through language. We gain from this rapid, sometimes polysemous passage because we have a preverbal, imaginal and passionate grasp of the flow of the universe we belong to, and which ultimately we are at home in. This is perhaps the case with my poem, 'Bright Moment':

*dust never settles when  
dun wrens flit in a green shower  
in a nook still as chinaware  
where human and nature meet  
and unseen children echo.*

This poem is hard to understand except by flitting over the words like the wrens mentioned—not skimming, but envisioning and enacting (*participating*) as we go.

Words are lifeless when static and unread (unacted, unwrought)—even if seen. Ideas, whether understood as propositional/verbal or not, are social and not easily killed; they grow or develop somewhat like organisms, and can be cultivated. The 'stability of the text' (Rosenblatt, 1994: 99) is dependent on our own exploration, emotions, and the 'awesome complexity' (ibid.: 48-49) of the reading process, which is unachievable without the outward-looking mind. That is because the process of naming, inventing or interpreting new semantic categories (first by the first reader, then by others, and inescapably in the last analysis through intuitions), also determines to a large extent *what* is arranged by the author (and later, reader) during any given reading.<sup>cxvi</sup>

All readers reach into themselves for (non-static) non-verbal understandings in order to decide whether or not a new array of words is of value (often passing rapidly over the words several times), and may change their own orientation if it is. As Valéry states:

*Understanding consists in the more or less rapid replacement of a system of sounds, intervals, and signs by something quite different, which is, in short, a modification or interior re-organization of the person to whom one is speaking* (Valéry, 2007: 62-63).<sup>excvii</sup>

Something reverberant and material, sudden and unsummoned (though itself ‘summoning’), joins the author and the reader:

*‘There is then creative reading as well as creative writing,’ Emerson says in ‘The American Scholar’ in a statement that could be a credo for the reader of poems. Poetry alerts us to what is deepest in ourselves—it arouses a spiritual desire which it also gratifies. It attains what it avows. But it can only do so with the reader’s imaginative collaboration and even complicity. The writer creates through words a felt world which only the reader can vivify and internalize. Writing is embodiment. Reading is contact.* (Hirsch, 2006: n.pag.)

As Dickinson puts it, in ‘non-rhetorical’ terms, reported by Thomas Higginson in *The Atlantic Magazine*, and much-quoted:

*If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?* (Higginson, 1891; Dickinson, 2011: 178-179).

As Wendy Barker comments in ‘Emily Dickinson and poetic strategy’ (in Martin, 2002: 84), when the poet reads good poetry, ‘the body is intensely alive, alert, quiveringly awake, shivering, almost orgasmic’. Reading and writing, as we know, are conjugal pursuits.

Similarly, Les Murray says of writing poetry: ‘It’s done in every part of your muscles—you can feel it in your muscles.’ (in Watson, 2005: 35).<sup>excviii</sup> (Watson adds: ‘Writing contains mysteries that only exertion can uncover.’) And Borges, in the preface to his *Obra Poetica* states:

‘What is essential is the aesthetic act, the thrill, the almost physical emotion that comes with each reading’ (qtd in Hirsch, 2006: n.pag.; cf Wolf, 2008, Pt1, Ch1, on the physical effects of reading).

Meanings emerge or are assembled from ‘transactional’ poetic acts of writing and reading (Rosenblatt, 1994: 10; cf Mead, 1967), rather than from some mechanistic, reified coupling of neutered and quasi-objective ‘signifiers’ and ‘signifieds’ descending from de Saussure, some shuffling of currents in a river. Words, even if in some restricted sense ‘arbitrary’, are not simply counters to be shifted around. As Williams states in the Preface of his *Selected Essays*, ‘writing, especially verse, has parts precisely as the human body has also of which it is made up, and if a man is to know it, it behooves him to become familiar with those parts (Williams, 1969: [ix]). Or as Coleridge comments: ‘Words are living powers, not merely articulated air’ (1978: 249). Their meanings are dependent on their function within the living organism of the sentence or paragraph one is (re-)constructing (completing its ‘acts’ in imagination), governed by the image stream—with its occasional ‘theatrical’ spaces—that drives one at that moment, as well as by that which has illumined the minds of writers and readers in history.

Something similar might be said about replacing a word (or ‘mental cell’) with another from outside Valéry’s system of ‘sounds, intervals, and signs’, joining two or more together, or splitting them up. Experimenting like Dr Frankenstein in this manner may well produce compelling, even trail-blazing results in the creation of new mental images and resulting metaphors, as the first Surrealists found (Balakian, 1986: 140-169), but it shows again that sentences and streams of images each have an integrity that one trifles with at one’s peril.

Language can juxtapose its evoked images unexpectedly, and images ‘preconceived in the writer’s mind’ (ibid.: 148) can also metamorphose, like chick-pea water whisked into ersatz egg-white: sometimes the new creations survive and flourish; sometimes not. Images them-

selves are not in every case stimulated by '[l]anguage [...] endowed with a hallucinogenic quality' (ibid.: 144). The sun becomes a 'red pearl falling down a vertical needle', as Michael Leiris put it in 'Marécage du Sommeil' (ibid.: 154), but was it word or percept that came first? Or do they both come together because, to the memory, they are in the same category?

One of the fascinations of the poem just 'being' is the invitation to respect and enter into its world, not just to adore, but to explore. This is even more the case when, as author or (first) reader, one must exercise one's imagination so as to 'be a poem'. Only then can one 'feel' it—or feel it quicken inside oneself—and pass it on to others. In the 'system' of literature-in-the-making, images, sentences and larger units of language intertwine like fruit, flowers and stems, an effect I aimed to achieve in the following poem:

This

garden        has a history like the  
great whitecapped wall built across the horizon  
seen from the Snowy Mountains Highway before Nimmitabel  
in early Spring  
which comes up with the onions  
planted in memory  
one millennium they will be dug in,  
back into the magma ...  
the hot garden under the frame  
watching the worms escape  
a lazy child, just watching

stretching, fetching things begrudgingly  
and bored  
but disinclined to work, or play  
just watching, dreaming  
being a pod of dolphins diving across the waves like waves  
while the garden grows and I am old  
snow falling deeper every day  
life rushes like a tabla  
words curl like worms in the sun  
my frame of plastic broken by the cats  
and my one cactus left run wild  
and this ...

This poem was set off not by any thought of sentences but by the sudden sighting, while driving, of the white and wavelike 'wall' of the Snowy Mountains, a wall in time standing up on the otherwise snowless and flat horizon. The poem contrasts and interweaves more contemporary experiential images (the early Spring mountains covered in snow, the dolphins, my garden) with those of my much younger self in the well of memory, spontaneously at first, then selected according to how they fitted the text as it unfolded during various drafts.

Here, we might argue that the garden is the speaker's life, and 'this' is the world, while the vision of the 'great wall' is the border of death or, perhaps—since it is compared implicitly with a row of emergent spring onions, and seems seasonal—of a prospective future life, a 'new spring'. Poetry is potential. The wall is symbolically a kind of threshold, though different symbolism might become apparent to others. (Ambiguity of interpretation—or richness of expression—is often enhanced by the poetic construction of streams of contiguous words and images.)

Consciousness is not a neutral and bloodless consideration of the world, exemplified, as in

Emily Dickinson's sardonic epigram "'Faith" is a fine invention' (2005: 95, no. 202), by the scientist peering down a microscope. It cannot be rendered down into some ideal, logical system of representation. Writing poetry requires an evolving, catalytic part of one's own imaginative artefact (and of the imaginary world it is found in, itself built from the real). Individuals write in this way because, like their readers, they are part of the raw material that poetry is made from. Language is grounded in analogy, bodily apprehension and partiality, not abstract logic. The 'common ground' of author and reader cannot be shucked off at will. Sentences and images may be disordered, contradictory, and *unproductively* ambiguous—that is, 'ambiguous without proper occasion' (Empson, 1947: 235)—without such common ground. Poets and readers both need access to scenes connected to their daydreaming lives (or literary allusions reflecting the daydream worlds of others) to fully grasp and continue their own work.

