

# Meum Pactum Dictum<sup>1</sup>

A new look at specificity of category for image, symbol and metaphor in modern British poetry and by comparison

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<sup>1</sup>. [sic]

A thesis submitted to The University of Gloucestershire in  
accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

'The important things are what we remember after we have forgotten everything else.'

Virginia Axline. *Dibs. In Search of Self.*

# Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed .....GPM..... Date .....22/12/22.....

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# Abstract

This discourse consists of two components, a creative section and a theoretical section.

The creative component consists of 50 poems that are themselves broken into three sections. The poems explore the nature of place, home and rootlessness and how these features compose and distort memory. A key feature is maps, and the symbology of maps. The foundation for each section is: poems written early in the PhD, poems written later in the PhD, and poems that explore the nature of poetic form.

The theoretical framework is broken into two components: the theoretical framework itself which explores the nature of image, symbol and metaphor in modern British poetry using other poetry for comparison and an analytic response which explores my own creative process and how the theory considered has affected that creative process.

# Dedication

This discourse is dedicated to:

**Lucy Emma Armitage**

**and**

**Tracey Anne Fiona Mackenzie**

Bookends to a life of fractured love

for what is poetry other than a look at the strata of love or its absence, through the prism of emotional control?

and to

**Sam Azmayesh**

Secret source of sanctuary in many mental storms. And, as the dolphins said, 'thanks for all the fish.'

And as with every word I write,  
to Seth and Alf by date, Alf and Seth by alphabet

## Acknowledgements:

The scaffolding glue of this thesis is hierarchies, categories and labels. For me, Dedications and Acknowledgements are graduated degrees of ‘Thank you’; some spiritual, some practical. Thus, it is imperative that I quickly acknowledge the sharp eye and brain of (medical) Doctor Mike Skeene who kept me alive twice, the staff of the Leukaemia and Intensive Chemotherapy ward of Edward Jenner, Gloucester, the lung guys in Gloucester, the heart guys in Bath and the heart and lung guys of Papworth. To all NHS staff operating the multitude of machinery that prodded, probed and examined me and kept me alive.

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For endless hours in the company of Plath and Hughes, with Ian Parker-Dodd providing lunch, many smiles.

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## Part 1

### 1. Poetry:

#### Ex Cathedra and the Bazaar

# Three Miles Up the Hamble

For, and to, Tracey Mackenzie

# Thresholds

## I

There is a click as the metal half-ring guard of the Mitchel 306 is lifted, locked into place like a revolver cocked. Glancing over a shoulder, the three-piece fiberglass rod, a brownish-bronze, arcs a little in reverse catenary supporting lead.

Line looping through eleven rings, an undercarriage diminishing in diameter, like looking down the barrel through a backward-facing telescope. The hook is fully loaded. - *Left hand swivels, right hand tight,*

*flip hard and extend the right arm.* Without the roared smoke bluster, the lead lump looking like Apollo 11's capsule is launched, arcing parabolic through the sky, line running the rings with ferocious speed unravelling

from the reel head. Simple, yet efficient technology. Weaponry hooked, as sharp and clean as a blade, nylon rifling the skeleton barrel barely. The trace, plummeting out over the sea, plops audibly even from a hundred feet high.

Engineers built ramparts against the weather, a capped gum shield above the rocky wind-torn face of exposed granite to smooth the face and flatten the surface so tourists and fishermen could course and ebb and a lighthouse illumed Europa's point.

## II

To the west, a funnel to the vast Atlantic, to the east the sea that cradled civilization; here the Med and the ocean shake hands. Behind, afore twin pillars of wisdom, like two ex-wives wise to be ex, opposite polarities to the brawn of Hercules, originating wisdom.

This speckle on the face of Spain sneers at the plus ultra, with nothing further beyond the Holy Roman Empire, the sprained Coat of Arms of Charles V, one Moroccan, one British. At this pimple of the peninsular Europe ends, over there the Atlas

Mountains, carrying from whose broad

shoulders the Arabs came, bringing literature and a culture  
that would creep into France and beyond, cultivating the Troubadours.  
A thin band of fertility greens the map at the lip of Africa, before

the desert broods away, as vast as the waters to the Americas.

On leaving this estate, my father and his brother drove the car  
that would one day be my first, crossing from Calais to Dover,  
as far east as England can go, the same flowing waters width  
of a herculean cast between continents and civilisations.

Later in life, I will study Spanish and Arabic in the Army, track  
the movement of heraldic poets, live where the Med expires.  
When I leave this place I will fish no more: entering my teenage years  
I will find other hobbies, none a traverse to my father.

### III

By the banks of these two widowed rivers willows weep  
towards mallards gliding the babbles. There is no fishing for me  
in the clear chalk streams that feel their way through eastern Hampshire  
where the South Downs die into Naval dockyards,

yachting berths and the terminals of an opulent south coast.  
Brown trout tribute the streams but I haven't fished for decades.  
Fly fishing for those that do, but not for me, for I tried to flee  
that class, eschewing Officer status as a defiant Private soldier.

There are battles in my head I fight still. In Winchester, King Alfred's  
statue stares with stone eyes, centuries to the south of the town  
that was once for me a gravitational pull. Later, as I sat composing  
poetry in a current life, as consciousness attracts the culled awareness

of the past, I hunted for a book, found in its leaves two black-and-white  
stills of my parent's German Shepherd paddling in the pools  
of the Meon flow at Droxford. I used to walk her round Hampshire's  
lanes, the arteries I'd run in preparation for signing up.

There's a lake in the park fifty meters from my house. Folk often fish  
for carp. My dog pesters them for food, as he does daily the lady  
who feeds the swans. I put down my unsnug pen, gather a leash,  
my own German Shepherd my accomplice, memories elided.

1° 19' 33"

Just under eighty minutes to the west of Greenwich, to the left,  
at the right elevation, the river Hamble takes a few degrees  
of separation to the Water, the Solent, and the Channel to the sea.

This is the land of Yacht Clubs, great dock yards, Cruise ships  
and Naval landmark; a few minutes east the homophonic  
birth place of cricket. A neat disengagement, blue on a map

bridged by the Red Funnel Ferry to the isle of white cliffs,  
iconic needles, and Queen Victoria. Here contours  
of curves, persuaded into planed planes, spirits level.

This was not my Hampshire, but the Hampshire that was  
my Hampshire was never mine anyway. Not my home,  
my maritime. Not my blue; nor camouflage greens and browns.

The postcard lies behind the washer now, beyond reach.  
The cross-hairs signalling Hamble, put away. There is no colour  
to this map, just the gestalt of the Island and the silent sea.

The postcard is the white of ice, an outline in sketch  
quilled in black. I know this place in black and white.  
I've cried here. Cried in memory. Tears the meltwater of a frozen heart.

## The Old House Looks the Same

The lore of local legend would have it the seeds of the old cedar were brought back from Lebanon, Crusader booty. A browse of the Internet tells me four centuries' rings is the oldest UK cedar. I prefer

how local lore and knowledge would have it. It was no longer there on the day I returned to a quarter century of my life truncated twenty-one years before. A great hole in the skyline of absence.

Here is the house where I birthed my teens back, god knows. Seventy-three, maybe. Plot number seven. Bricks, glass, a house but not a home. To say I lived there is half a truth, twice over binate: cathedral of silent shadows, ghosted séances.

For most of that life was in a different polarity: two thirds of a year's nights I'd sleep at school in a different city, later the Army in a different world. None of which were mine.

Four locales in those first dozen years, four countries spread around a decade in a dying empire. Eight, just eight, flying back to new bricks called school from Hong Kong on my own. I could swear better in Chinese than in English.

I never owned a front door key, my room, a 70's Air BnB loaned out when it suited my father. Yet, when I was there I was the recusant revenant who most walked the dog. These are the bricks I was taught ought be called home.

Others do now, I know nothing of the families here since. If I knocked on the door I'd probably tell the hosts more about their domain than they knew there was to know.

The Roman road past 'our' back door,

the gentrified house of the tree's garden around which a housing estate has grown. I'd explain why the garden's that shape, how every Friday my father and I would pass our neighbour's land and the tree,

calling out to the folk with their gins and tonic did they

want some chips? Since we were going. The chippy's closed down.

Houses flourish now. A developer's harvest, an eye-scape's weeds. Where modern tarmac buries the past, I'd explain the strange



geometry, describe when Col Jones, VC, was shot at Goose Green

in eighty-two, his brother, our non-estate neighbour who sold us the  
the plot late of his barn, and as a role stood by the Jack on Britannia  
as it entered port – the Union Flag isn't the jack he'd explain –  
half-masted the flag, his jack halfted ever since.