As a result, the author should not simply describe but 'present' this imaginary world, roughly as Pound advised (1968: 6), in order to evoke a scene within the reader and to provoke him to imagine and 'act' inwardly. Dickinson, even while speaking metaphorically, 'presents' as one of 'Us' in 'The Sky is low - the Clouds are mean' (Dickinson, 2005: 452, no. 1121):

The Sky is low – the Clouds are mean.  
A Traveling Flake of Snow  
Across a Barn or through a Rut  
Debates if it will go  
A Narrow Wind complains all Day  
How some one treated him  
Nature, like Us is sometimes caught  
Without her Diadem –

This poem is a metaphor growing out of a simile (cf Cohen, 1976: 257); it is simultaneously about nature and humanity. It disturbs the allegedly 'Romantic' idea of nature (and poetry?) as

immaculate, not by cleaving to some blithe defence of imperious Enlightenment rationality, nor by rejecting imagination and originality or the pivotal place of childhood, but through making an analogy between nature and questing (yet diffident) human psychology. Its opening line refers not to a minutely described cloud-front as a storm closes in, but to a ‘mean’, personified one (like a primal fear, where the ‘Diadem’ of reason—or decorum—and sensibility has slipped).

In this poem, the precise shape and shade of the clouds do not matter. What does matter is the internalisation and understanding of the dramatic situation by the reader, the childlike emotional impact of low snow clouds that are recognisable to all readers. Further, most readers readily relate to what it is to feel like a buffeted snowflake in a coming storm—as presumably the poet did. Language and experience are once more joined in the poem’s vivid, imaginal scene.

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- clx Another proscenium arch—see above, and Chesterton (2005: 83-84) above—holding an inviting space or frame of whatever shape.
- clxi As noted in the Introduction, the mental scene is a valued ‘*quasi-perceptual experience*’ (Thomas, 2014, Introduction, his italics) which may capture the living body and its sensorium, like a dream or an anticipation, or a hopefully benevolent incubus or succubus.
- clxii Cf Kirkby (2010: 4), cit. Greenblatt, n.128 above; Moorehouse (2006: 23-26):  
 SOME WRITERS LIKE to use the painter’s statement that the first mark on the canvas is the mark that matters creatively—the genesis mark—that the first correct brush stroke will suggest the next brush stroke and so on through to the completion of the painting.  
 Hemingway probably had this in mind. He was not only one of the writers who observed the process of writing most closely but was also curious about painters and how they work, as was Patrick White.  
 Hemingway talked about the writer finding the “first honest sentence”, which, if found, will set in motion the whole work and guarantee its integrity. Logue believes in the critical importance of the first mark.  
 But in the imperfect chaos of creativity we do make false starts and we have to go back and search again for that first honest mark. Sometimes we can’t find it and we have to abandon the work altogether and start afresh or burn it.  
 Frustratingly, as Logue and I agree, there are few rules in the making of imaginative work that are 100 per cent reliable.
- clxiii Wordsworth, in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* Preface [1798], has the tranquil mood triggering recollection of events and emotions that can be recalled and used for writing: ‘the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement’ (in Nalbantian, 2003: 35. See also Wordsworth (2005: 251, n.50); the editors, Brett & Jones, state that the quoted Preface actually comes from the 1800 edition, as the 1798 edition was prefaced only by an Advertisement (ibid.: 233).
- clxiv Cf Amy Lowell’s ‘A London Thoroughfare, 2 a.m.’, above (2015: 17-18).
- clxv Certainly there are terms in various languages that seem to embody an allied sensation in differing ways—*saudade* (Portuguese), *Sehnsucht* and *Weltschmerz* (German), *wabi-sabi* and *mono no aware* (Japanese), *dor* (Romanian), etc. Freud’s ‘oceanic feeling’ also springs to mind (Freud, 1995: 723ff, see above).
- clxvi Named for the recursive Russian doll-like ‘picture-within-a-picture’ on the Droste (brand-name) cocoa tin; also called (by André Gide) the *mise-en-abyme* (or *mise-en-abîme*), the object depicted within itself. See Borges (2000: 160-162) above. (A distinction does need to be drawn between the nesting of different images and of the ‘same’, the latter phenomenon being known as ‘self-similarity’.)
- clxvii The ‘homunculus fallacy’ may seem to arise whenever you insert yourself into what you imagine, and thus picture yourself

- as a ‘homunculus’ or little person inside your head picturing a fictive world and necessarily picturing itself (yourself) too; that pictured self is picturing a world and itself (yourself) *ad infinitum* (Pinker, 2009: 79, 256-257, 286 ff). Yet like a feature on a map, a pictured or imaginary being has only so much imagination as is imputed of it. It can be just a sign, if outwardly iconic. The imputed ‘little man’ represents only the aspects of ourselves (or the whole) that we allow him (or her) to (Pinker, 2009: 79). The infinite regress is a chosen artefact, not an ontological or epistemological necessity.
- clxviii ‘No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.’ Cf Horace (2005: 103-105): ‘As the human face smiles at a smile, so it echoes / Those who weep: if you want to move me to tears / You must first grieve yourself’. Or as Mead has it, ‘if it is going to be language one has to understand what he is saying, has to affect himself as he affects others’ (1967: 74-75).
- clxix Without an overarching, leavening reverie that takes us beyond our immediate words or image and metamorphoses into a new home, a new world-view, we might be like the fictive writer Joseph Grand in Albert Camus’ 1947 novel *The Plague*, stuck on the opening sentence and rewriting it endlessly (and finally consigning it to the flames).
- clxx A desperate author, consumed perhaps by presumption or nit-picking or self-doubt, may seek to write ‘automatically’ or produce gibberish in the hope of filling it, and that may indeed perversely lead somewhere. Automatic writing may assist further visualisation, but not always of a productive kind. Though science fiction writer Ray Bradbury did well by listing nouns (Popova, 2013), a practice I also loved as a child, and still use.
- clxxi This is the April 1913 version, from *Poetry* magazine. In the source cited here the second version is referred to. On the various early versions Pound made, see Ellis (1988). The final and most familiar version is used below.
- clxxii An earlier ‘American in Paris’, he is drawn to the faces of anonymous women and children. Is this evidence for the influence of the ‘dream of home’ made strange?
- clxxiii For instance, in my own case, a Welsh bluebell bower, which however clichéd it might sound (or how like an experience of Gerard Manley Hopkins, alluded to in Wilson, 2003) was something I had never visited before at the age of around two or three. I felt that the whole cosmos (as I then understood it!) was suffused with special meaning. In one respect, that had never happened before, i.e. to me, which is not of course to dismiss the similar but unique experiences of many others.
- clxxiv One’s intuitive feeling or ‘ear’ for a language; or what is argued to be the essential character of that language.
- clxxv These versatile (re-)animations lend themselves to three-dimensional mental invention, though we don’t necessarily ‘scan’ from the outside:  
 Unlike verbal structures, the processing of information in synchronous nonverbal structures is free from sequential constraints. We can mentally scan across a familiar face or room with equal dexterity from one side or the other, or from top to bottom or around about. When asked to describe a familiar scene, people often describe it from left to right, but this may be a habit learned through literacy. Asking people to describe the scene from right to left produces the same result with none of the difficulties experienced in spelling their own name backwards (Sadoski & Paivio, 2009: 51).
- See also Turner (1996: 118) and Pinker, (2009, Ch 4).
- clxxvi Remy de Gourmont (1858-1915) was a French symbolist poet, novelist and critic, much admired as a critic by Pound (and Eliot). Compare the speech of Mephistopheles to the student in Goethe’s *Faust*: ‘For just where fails the comprehension / A word steps promptly in as deputy’ (Part I, Act 4, ‘The Study’, 158-159; qtd by Fürth, 1966: p.iii). This phenomenon is all too common in contemporary managerial newspeak (Watson, 2005: 53-60).
- clxxvii The Surrealist Leonora Carrington held of art that ‘The task of the right eye is to peer into the telescope, while the left eye peers into the microscope’ (qtd by Bond, 2011, n.pag.). (Taking care not to have ‘one eye on the pot and the other up the chimney’!)
- clxxviii He had a memory of the story of a ‘[t]horoughly documented’ hurricane and its aftermath at Saint Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, from his father in the 1870s.
- clxxix The word ‘garage’ for an ‘automobile stable’ was introduced into English from French in c.1902. It might stand for the whole 20th century. See Online Etymology Dictionary, at <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=garage> (30.10.2015).
- clxxx Burt (2002, n.pag.) asks: ‘Isn’t this tiny poem (among other things) a snapshot of Williams’s suburbs, an emblem for secularists, and a demonstration of how it sounds (curt, confident) to take disaster in one’s stride?’
- clxxxi When he read it at Harvard in 1951, it provoked such a response, the poet himself laughing along with them (Williams, 2006).
- clxxxii Or ‘moment[s] of being’, in Virginia Woolf’s phrase (Woolf, 1985: 78).
- clxxxiii Here, the self-penned ‘script’ of the actor-writer.
- clxxxiv ‘Better’ according to a given aesthetic, moral, and political leaning, if not ‘best’—with apologies to the Furphy Brothers. And maybe not an eternal home, as above or as Dickinson’s ‘alabaster chambers’ (Dickinson, 2005: 64, no. 124) are claimed to be, but one that endures, and gives her hope—a realistic appraisal of what she envisions.
- clxxxv Permutations too can produce new outcomes in conjunction with the some aspect of the real world, rather like stumbling on the combination of a safe full of treasure. Furthermore, ‘elements’ like phrases, clauses, and sentences have already quite knotty and sometimes non-commutative interrelations.
- clxxxvi The authors draw on Abler (1989). Cf Pope (2005: 117ff).
- clxxxvii These active images may not have been Williams’s initial ones, but the process should apply to their precursors.
- clxxxviii The term normally refers to a play (in verse or prose) written for reading and recitation only, not performance, an example being Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, though he used the term ‘lyrical drama’ (Shelley 2002: 202). Here I stretch the meaning and employ it to refer to a textual work of poetry or prose written solely for ‘inner performance’, that is to say most such works.
- clxxxix His is no longer a fashionable view, but fashions come and go—and return. Weinsheimer states (ibid.: 186) : ‘Semiotic criticism, as I am defining it, is based on the fundamental premise that the relation between a signifier and its object

- 
- (as well as its signified) is arbitrary.’ I see no justification in making such slick assumptions.
- exc Theories which reduce language or thought—sometimes equated—to fungible (interchangeable) or at least differentiable units, such as those of Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, C.S. Peirce or Ferdinand de Saussure (Chandler, 2007).
- excii As Marx (1954: 174) states:  
 A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.  
 A work of co-operative labour, grounded in the author’s socially-inflected mental constructions of an unfolding ‘structure’ raised ‘in imagination’, can evolve between author and reader as the author holds a shaky ‘mirror up to nature’ (if not a finger). See Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, III.ii.23.
- exciii Corresponding to the mental scene as accurately and emphatically as is called for by the work. There is the common tension in writing between describing things plainly, and hiding but hinting at them to sharpen curiosity and enhance suspense and dramatic effect. Clearly this banal clause could be considerably more drawn out, perhaps concealing for longer precisely what the cat—or mouse!—is catching and how it is only just managing to do so.
- exciiii Because of this, moving images, and moving images presented in words, are linear or ‘handed’ but will nevertheless ‘work both ways’ when a film or video disc or paragraph is run backwards, as was anticipated in Ch23 of Lewis Carroll’s *Sylvie & Bruno* (1889/1893)—a sequence still be close enough to comprehensibility to be funny.
- exciv Cf Ogden and Richards (1949: 6) on the so-called ‘Father of Linguistics’:  
 As a philologist with an inordinate respect for linguistic convention, de Saussure could not bear to tamper with what he imagined to be a fixed meaning, a part of *la langue*. This scrupulous regard for fictitious ‘accepted’ uses of words is a frequent trait in philologists. Its roots go down very deep into human nature, as we shall see in the two chapters which follow. It is especially regrettable that a technical equipment, otherwise excellent, should have been so weak at this point, for the initial recognition of a general science of signs, ‘semiology,’ of which linguistic would be a branch, and the most important branch, was a very notable attempt in the right direction. Unfortunately this theory of signs, by neglecting entirely the things for which signs stand, was from the beginning cut off from any contact with scientific methods of verification.
- excvi Bachelard quotes this speech-turned-essay (in a different translation): ‘we understand ourselves thanks only to *the speed of our passages past words*’ (1971: 48) quoting Valéry, from *Variété V* (1945: 133)—Valéry’s italics or rather stress in his speech. We are guided by a cavalcade of thought and recognition. Cf I.A. Richards’s view, from his essay ‘The Interanimation of Words’: ‘Often the whole utterance in which the co-operating meanings of the component words hang on one another is not itself stable in meaning. It utters not one meaning but a *movement* among meanings’ (Richards, 1965: 48-49, his italics).
- excvi Cf Rosenblatt (1994: 58-60) on William Empson (1947) and ambiguity and multiple readings. All of these can in principle be recorded and reconsidered in the light of each other.
- excvi As well as the ‘ongoing self’ of the speaker.
- excvi See Murray’s poem ‘The Cows on Killing Day’ (1992), for example.



## Chapter 6. Naming and sharing the dragon's territory

### 6.1. Here be borders

The poetic traveller seeks a version of home, even if 'you can't go home again' (Hewett, 1990: 237). An enhanced scene, a 'renovated' portion of the dream of home, is built on the still-recognisable saintly bones of the old. And poet and reader can in a sense work together, and be imaginably on the same track. In regard to this, Gottlob Frege (1948: 212) quotes a Latin proverb:

Si duo idem faciunt, non est idem.

*If two persons conceive [picture, make] the same, each still has his own conception.*

Dickinson's poem, 'The Sky is low – the Clouds are mean' presents a scene that is half-wild but 'anthropomorphised', yet unsentimental. That scene is an extension of the speaker's imaginary and daydreaming life, or indeed that of the author, and it strongly draws the reader with it.

Psychology and poetry cannot be divorced from the world, as Rich observes from her own reading of Dickinson:

More than any other poet, Emily Dickinson seemed to tell me that the intense inner event, the personal and psychological, was inseparable from the universal (Rich, 1995: 168)

In Dickinson's poetry the 'intense inner event' is communicated poetically through imaginal scenes that represent some of the ways in which all of us construct or understand our relationship to the world. In 'The Sky is low – the Clouds are mean' the first verse sketches in a universally accessible mood, enshrining (like Williams's 'The Hurricane' quoted earlier) a curious moment in which, perhaps from the point of view of an observer, the snowflake is caught briefly in an eddy of wind and so appears to hesitate, such that the speaker or poet apprehends this as

if it were like a personal decision. The inner and outer worlds have momentarily merged and, while the moment is fleeting, when relived through repeated reading it becomes a source and symbol of enduring enlightenment.

This outside scene is simple, but it lives in a way that a treasured daguerrotype of the period cannot,<sup>cxciix</sup> even if animated by a viewer's imagination. It places the reader in a quandary that encourages both critical empathy and immersion: he is thrust across a cryptic barrier to find himself beneath lowering clouds with the 'debating' snowflake—amid an intimate theatre of the elements. And within this theatre, a significant life-choice is suggested by the phrases 'across a Barn' or 'through a Rut'.