Lock Down Cheltenham and there's a fight going on: the Council  
wish to cull the cedar at the top end of my park. Subsidence  
worries for a house, built centuries after the planting. Barristers  
from London calling. Council lose, the great cedar remains.

## How the Wind Would Sound

The 272 is cut like a Caesarean scar across the southern shires of England, a fellowship kind of place with its tunnels of trees. Imprisoned by my youth, I travelled this road many times, skirting the new-born M25 bringing blue, like a canal to the map.

Ping-ponged between the gaol of home and the bird-cage of school. This blue of progress, a future four-laned car park holds more weight in the hierarchy of roads than the red of the As or the yellowed B's. This isn't the sea, this isn't the rivers, map makers' colours running

out of cartesean cartographers' ink, here, the lumps of history, these flat contoured ups called Downs. West Meon to Petersfield, home to the ghosts of charcoal burners summer's all-consuming green become rainbow colours of Persephone's rule, the spectrum from magenta to yellow to brown; with leaves left out, nature's brown is the map's woods green.

Bends lend themselves to a biker's tilt, farmland, pasture, the first whimper of the hills, awaiting the inevitable developers' progress plot. The shrieking wind scrubs the land again, its grainy saugh tooth, cruising gears and the contours easing leaves towards the low pressures

of depressions. I have come to know downs.

Take a sharp left. The road to Steep is. A false village, stone church locked against the heathen, hedgerows tall enough to satisfy an ageing man's bladder. Beadles' Public School with its BMWs clogging the lane.

The place of my pilgrimage the 900-year old church which saw Edward Thomas among the worshipers; it has a transept roof in an 'M', a saw-toothed sine wave; a square terracotta tower with its spire a Samurai's jingasa.

Beautifully engraved, Thomas's shrine windows sit like twins, in eponymous RS dedication, celebrating Edward's centenary. One, reincarnated in 2010, broken, an entry point for thieves. For me, a week before Remembrance, the front door unlocked.

## Renaissance Hampshire

George, a Royal George, rolled and settled on Mary Rose as popular myth settles on truth under silky layers of civil silt. Divers, wrecks not beyond their reach, selling yesteryear's booty like modern marketeers sell promises. The commercial carrion sold bows of yew by mistake, from the ship beneath.

Then others could open up and peel back out of history the trade that was the artillery of war. This freight, yew, transported as tax, came from Spain, wood not knotted as English; from which Welsh archers went nuclear crying havoc, havocing northern French knights.

I would meet two archers, a poet and a muse dressed in 1415 as they magiced me by the banks of the Wye near Monmouth. My dog sniffed wild garlic. As they left on a real trek of replica to Chepstow, I mused on my way to a Saracen's Head beer on reinventing the past.

My mother's ashes were scattered on a western beach of Pembrokeshire by my father; he wanted his own ashes stored in an hour glass. I wasn't told if his quantity was by an hour's weight or random heft producing a 'random time glass'. I wasn't invited, I didn't care, he didn't notice.

Behind their Hampshire house there is still an old Roman road, then a super-highway for horses and sandled soldiers, now a rubbled path forgotten by modern traffic. At a time as far back from Chaucer as he is from me, it connected the capital of culture,

to Chaucer's centre of commerce; maybe he tramped the road as his own pilgrims would slog in the other direction, him probably by carriage, them by horse or tawed turnshoes on the turnpike east to Canterbury. Thus out of myth.

The renaissance wasn't born out of Florence or Venice, as I didn't choose my name or date of birth, as history attaches. When the world's finest wool would fetch top dollar, the sheered sheep grassed, wet as the wold, high yet flat on the map,

on the green grass of Gloucestershire and Oxford prairie. The Downs and the Cotswolds bookending a life forgetting the parentheses of abroad. The cut of the 272 gave a birth to education, it was the deep-water port of the Solent spawning art, centuries before.

In Bruges, not in the painted pieces of Pisa or the florets of Florence that would claim the glory, 'twas ever thus, van Eyke would paint the future on the back of material wealth. Skirting the staple so the King could evade his own merchants, as I spent a life evading authority.