The proscenium arch-like frame or border of the author's fantasy of becoming is mysterious, but not unfathomable. The poetic results of her intense concentration on and enhancement of her capacities for perception and the probing of memory provokes curiosity and longing in her readers. Through the clarity of its situation, 'The Sky is low – the Clouds are mean' also gives a 'voice' to the reader, who may well already have a voice, but not *this* one. That voice convinces, personifies, names and classifies from the observant and reasoning perspective of the speaker. Nature is 'caught / Without her Diadem', a queen without her crown, as glorious and as imperfect as we are.<sup>cc</sup> Imaginatively, we might conjecture that the speaker spies the snowflake and that this image triggers an instructive poetic excursion, drawing her on; her account is a succession of 'moving' (as though alive) and contextualising images that translate into the word and image 'leap-frogging' of such sparks. These are relived within an imaginal, framed space that draws on the features of real encounters in the world.

All these inhabitable images or moments belong to one poetically 'momentous' experience, if only a 'backyard epiphany', as White (2014, 229) calls it, located within a wider setting of the author or reader's recollection. As Dickinson coolly observes that the sky is 'low' and the clouds 'mean' (the personifications—like Williams's—evoke how the speaker feels threatened

and has perhaps ‘regressed’ to a specific childhood viewpoint where sky and clouds are hostile living things), the speaker is represented as somewhat like a self-hypnotised subject, more or less voluntarily ‘possessed’, and brimming with apposite words. At the same time, the reader is invited to replicate this experience. To do so entails travelling across a transformative threshold along a subliminal or ‘secret’ path of composition from subject to object.

When crossing the border between the subjectivities of poet and reader, authorial images are further constrained (and thus transformed) by the limits imposed by inner speech or external words and sentences on the imagination of each. The mental images of daydream, which are not stable or ‘timeless’, need not, as I have indicated, be devoid of some play with pun, rhythm and sound, or some adroit shuffling of conceptual spaces—and some of that verbalising may survive rewriting and remain in the ‘amplification’ and ‘broadcast’ of the published work. In Denise Levertov’s 1961 poem ‘To the Reader’, for example, with its resonant, metaphorical appeal from author to audience, the reader sinks like a diver into the imaged scene:

[...] and as you read  
the sea is turning its dark pages,  
turning  
its dark pages

(Levertov, 2013, 133)

The words are waves, and the waves words; both are ‘in the mind’. We can swim in both like dolphins. Here lies emergent power, captured only if reading and the sea may be symbolically and metaphorically ‘combined’ as vessels of equal profundity. This is not just a simple combination of elements. Reading and the ocean are less easily bound than poet and reader, who respond to analogous spatial-temporal motions, like clocks in synchrony.<sup>cci</sup> Poet and reader both want—and find—something new, whereas pages turned by the reader and waves rolling in are divided by the question of consciousness.

McNamara's 'dance of trees', discussed earlier, is a choreography unique to its perceiver as she watches on the transformative 'creek bridge' (comparable to a street of childhood) that spans the distance between childhood and adolescence. The trees in McNamara's poem are not new, but the poem imagines them newly as their motions in time are construed to be as estranging as the act of writing itself. They are rather like the trees and water allowed to 'enter' (or cross a special border) in Dylan Thomas's poem 'The Hunchback in the Park' (Thomas, 2000: 93):

The hunchback in the park  
A solitary mister  
Propped between trees and water  
From the opening of the garden lock  
That lets the trees and water enter  
Until the Sunday sombre bell at dark

As Helena Brand speculates (1970: 197):

The singular form of lock encourages another semantic possibility in the Faulkner-Benjy<sup>ccii</sup> tradition. Dylan Thomas may be using a child-like inversion here in which the adult narrator lost in his childhood experience verbalizes his childish concept of gates as functioning to let trees and water enter rather than people.

Alternatively, it is as though the park for the child exists only when he crosses a sort of magical barrier. The childlike, visualised and then verbalised concept is transplanted into the poem. It begins to live again as it is entered deeply by the author in memory. Similarly, in McNamara's 'Cooma', where still branches suggest motion, the paradoxical dance or *tableau vivant* of living things rooted to the spot (standing perhaps for the contradictions to be resolved in all unfolding) begins as the child-speaker begins to cross a threshold into adulthood in a way special to one person. That voice speaks to the child in the reader too.

## 6.2. More poetic moments

Poetic moments, as we have seen, are elusive phases of focus when acts of creation cross borders. To a poet-*animateur*, each such moment brings a sense that mind and body are acting in concert and that the creative work is following suit.. The sensibility in question is described by Valéry (2007, 62) as the ‘poetic emotion’, both productive of words and produced by them: ‘Poetry is an art of Language; certain combinations of words can produce an emotion that others do not produce, and which we shall call poetic. What kind of emotion is this?’ It is not one derived merely through giving past literary gems a new setting. Valéry continues:

I recognize it in myself by this: that all possible objects of the ordinary world, external or internal, beings, events, feelings, and actions, while keeping their usual appearance, are suddenly placed in an indefinable but wonderfully fitting relationship with the modes of our general sensibility. That is to say that these well-known things and beings—or rather the ideas that represent them—somehow change in value. (ibid.)

They are integrated into, or measured against, the imaginal scene (which is a feature of Valéry’s ‘poetic universe’, a ‘refined’ scene appreciated by author and audience):

They attract one another, they are connected in ways quite different from the ordinary; they become (if you will permit the expression) musicalized, resonant, and, as it were, harmonically related. The poetic universe, thus defined, offers extensive analogies with what we can postulate of the dream world (ibid.).

A poetic moment entails a border-crossing of ‘recontextualisation’. Take again Rich’s ‘Diving into the Wreck’ (2013, 24):

I go down.  
Rung after rung and still  
the oxygen immerses me  
the blue light

the clear atoms  
of our human air.  
I go down.  
My flippers cripple me,  
I crawl like an insect down the ladder  
and there is no one  
to tell me when the ocean  
will begin.

This structured space of meaning can induce an inner reorganisation in first or subsequent reader. Rich presents an account of her entry into the imaginary 'endless lens' of daydream, as well as describing a diver on a special mission. The poetic moment represents an active and receptive state of mind that occurs 'within' this imaginal space.

Having gone into a place where it is safe to *daydream*, making herself at home, the writer may look out at the perceptual world, or 'inside' at a memory, or a new thought, and with every glance be carried by the uprush or downsuck of their own initiatory or responsive waves of feeling. In her 'guided dream' (Borges, 1973: xi), delving perhaps into the watery unconscious—either her own or the idea of the unconscious in the abstract—Rich internally 'channels' the currents of the internalised world of which she writes, in various ways:

First the air is blue and then  
it is bluer and then green and then  
black I am blacking out and yet  
my mask is powerful  
it pumps my blood with power  
the sea is another story  
the sea is not a question of power

I have to learn alone  
to turn my body without force  
in the deep element.

(Rich, 2013, 24)

Once ‘inside’ that world, and in the moment, she, like any poet, must then develop it. A poem could contain a voice or character, which may be articulated dramatically as in prose. Alternatively, in the interests of symbolic import, the poet may expand the ‘setting’ along the lines of a conceit or continued metaphor. To that end, she can match one part of it with another, not just verbally but imaginally. This matching amounts to a ‘geometry’ of all categories of perception, not just the visual, overtly temporal and spatial—though it might depend on analogies with those dimensions.

### **6.3. Controlled Hallucinations**

During the poetic moment, the poet while ‘matching’ various parts of a work may engage in inward or outer ‘projection’ (as with the leaf mistaken for a sparrow in the poem above). The practice of a ‘cloudwright’ like Shelley or Dickinson may continue in a light ‘trance’ reminiscent of the hypnagogic state before sleep—or the hypnopompic state experienced prior to waking. In such a daydream one might spot a curious shape from an aeroplane window and assume it is a cloud (or an angel!); the unknown is then half-integrated within consciousness. Such mental simulacra can be the result of projection or so-called superstitious perception, perhaps even relating to innate pattern recognition:

We have all seen a human face or a landscape in a cloud floating by, in a pebble lying on a beach, or in blots on a wall. Notorious examples of this phenomenon include the Mars channels and the Man on the Moon; Hermann Rorschach has even made it the basis of a projective test (Gosselin et al., 2001, n.pag., Introduction).