And his own taxes. The king, that is. Taxmen would have my pound.

In Venice, map-makers put Terra Incognita on the board, it is said, shallow as a myth, shallow as the shadow on the liminal spaces randomly drawn on a map, where the Renaissance was invented. So it's not said.

## Pork Balls Sweet and Sour

We drove the country roads on this cold but clear December day, roads I'd run in preparation for the Army, and walked their dog. My mind map of geography through time unerring, after a quarter of a century, I could still navigate the lanes with certainty.

My first job in daylight hours, not in the low-slung ceiling of a pub, was on a farm to the east of Upham, a place of birth and death. We whelped wheat too, to be shovelled in vast hangers and dried through England's wet weather.

Note to self four decades on: don't drive a Massey-Ferguson through the burning straw of the wheat's waste, toasting my arse as the farm-hand laughed out loud. The piglets' looks to see a human scratching arched backs, small hops of fright.

Seeking sanctuary with their mother, some only alive because I had the task of monitoring so the sow wouldn't roll on them. Eye-watering discomfort as the vet flipped plastic bands around the testicles of those soon without; wincing, I'd work the wheat.

A huge bull of a pig rubbed its shoulders on the Massey's wheels when I went back from closing the gate. Decision time, oh dear. Not run over the pig, for sure. The farmhand brought a shovel. With it held flat, he smacked the boar's huge bollocks.

A squeal, a jump more electrified than a startled piglet, my tractor free of a porcine predicament, we finished the day and went to the pub in the village to hear Mountbatten had been assassinated by the IRA.

## Council Taxing

The BMW'd businessman could wait a little longer, engine idling,  
just because. So too the pretty girl, victim of a male gaze.  
I strode the hills of eastern Hampshire with my stop-go board

controlling traffic, a road god, irresponsible with power.  
Occasionally, I'd be allowed the wheel with its bright  
yellow frame, calibrating distance, its meter clocking up the miles.

One guy would have the measure, calling metrics for the road furniture  
to come. White tape, zinc oxide plasters, deployed pocket vaccines  
protecting infrastructure from soon, when real road gods' big toys

arrive. Industrial revolution machines straight out of Mad Max,  
belching steam and smoke thickening the country air like the Solent's  
fifty Red Ferry funnels. Molten tar oozing over surfaces, volcanic,

triage for potholes, crumbling country roads. For lunch we'd stop at pubs.  
The Flowerpot Inn, Cheriton. The River Itchen bubbles from the land here,  
sourcing in breach of the 272. Parliamentarians thumped King Charles

royally before the pub was open and the beered gang were merciless  
taking the piss of my passion. The lead hand was cunning, street smarts,  
for if we tarmac'd roads post-lunch, productivity produced overtime.

## Body Bits

I once carried a boob in a plastic jar wallowing  
like a dead jellyfish on an early morning tide.  
A bollock too, it held its structured shape better.  
And a leg, surprisingly heavy, in a black bin bag.

We laughed at the porter who had to shovel shit, surgeon's  
release of a sphincter closed around a a foreign object.  
Two weeks of awkward. Common room chuckles had it of course  
the ten-inch dildo struck him on the chest. What a release.

The specialist nurse presented it on recovery ward,  
everything you arrive with, you leave with. So she said.  
Not so the young girl in gynae needing tweezers,  
a squeezed test-tube nearly providing its own little death.

I saw more broken bodies and dismembered bits than I  
ever did in the Army. My boss, older than I am now,  
cursed the politicians who amputated Poole into Dorset  
where he'd watch the speedway. He'd never outted Hampshire.

## A Tree Remains

*For Sheridan Chillard, 19 vi 59 – 22 iv 05*

My parents didn't like her. She didn't notice, I didn't care.  
We'd made love on their front-room Afghan carpet before  
Stevie Nicks and Christine Perfect. I lasted longer than Rhiannon.  
My parents didn't notice; I cared too much. Over and over.

I stayed with her in the spare room, my own, casually loaned over  
to strangers had become a stranger to me. Constant discomfort,  
my parents didn't notice, and she didn't care. About my parents,  
in succour she gave me episodes of her subscription to Spare Rib.

We visited her aunt in Wickham, only a mile or so away. Bishops  
Waltham was familiar to this wild thing from Scotland's northern  
coast. Hampshire, a cross-roads, closer than her Inverness.  
When she returned my suitcase, my dog-tags were no longer in it.

Now, all that remains is a tree in the grounds of Corps Headquarters.  
The current cohort of the officer class were polite to me, corporeal.  
Long out of service, to them I was the stranger, not knowing how  
I knew her. Her ten-year memorial; their comfort of a country's club.

She gave me the greatest gift: the gift of understanding.



## Three Miles up the Hamble

The disruptive pattern on the pale blue, from the reflected  
cloud's white, suggest the chill through continued changing time.  
All I see is a clear surface, rippled with endless shallow W's  
that scratch the canvas, yet beneath the outer cover, shallows

cloak the cold of this collective season. On the surface,  
a man cruises his dwarfed kayak along the liquid path  
between moored boats, chickless battery hens, coots unraild.  
A dog stands proud, uncaring, on the deck, a card without a pack.

Metallic masts counter the bank's rush of greens and browns corralled.  
Timberland of silver waiting down to the sea again; chandlers stripped  
of the sailing sales of summer. Winter, masterless. The voluble  
with their crystal voices, refresh the winter water sitting in the pub.

Clouds above the eyeline of the window, below, something of reflection  
and yet of sky, travel the winds, reflect a grey meeting in the middle.  
Masts without a sail, boats without a soul, rings without a finger.

## Leucippe

When I was a kid  
we didn't have a telly 'til I was twelve years old.  
My parents returned to Britain and I was rehomed  
in England. The cathode ray would dilate to an eye  
after the black and whites had re-won the war for us.

It was the music.  
The music endures in the corroded addresses of memory,  
Casey Jones's Cannonball Express, if preserved correctly,  
was a tootlin' an' a rollin'. Someone, maybe David Cassidy,  
was riding on snowy white horses, presumably to get away.

Why white horses?  
*The manes of the dancing horses of Vienna*, she said.  
As I squinted through horizontal, stinging rain, leaning on wind,  
they looked innocent yet malevolent to me. The waving of the Solent  
juggled in sound and fury, flailing the sunken beach in spumes.

Leucippe  
dances the white horses of an old man's beard in the wind,  
contemplating complicated interwoven women, considering  
a lifetime's wondering in search of magic potions of a Middle C  
revealed in music, song and words in poems on and below the fret.

## Grapeshot

The carpet was new, nothing else. My grandfather had fallen on floorboards while his sons continued playing darts. I'll remember you, he said as I picked him up. If he meant in his will, he didn't.

This is a town pub: the toilet's outside, the floor's tiles terracotta and beer comes straight from the barrel served across an uncluttered bar. A simple spectrum of spirits served – but food there isn't. Never has been. Nuts or scratchings.

Yellowing newspaper cuttings, a metal plate advertising a long dead brewery with a horse and dray adorn the walls. I'd asked after their Boxing Day hours, being a Thursday. *Depends who's asking* echoed the voice down the telephone line.

The manager remembered me  
*your dad, he was well presented and upright.*  
*My father was a military man, I said.*

Forty years he'd owned the pub.

There was a vineyard too, hence *The Bunch of Grapes*.  
Fine English wines, I was told, which was news to me,  
a once regular, a once frequent.  
Intrigued, I bought a bottle of their finest, kept out the back.  
It fizzed, bubbled and popped correctly,  
a nice addition to Boxing Day tea.  
It wasn't worth thirty quid. Mind, the memories were.

## A Yew, a Brook and an Inn

I

There is a yew tree in the grounds of the Saxon church, perhaps sixth century, that I have talked to, many times. This tree echoes through my life, like memory. They thrived on corpses, so wisdom says. I touched it with each visit,

and still live, still thinking in blue to the yew's black silence. Close to here, where the Meon river babbles its brookness, a little grid-square map-centimetre north of Corhampton, the hamlet of Exton sits a fraction off the A32, corralling my then favourite pub:

The Shoe Inn. To return there, through time, revolving place, it still is. The bar splices two long walls, one shelved with that morning's freshly baked bread, waiting to fly out the door, the other a framed expanse of coastal Hampshire mapped in grids and contours.

This quilted patchwork of colours is the territory of one of my lives. Although not nine there have been many, identified without by uniform or pay check, within by displaced thoughts like jigsaw maps with unkempt contours and no explained colours defining land or sea.