Such recognition, some of which relates to perceptual developments in early infancy, may be a preverbal precursor of metaphor and word- or concept-building, essential to ‘naming’. It could explain the awful power of the dragon’s eye.

Take, for example, William Carlos Williams’s ‘cloudwright’ piece ‘The Clouds’ (1991, Vol. II: 173), in which he reflects on the illusion too:

[...] the bodies of horses, mindfilling—but  
visible! against the invisible; actual against  
the imagined and the concocted; unspoiled by hands  
and unshaped also by them but caressed by sight only

These are actual horses, yet not; they are made by the perceiver yet are ‘unspoiled by hands’. The whole extract is like a ‘play-within-a-play’ device—a self-reflexive product of the guided imagination. The clouds present an illusion we can easily step into within our own imaginations, and use to generate worlds and words. By comparison, the idea that Riad Halabí, ‘offer[ed] his wares in hamlets where the air was so clear that you could see angels at dusk’ (in Allende, 2009: 126) is more sarcastic, more like a gag, but can be taken seriously in a ‘magical realist’ context, where all imagined things co-exist.

Gosselin et al. (loc. cit.) continues:

The earliest known reference to the phenomenon [of seeing human faces in patterns that occur in the natural world] reaches back as far as classical antiquity, and thousands of others have been enumerated (Janson, 1973; Gombrich, 1960). Given this human fascination for the phenomenon, it is surprising how little—if any—scientific attention it has received.

Poets, especially, project onto (and musicalise) the world. They ride the rhythms, boisterous or subtle, of the animated relived image sequence, that concretised dance or ‘wave in the mind’ (Le Guin, 2004: 264, 280-281, on Woolf), coupled with that of syllable, line, stanza, and beyond, carried by it like a flourishing metaphor, except that they manage to write it down before

the transitory poetic moment passes.<sup>cciii</sup>

That moment emanates from the author's first or off-guard glance (already a taking stock) at illusions that come to dovetail with scenes that already exist in her mind. The relived image in reverie is a product of a peculiarly concentrated and transformative consciousness, which may be partly what Borges means by his claim in 1924 that '[t]he image is witchcraft' (2010: 9; 2000: 11). It permits the so-called 'subject-object' interplay (Rosenblatt, 1994: 18)<sup>cciv</sup> that, along with representation, makes thought fruitful, separating what is from what is not yet absorbed—or invented—by the engaged mind, thereby renewing language and any social practice affected by it.

The imaginal space, as illusory as a mental stage-setting, yet 'real' as Williams's horses, is from one perspective merely a notional 'construct' that the poet insinuates herself into. She then speaks from it, feeling some surprise, and thereby reveals to her putative audience the scenes she encounters—though she may feel as alone as a child first approaching a hearth. The scenes could grow brighter and more 'existent' in the mind as she writes about and otherwise dwells on them—perhaps obsessively—in draft after draft. And as I have underscored above, each word and name she selects, or which rises unbidden from memory or the 'unconscious', produces images (in various sensory modalities) of its own, which in turn tend to modify the initial scenes.<sup>ccv</sup> The words she scrabbles for effectively re-construct and expand the relived image complex (simpler than perceived reality yet part of it too). She gazes up at imaginary horses or down at hoof-marks on hard sand. Story and sensation reverberate within her in a perennial pattern.

### **6.3.1. Dragons, 'subjective' and 'objective'**

In the complementary acts of reading or writing, the categories, cognitive experiences and points of view of subject and object are 'dialectical opposites', and thus mutually modify each

other (Hawthorn, 1973: 17, 18ff; Rosenblatt, 1994: 18), though not always equally. Projection is sometimes a trance-like interchange between the two. Owing to these involuted switchings around of actor and acted upon/referred to, Rosenblatt (ibid.) believes the terms subject and object are better avoided 'in characterizing the reading and criticism of the literary work'. In writing, the process is equally Byzantine (and involves reading as well). In fact, to discern all its divagations in the final work is impossible, given all the editorial changes that may have been made, and the truism that the author is hardly able to record anything but her textual outcomes while these are occurring.

#### **6.4. Naming or sharing the dragon**

To name is to single out, to differentiate and control, and also to recognise intrinsic properties, patterns and value. A poem's rhythmic space is isolating as a spinning wheel or pendulum and, through this encapsulation, seems pre-verbally to name itself—'*avant la lettre*'. For instance, Shelley's 'Ozymandias' has given rise to the adjective 'ozymandian'—to denote, amongst other things, the grotesque futility of absolute power. A name can thus represent or be part of a situation or scene of significant images that occurs in the mind. The constructions a writer wants may be socially available, but her own meanings come first in her mind, and if they do not fit the words she dredges up, she must either 'choose' again, coin her own, or recast everything she has written. Only if these recourses fail will she countenance changing what she has imagined, for here the 'world of the word meets the world of the image and patterns inexpressible by speech' (Wolf, 2008: 162).

One catches a meaning like a cold, or a fish, as in my poem 'Fish':

It is as hard  
to describe  
a fish

while watching it  
as to draw its motions from life:  
look up and it has changed,  
and so perhaps have you.  
(And dead fish in shocked water  
bounce and glitter as well.)  
Impossible then to lament  
a loved one  
lost in an open coffin.

But how does one get from fish to coffin? That poetic moment is the inexpressible transport that leads us across the transforming threshold to the ultimate mystery of the open coffin. It is framed by the passage 'It is hard ... Impossible then', but within those caveats dwells life, a fish in water. No angler can quite capture it, let alone its end.

#### **6.4.1. Dragons can dance**

In poetic moments, the poet-actor roots out words with apposite or *juste* meanings. From within the scene, she apprehends and feels her way into constituent images that for her and an indeterminate number of readers underlie sentences, themselves 'equivalent' in Rozik's terms (2009: 310). The logical possibilities of the scene itself will contour the diction and grammar of the passages or verses that result, limiting the choice of words to those that 'by *Sprachgefühl*' feel appropriate. Organic pattern is central, whether static or moving.

Virginia Woolf wrote to Vita Sackville-West on 16 March 1926, saying: 'As for the *mot juste*,<sup>ccvi</sup> you are quite wrong. Style is a very simple matter: it is all rhythm. Once you get that,

you can't use the wrong words' (in Le Guin, 2004: 264, 280-281).<sup>ccvii</sup> This is possibly overstated, but a poet, if she so wishes, can deliberately make the pulses of her own language mimic other movements,<sup>ccviii</sup> and thereby 'sway' the reader with recognition (if that reader wishes to be swayed) to suspend disbelief. The dragon can dance. Take Kipling's sinuous line 'the great grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever-trees' (from 'The Elephant's Child', 1902), which I found very evocative when I first heard it at school at the age of five. A long, undulating sentence with a matching meaning tends, more than a swift, jerky rhythm, to cultivate a mood of 'expectant languor' (like Whitman 'loafeing' and 'inviting his soul'). Consider these best words in their best order, epitomising the creative *katabasis* or descent into something more rewarding than Hell:

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean

(Coleridge, 1967: 297-298)<sup>ccix</sup>

The American poet Charles Olson, in his book *Projective Verse* (1950), saw the syllable and then the line as more important than the sound and sense of words in the making of poetry. He believed that syllabic rhythm ultimately depended on the breathing of the poet (Olson, quoted by William Carlos Williams, in Gibbons, 1989: 191-194). That connection is I believe fundamental to much poetry composition, but the alert, 'occupied' mental image—in its myriad and unpredictable nuances and patterns—is what invests it all with meaning.

The rhythm, Virginia Woolf's 'wave in the mind' (Le Guin, 2004: 280-281), is not *just* the rhythm of speech (or even of Hemingway's 'one true sentence') but of the patterns of emphasis and echo inherent in a meaningful, passionate, sequence or flow of relived images, as felt—mentally and bodily—by the author. In this way, a writer 'confronts the challenge of creating

coherent ideas in the private realm of thought and mapping those ideas into the public world of linguistic symbols' (Kellogg, 1994: 3). For the poet, they must also sing.

A poet perceives, feels, and conserves in memory a kind of unity, but it is the unity of movement, of a stone skipping across a pond, a character striving against inner or outer obstacles and opponents to attain a goal, or any remarkable 'sea-change'. The philosopher Patrick Suppes even claims:

the patterns of words of poems have a feature that gives rise to what I think of as the most important psychological or neural characteristic of poetry: The rhythms of the words lock in phase with the rhythms of the brain (Suppes, 2009: 165).

Projection can apply to words as well as images, for to the extent they are audio or visual forms, words are patterned images too. These rhythms conceivably reflect the subject-object interplay or transaction that Rosenblatt refers to. One might compare the fitting of words to music in song (see above).<sup>ccx</sup>

My own position is that to write poetry is to seek a verbal and non-verbal 'synchronicity'. The rhythms of poetic language will reflect the feelings and inner experiences of the poet if the poet is as fully immersed as possible in the dragon's imaginal scene.

#### **6.4.2. Poet as dragon**

Taking on the role of 'dragon', a poet translates private thought into gracile yet truthful public symbols (cf Kellogg, 1994: 6-9; Levertov, 1979: 8). Because of the one-sidedness of 'publication', we can reasonably infer in only one direction—from poet to reader, not reader to poet. Yet despite all its individualist, commercial trappings under capitalism (cf Socarides, 2012: 44-48),<sup>ccxi</sup> it is still a semi-mutual affair. In the writing-reading transaction of a specific book, the poet might even 'read' the reader as much as the reader writes the author, but these exchanges tend to be virtual.

We sense this, perhaps, in the opening lines of Coleridge's otherwise domestic poem of 1798, 'Frost at Midnight' (1967: 240), with its 'Abstruser musings' taking—like daydream?—the place of sleep.

The Frost performs its secret ministry,  
Unhelped by any wind. The owl's cry  
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.  
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,  
Have left me to that solitude, which suits  
Abstruser musings: save that at my side  
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.

In this 'coldly smouldering' extract, as in Rich's 'Song' above, the reader can feel the speaker's (and probably the poet's) apprehension of being the only human awake in his immediate world and his home as 'The Frost performs its secret ministry', manifesting itself in silence; the only disturbance comes from a nocturnal owl. The poem, addressed to the poet's sleeping baby son, speaks for nature too, though Coleridge's Frost is not quite Dickinson's 'blonde Assassin'. Solitude and the abstruse thought which accompanies it also goes on silently, with the precision of an ice crystal as it forms, and perhaps only an iceberg's tip of it is present in this lengthy composition. As Robinson (2016: n.pag.) says of the whole work:

Coleridge meditates on creation by pairing poetic composition with the magical appearance of frost crystals on the windowpane and eaves outside. Coleridge explores how the individual mind mirrors the natural world and shows how patterns repeat at different scales, revealing universal elements underlying landscapes, thought structures, frost crystals, and poetry.

It also seems at once a religious and scientific encapsulation. We and nature, Coleridge maintained, link at some subtle—and law-governed—level and thus communication is enabled.

Similarly, Robert Frost, in a letter to Louis Untermeyer (1 January 1916), glimpses the way

in which the sense of home connects poet and reader when he states that a poem starts as a ‘lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness’ (Frost, 1963: 22). This ‘poetic’ emotion (Valéry, 2007) might produce tears in the author and thus in the reader. In general terms, the bond between oneself and home, as between parent and child, is as existential as that which joins us to life itself. If such well-understood and widely experienced emotions are stimulated in a reader by the text, there is a strong case for them having been present in the author.

The continuity (intended, assumed, or actual) between the poetic thought that evokes a certain class of sentences and the thought evoked by them in the reader is one definition of ‘meaning’. Another is the thought forged in opposition to it (Calvino, 1986: 130), since it still relates intimately to the ideas of the author. Both tie in with Nalbantian’s dry observation that ‘there is a similarity between the context of encoding and the conditions of retrieval’ (2003: 136). Here we are talking about two different people, author and reader, joined by language and its social underpinnings, and the ability to recall both words and memory images (notably those deriving from ‘home’). But preserving such continuity is effortful, and requires not just common humanity but drive or thrust, lest an author—or reader—should simply give up. As Rosenblatt stresses, each reader is moved by their memories and ‘revisions’ or ‘rememory’<sup>ccxii</sup> of their memories, current thoughts, (im)maturity, etc.

In the letter quoted above, Frost continued: ‘A complete poem is one where an emotion finds the thought and the thought finds the words’ (1963: 22). Both emotion and thought are linked by a relived or inhabited image embedded in a home-flavoured daydream, in other words, a more or less concrete scene. In the chill situation presented in Coleridge’s ‘Frost at Midnight’, emotion may have found its thought,<sup>ccxiii</sup> and the thought the words (in the act of writing), but the reader is called upon, in Artaud’s words, to ‘break through language in order to touch life’ (1958: 13).

In other words, while a poem is received as a text made up of ‘cultural’ (public) signs, these intercessors join living people. The bridge over the Artaudian ‘infinite’ gap between speakers is that which is common between the verbal and the non-verbal, namely the common ground between author and reader, and the evolving understanding of their social and natural reality and shared humanity. The received ‘meaning’ of a poem<sup>ccxiv</sup> is therefore bound up with the unavoidably contentious ‘history’ and provenance of that work and its myriad readers and critics in different social periods—which includes the author in the period after the poem’s composition (Rosenblatt, 1994: 122).<sup>ccxv</sup> Within the receiving consciousness, eager to participate imaginatively in the fictive world, there forms a new edifice with its foundations in the dream of home. As Le Guin stated, ‘Truth in art is not imitation, but reincarnation’ (2004: 268). That is so because every work is a transfer from one semi-autonomous person to another.

The apparent autonomy of the text itself can be no more than partial. Just as there is no real Don Quixote, there is no ‘poem itself’ that is independent of the author and reader. Like Hawthorn (1973: 3), Rosenblatt rightly rejects such ahistorical formalist autonomy (1994: 122-123). Mutual recognition by poet and readers of aspects of transferred imagery helps to build the historical meaning, except that most of this is not *strictly* ‘history’, since it is never recorded or brought together for comparison. The mapping of poetry and poetry-making (as indeed in this PhD) always risks being a case of *ignotum per ignotius*.

Nevertheless, specific, private sense impressions possess features which, through a sort of transduction or somewhat mysterious, psychic ‘ministry of the frost’, heighten or convey the scenes and meanings of a poem or story.<sup>ccxvi</sup> That transduction is partly the result of parallels between the rhythms or patterns of shapes and suggested sounds and actions discerned within an image, and the rhythms and stresses of spoken or written words.<sup>ccxvii</sup> Owing to the mutually-recognised transfer of many cross-modal sensations along with words, even the long-dead author manages to reach across to the new reader.