II

Canterbury to the east with its great cathedral. I read the lesson eight hundred and eight Christmases after Becket was slain. About shepherds tending sheep by black night. This turbulent shepherd quarrelled with a King, as I would quarrel incalculant through each of many lives.

To the west, the Black Mountains, the Usk the thread for two decades. Two children replete my life from here, this neck of the woods an Indian summer. Loughborough, and the army, where I owned my first house and had met my first wife. Now, in my sixth decade,

the map on my wall has the thin blue line of the Chelt, sized the same as the Meon, babbling towards the Severn and the sea. Most of the Shoe's map was blue, most of the Chelt's course dull grey sprawling housing estate concrete washed clean. Zen and my first house,

of our own. Milbrook Street, the mill long gone, the brook the Chelt that named. Here it emerges from its tunnelled trajectory under the town, no need of bridging, no source of problems to modern town planners. Except when, as now more often than planners' projections, it floods.

## The Empty Quarter

There is a silence in my house. Not the quiet  
that your ears can't hear, but a tactile thing,  
a felt silence like the felt absence of longing.

There is no flip-flap-flop as he rotates his head  
this way and that, his wigwam ears clapping together  
like a pleased young girl. No echoed breathing

a counterpoint to my own, no whimper as his feet  
paw the air and legs rotate, nerved from within  
his dreamworld. No ice-berg presence on the sofa

no clomp clomp clomp up the stairs, no booming bass  
of his big five-nine bark, rumbling round the room.  
No mournful eyes turned towards me signalling time

for food. My dog is in Hampshire, a holiday's home  
that came unexpected. I buggered my knee, can't ride  
my trike, Zen gets walks on my old stamping ground.

It is as if my trip to Hampshire was a reconnaissance,  
researching where my dog could go as I became immobile.  
My dog is not here. He's somewhere else, without me.

## The Plurals of We

Like the two legs of a football match, but both played away,  
a second coming to Hampshire in as many months.  
Spanning Christmas, high-octane, a brave move: we'd take the cat.  
Her constant staccato to accompany the base grumble of an anxious

dog. He'd been here during half-time, I'd injured my knee,  
couldn't move: Tracey took him home as she would again when  
I broke my ribs during Lockdown. Going back, to the geography  
of my parent's dog; my distant life, the stormy furore of the furious

fifties having weathered the roaring forties, where an albatross  
brought sign of refuge if it stayed alive, with the remove of time,  
of space, of affection. Gapped by a time-piece that revolved decades,  
not hours. Kit for the cat and food for the dog, fuel for the fortunes.

I would need the flight case. Too much to take in my day sack.

An embarrassing layer of dust coats all stuff beneath my bed,  
the space gathers clumps of dog hair like a black hole gathers light.  
A museum, holding artefacts of a modern antiquity. Although  
the past, a life-raft, a memory my mind clung to a false prediction

of future. I have to live in the present. The case, a 'BCE' to the contents'  
'AD' that proved only a pause like an ice-age, all aeons post-archaeology's  
seam known as marriage. These were the middle we's clothes, left behind from a  
retreated high-water mark. The second we's clothes stored in the first

we's case, now taking the stuff of dog, of cat and a little of me to the third we's  
house. Complications of seeking succour post marriage, and making do.

The label holds her handwriting. Her address, the address I moved out  
of that Spring, with a flatness of step. An address that used to go round,  
round and round, in the register of my brain. The pointer is labelled regret,  
insane, an ear worm of memory not to forget I'm back from Hampshire.

The river Hamble a hologram. The third we had too much space  
between the 'w' of we and the 'I' of me. The second we's clothes go back  
in the flight case, the thrrrrr of the closing zip ratcheted along  
the three dimensions of closure. There is no name on the case.

Her name, with 'Twin of my Soul' etched a decade ago in Arabic kohl  
on my ribs, the label, the broken zip of memories, all that remains.  
When this first we used the word 'we' on the phone  
she signalled I'm happy now, content. Your work here is done.  
When the third we did, she signalled: *not you*.  
At least, not for now.



## Wessex

Flavours from a past historic tense revive olfactory sensory mind  
that the place I lived longest of my own volition was the  
Royal Kingdom of Gwent, one of only two Royal counties.  
Without contrition the covering force was the Gwent Police,  
the County Council: Monmouthshire; bureaucracy can't trump class.