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- cxix I avoid any *paragone* controversies here as to which art form is ‘best’!
- cc A more ‘serious’ glance at Nature’s imperfection than that in Oscar Wilde’s 1889 essay ‘The Decay of Lying’, for example (Wilde, 2010a: 3-37).
- cci Imagine the fragment done with a brush on a bamboo mat. However it translated into Chinese would be a veritable calligraphic dance of the eye through new space and time.
- ccii Benjy Compson is the ‘idiot’ character in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929).
- cciii A science fiction writer or revolutionary may ‘project’ a vision onto present or future society.
- cciv As Rosenblatt (1994: 18) states:  
 Sharp demarcation between objective and subject becomes irrelevant, since they are, rather, aspects of the same transaction—the reader looks to the text and the text is activated by the reader. A “subjective” response assumes an “object” at the other transaction pole; it is better to avoid the use of either in characterising the reading and criticism of the literary work.  
 Subject and object seem more separated in time than space, or material substance.
- ccv There is likely to be a complex word-image, ‘spark-cascade’ or spark battle at the initial stage (as well as in later phases) of the act of composition. For instance, the image of an elephant in the day might suggest the very different yet comparable image of a military tank at night (both large, grey, and potentially dangerous). A metaphor might result, or even a humorous verse with puns on ‘tanks’ or ‘trunks’. Writing is an experience that often deals in half-relived or half-baked simulacra as well as ‘half-memories’ leached from past experiences.
- ccvi Cf Flaubert, who in 1876 argued that ‘The word (i.e., the sole right word or *le seul mot juste*) is never lacking when one is in possession of the idea.’ Of course, Flaubert saw himself as a Platonist; the world is Ideal, not contingent. See Letter to George Sand, 3 April 1876, in Flaubert (1984: 232-233).
- ccvii Letter quoted in Le Guin (2004: 264, 280-281). Woolf, writing (poetic) prose in a state where she is ‘crammed with ideas, and visions, and so on, and can’t dislodge them, for lack of the right rhythm’, goes on to refer to a deep, rhythmic, ‘wave in the mind’ which is created by ‘a sight, an emotion’, ‘long before it [the wave?] makes words to fit it’; recaptured, it [the breaking wave] somehow fits all the words and visions together. Le Guin’s book takes that presumably metaphorical phrase as its title. My personal experience of inspired or spontaneous poetry is very similar.
- ccviii Even without following a formal rhyme or metrical scheme.
- ccix See Andreasen (2005, Ch2).
- ccx As we have seen, a poet when composing may hum a silent ‘undersong’, an auditory image sequence derived from other speech or music, a veinous hum of blood in the ears, a work-song with all its infectious mood- and rhythm-setting power. Woolf (2009: 15) writes in the first chapter of *A Room of One’s Own* (1928):  
 It is strange how a scrap of poetry works in the mind and makes the legs move in time to it along the road. Those words [of Tennyson]—  
 There has fallen a splendid tear  
 From the passion-flower at the gate.  
 She is coming, my dove, my dear—  
 sang in my blood as I stepped quickly along towards Headingley.
- On this score, though, I think Ezra Pound, in ‘A Retrospect’, goes too far in his ‘absolutism’:  
*CREDO. Rhythm. — I believe in an “absolute rhythm,” a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of, emotion to be expressed. A man’s rhythm must be interpretative, it will be, therefore, in the end, his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable.* (Pound, 1935: 9).
- ccxi In c.1863, Emily Dickinson wrote that ‘Publication – is the Auction / Of the Mind of Man –’ (2005: 351, no. 788). She may have rejected the compromises imposed by contemporaneous capitalist publication (Socarides, 2012: 45-46). The poem her lines are drawn from was first published in 1935. As Robert Frost concluded snidely in ‘Provide! Provide!’ (2001: 307): ‘Better to go down dignified / With boughten friendship at your side / Than none at all. Provide, provide!’ Like Dickinson, he had at the end no need of ‘boughten’ (store-bought as against ‘homemade’) friends and family. Yet maybe not all fame is fatuous; a writer whose works never have any ‘fame’ is a writer who is never read.
- ccxii See Rhodes (1990: 77) on the character Sethe’s use of ‘rememory’ in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. There he defines it as ‘seeing things for what they were, not for what you thought them to be at the time [...] seeing things again in the light of present circumstances [...] weighing the value of past events in order to build a foundation for living in the present and the past simultaneously’.
- ccxiii Or an integral part of it. *This* integrated threesome was Plato’s ideal in *The Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, though Plato refers to desire, which if it is an emotion is not the only kind.
- ccxiv Take the many conflicting interpretations of Blake’s ambiguous yet memorable poem ‘The Sick Rose’ (1789), e.g. Adams (1963); Biles (2007); Holloway (1968); Langland (1987); Riffaterre (1973).
- ccxv This is its ‘contemporaneous echo’, what it means to a reader in the context of the times in which it is read, though that by definition is open-ended.
- ccxvi Or a confluence of the two, a prose-poem, say Eva Figes’s *Ghosts* (1989).
- ccxvii Cf music as an influence on painters (Kennedy, 2007).



## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1. There were dragons

A poet often writes from within the confines of a provocative playlet, the world seen from the sanctuary of home and focused by an inner eye. Her work then incorporates the slow, building, climaxing, revelation of drama in an alternative world whose laws of motion escape her full control.

In this thesis, I have tried to chart the poet's creative process when she is visiting her dragons. I have defended the claim that significant (valuable, novel, fitting) poetic lines germinate in ordered subjective scenes. Original poems spring from a writer occupying a scene's fantastic space and structure, though they are hardly deducible from it. The poet becomes a character in her own daydream scenario, one which grows circuitously from her mesmerising mythos of home and provides the feeling, image, and thought that lets her 'find the words' rather than making them up out of nowhere—or merely rehashing what she has read. In this scenario she can 'rewrite history' if she wishes. This process becomes specific to a given work, and tends to point beyond the quotidian and charted. A new, singular scene makes a space in the mind for both imaginative and critical thought.

After that, the poet connects with 'naming' language that captures her mental 'picture' (with a logic of its own), and her poem may thus be understood. She and her 'ancestral' past loom over the roof of the first childhood house like Williams's falling tree (or indeed the doomed cherry orchard in Chekhov's play), only to dance away like a sentient cloud. Or she discovers home truths and wild imaginings in the sleepout.

Fresh poetry often happens 'by surprise', the result of a successful search by its maker for the new and valuable (Boden, 2004: 2-3), bonsai'd by the internalised everyday as well as by

authorial plan. As Rich observes in 'Dreamwood' (1989: 28):

poetry  
isn't revolution but a way of knowing  
why it must come.

In my own short poem 'Sunday Observance' I have gathered, through observation and reflection, significant images and ideas that 'discovered me' and which I believe are 'worth naming', not just contemplating and recording, but completing or acting upon. Death, impending here, is the harshest anti-utopia—or is it?

an old man with a walking stick  
passes mottled trees  
wind flutters everything, it is Sunday

This is perhaps a vain attempt to set going 'the best words in their best order', an attempt made in the context of the protean but all-consuming, all-producing scene—that fire that sometimes burns backwards.

The 'pied beauty' (Hopkins, 2011: 24-25) of a Sunday, with all its (Christian) redemptive symbolism, has a peculiar transitory quality that might, or should, transcend time and space and last forever. But such perfection is stasis, and it is the 'mottled' and narrative nature of our world that is so achingly beautiful—not its mortality but its mutability. Poetry is like a secular form of religion with a sense of humour. Light is never so fascinating as when it is dappled, impure with shadow, or like sound that is almost speech—or music. The scene may be imaginary or real in origin, but at first it is all real, all rhythm, all dragon:

the winds of may  
the clouds are bells  
time's scars faint

as a redhead's eyebrows

Such essential scenes are 'quasi-experienced' for the 'first time' by poet or reader, *felt* in both senses of the term, using our abilities to recollect and recreate. The poet realises the scene as she puts it into harmonious or discordant words. Her musicalised memory, with its roots in the first things of home, flowers in the chosen 'new dream' of mutable home. Buoyed by her burgeoning 'mythos', or alternatively wishing to better it, or exorcise it, a poet modifies it to bring forth her current and hopefully molten material. Further, she has wrought pan-sensory patterns and, against the background of the mythos, can recognise valuable alloy as it pours from the creative crucible, bearing in mind that fool's gold and real gold (and even brass) can all be exquisite in the poetic universe.

Writing of this kind may be new to the author, reader, community, society, humanity, or even 'under the sun'. Or it may be mundane but seen with a twist of the imagination, like a familiar street viewed from a different vantage point, an old notion in a pristine guise, as with Larkin's 'Aubade' quoted in my Introduction. It might of course be just newly in print, a poet (or prose author) saying publicly what 'everyone else' has apparently been thinking or saying privately, giving a readership a 'voice'.

That focusing mythos, as identified, for example, in my poem 'London', incorporates outstanding, remembered—or 'cherry-picked'—elements from the author's environment, yet remains distinct. The author as *animateur* writes and directs what she knows in a revisited home. Her mythos, and its inescapable concern with personal, social and cosmic mortality, guides the act of writing and refashions it as the poet occupies her own fantasy. In that sense, home—literally and literarily—becomes 'a place where you have never been' (Le Guin, 1975: 52). The 'voice' it gives a reader, then, being one they have never possessed.

A 'new' home may be grounded in childhood, or grow to be the one an author never had; a negative vision of dystopia might resemble the home you had or be one that no one should

have. Loss may be transformed into ‘that Etherial Gain / One earns by measuring the Grave – / Then – measuring the Sun –’ (Dickinson, 2005: 128-129, no. 288). What is produced by each act of writing is therefore as individual as the author, and as lonely, being unrepeatable in time yet pointing beyond itself; it may be as singular as any new leaf that sprouts, even out of an old, scratched desk. More than a sign, it is a growing new reality beyond the author’s full control. The empathising or ‘bewitched’ (Borges, 2010: 9; 2000: 11) reader will be made to feel part of it too.

Such is the case with the extract from Levertov’s poem ‘To the Reader’. In that work, the words are waves of anticipatory thought, and the waves are words of the sea—sometimes even a tsunami of expression.<sup>ccxviii</sup> This poem too might rise from a positive impulse and also tend towards the ‘positive’; it is not saccharine, but poignant and powerful. It is *Energeia* encapsulated. As American poet Eileen Myles says of her poetic dream in ‘Dream 2’ (Myles, 2013, n.pag.),

[...] this is not  
made of language but energy  
that will stop when I die

It may, however, skip like a dragon’s flame from reader to reader. The impetus here is not ‘nostalgia’—that word applied to such examples feels inadequate. It leads after all to an energised home never visited before, as does Adrienne Rich’s ‘Song’ (2013: 20):

You’re wondering if I’m lonely:  
OK then, yes, I’m lonely  
as a plane rides lonely and level  
on its radio beam, aiming  
across the Rockies for the blue-strung aisles  
of an airfield on the ocean.

A page to be worked on is like the flat ice, or the flat or retreating, sea. Owing to its active nature, its 'innocence' will not last. As an antidote to aseptic blankness, a poet can dip into her self-scripted inner mimesis, which has the capacity to unlock the source of her poetic scenes again.

Poet and reader are there—'unconscious' past and all—sitting in the 'hollow of the heart' yet perhaps fervently on a quest for what they see as a better home. Paradoxically, they live in both permanence and transformation:

If I'm lonely it's with the rowboat ice-fast on the shore  
in the last red light of the year  
that knows what it is, that knows it's neither  
ice nor mud nor winter light  
but wood, with a gift for burning

(ibid.)

The poet's conscious and present self expands in a not fully controlled way into its own past. An imaginal scene—fascinating as Eliot's motionless axis—comes to the rescue, focusing attention. Yet it is not stationary, because 'at the still point, there the dance is' (Eliot, 1971, 15)—that is to say, the dance of trees, or the dance of galaxies, which may go on forever.

We become hypnotised by the 'witchcraft of the image' and, perhaps paradoxically, the power of understanding and the rhetoric it brings with it. We experience the musicalising and verbalising 'moments' or 'waves in the mind' as aids abetting critical immersion. We extend ourselves and the home we carry like a snail—and which also carries us. We create Promethean scenes with borrowed light, empathic dramas and daydream travels. The flames burn in reverse. We catch, we write, we soar. We hold a finger and thumb up to the sun as if to pluck it out of the sky.

But when I am consumed in the Fire

Give me new Phoenix-wings to fly at my desire.<sup>ccxix</sup>

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<sup>ccxviii</sup> We cannot help but be impressed, atavistically perhaps, by such alarming power, even if it is 'inanimate', any more than we can fail to be affected by the sudden sight of a zenith-high, full moon against a wash of night cloud, or the red sun rising at dawn, despite—or maybe because of—contemporary knowledge of astronomy.

<sup>ccxix</sup> The final two lines of Keats's 1818 sonnet, 'On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again' (2001: 29). Cf commentary by Hawthorn (1973: 108).

## Appendix

London

I dream of you,

tonight,

a mist of stars over each chartered street

a chilly cavern of colonial opals

over St Paul's open-eyed globe

privileged but eternally curved;

like echoes in a whispering gallery,

my father's northerner legends of

muddy eel and pork pies,

Ma Barton the 'film moon'

and dirty coal skies of '52,

are now served;

born in you

I barely know you.

My desires tilt at nostalgia like salmon

fighting their way up a tubular aquarium,

a hundred storeys bright

and burning like the Crystal Palace;

more wholesome than today's

London Dubai-skyline

of babelic Shard and Eye;





I saw a young woman  
flick a plastic ring,  
making bubbles  
at the traffic lights  
as she crossed;  
they were rainbowed in the sun,  
like ball lightning they danced  
on the rising wind,  
she was unconcerned  
when they fell in the traffic:  
this ark isn't seaworthy enough  
for the coming storm —  
soon the only safe place will be underground;  
but while I may grow irascible in my old age  
I will never fear the young  
Nor test Dresden china  
(as they tested Dresden)  
In a wind tunnel.

must not die

window

under weatherboard

pane sharp against the

mackerel sky

mirrored in it

a garden of warped fences,

small pear trees and

the hollow sea tossing

autumn sun in summer close by

place of the confluence

of the seasons

the sanctuary

where the clock

stops at noon

yet high time is mild

walks months past with a child —

an age to her, age to me —

freed me from the bone church

for a while

now I lie  
sleepless,  
surprised by the cold gold moon of four  
that must not die.

Boys Grammar

the hallowed  
chalk dust of the church school  
my mother cleaning  
my mother cleaning  
by night temporary  
barrack-like  
classrooms  
unswept since the War  
I, running, nine years old,  
in enemy territory,  
kidnapped by the  
dark dizzying Quad,  
that carved-top Quad like  
an army parade ground  
sandwiched between

hard, gargoyled halls  
    my mother cleaning  
their mock-English abyss  
(wherein God was never present,  
nor even Berkeley the Irishman),<sup>ccxx</sup>  
    cleaning, cleaning  
away the past;  
cleaning  
away the future.

#### Manuka Pool

it is raining time again  
the golden pedal-car rushes in a  
travelling  
unravelling spray  
of rainbow drops  
or broken glass and blue metal  
every mint-ozone day  
while evading smiles  
spiralling  
I am ten and tiptoe  
over hot tiles

and Van Allen Belts

into

Manuka Pool.

Sunday Observance

an old man with a walking stick

passes mottled trees

wind flutters everything, it is Sunday

telegraph poles telegraph calm

far off birds sing

leaves scatter

the traffic has all stopped

a desk with two sleeping cats:

surely this is not heaven

new winds of may

the winds of may

the clouds are bells

time's scars faint  
as a redhead's eyebrows  
the lost scents  
eat into old bones  
and young minds  
beds are oceans  
cities are spindrift  
time is in vanishings  
not in lines  
a map  
of boundings not boundaries  
round as a  
a pond of irises squinting  
into winter  
a deck in suburbia  
still as a painted  
ship sinking and emerging  
ringing in  
the next twenty years  
the map on the clock  
its new shadow-bird weaving  
another ply  
through the nest of durée  
albatross, fly!

over the steppe plain

new clods plod on

earth's snowy coffin.

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<sup>ccxx</sup> Cf the philosophical commentary on Bishop Berkeley found in the two limericks of Monsignor Ronald Knox.

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