If my sons, at the Cathedral school in Hereford, were errant  
they had their collars felt by West Mercian. Politics relabels counties,  
redrawing squiggles on a map, random replacing rivers. A new model Army,  
anchoring, grounding. Throughout history the past is still now, except for suiting  
volatile agenda. Roots for the rootless, labels welcome identity.

Gone.

The army canteen cooked and served a breakfast greater than a full  
English; for me now in my pocket-garden rockets, spinach, chard,  
will do. Against my will or worse judgement, watercress  
with eggs, scrambled, a metaphor for my peppered brain.

There is a Watercress Line in Wessex, seasoned by old steam trains,  
leaving a line of breath to their terminal stop, Arlesford,  
a nudge of miles east of Winchester, lean petty paced  
bends of the Itchen from its source at the picturesque village

of Cheriton. This river once watered the nation's first capital city,  
when the Saxons of Sutton Hoo to the right of time ruled the lands.

These were the days when men wore broadswords across their backs;  
no concept of International Women's Day. Sanctified by monks.  
A thousand years later the river, only just the length of a marathon,  
clear chalk waters the breath for the smoky flavours of watercress.



## Flight Paths

We took our token from the ticket machine, as if awaiting the meat counter at the local super, turning to take our place at a metred interval of final approach on the glide path to getting a table.

The wrong season's summer sun beat pressure cooked LockDowners on a late September Sunday lunch with twenty-four degrees on the clock.

Tables arranged like helicopter drop zones where rotors whir a virus distance from bodies and a sneeze is looked on with scorn. Drinks, offered on a tray, stared at with a chess master's thought until the instruction to take them.

The apron is spaced to accommodate a new elaborate wingspan, the old

village pub with new contours, the gleeful distances eased by lack of rain.

I am allowed to sit and enter the outdoor, ignoring the patterned one-way system of the apron. A short-cut to the toilet, a short stagger where a stagger is unfuelled by the inn's liquid fuels. Lunch comes in courses like passenger classes of modern-day luxury travel, where luxury,

the new norm, was corralled by a virus. Lock Down is the new found Eremite, self-reflection the only alternative to Netflix, the late autumn sun without the customary chill.

This is how to continue my life until the shell of a craft is stored in the desert sands, an aeronautical graveyard. Not the emotional sine wave of the past but with the warmth and gentle glow of a take-off slot. Canopy and canapés.

## Eighty-Six Miles and a Few Decades

later, I still hold the same Viking surname  
I was born with. But not when I wrote. Could write with a pen.  
No longer the violent apparition that refuses to publish under  
names I did not choose. Map squares from Winchester, I dwell

two hundred miles from Canterbury, a dozen miles from Gloucester,  
out of reach of family bonds, living at last to my choices. Here I watch the town's  
rugby team ply their trade in the same different game  
I played. With a time-attributed body ravaged by disease, the Army,

high-level sport, disease is the new growing old. I study Greek literature in the  
cathedral's Parliament rooms where the august body decamped in Chaucer's time  
of plague. The street plan of the city of Gloucester  
was built from Winchester's template. When I cycled the dozen miles

along the C9 from Bishops Waltham to that county town, I would enter  
from the south past the great statue of Alfred the Great. Two decades,  
it would take, two decades to find a kind of home, free of people  
from the past, just me, my dog, my cat and my poetry.

I love Gloucester, its cathedral, cheese, old spot pigs, its rugby.  
My long-supporting friend who got me a free pass twitches at every play. Despite  
my love,

I'm Welsh on my certificate and in my heart.

## The Cruel C

Born in the Spring of nineteen thirty-nine, my father was shipped  
to grand relatives at the outbreak of global inferno.  
Schooled in the vernacular of a rural west Kerry farmhand, in later life  
he came not so much from the school of cruel to be kind but the school

of cruel to be cruel. Emotional warfare and coercive control  
are more easily focused on the human mammal than the sheep and cows  
of the country. Give me a child 'till the age of six ...  
yet he failed to own the man.

A post-war Army taught him violence. A family taught him cunning.  
The cunning  
of a cunt.

## Immobile

Whoa-oh, Spastic! Would be the admonition when I was at school for the fool, the idiot and the innocent. Accompanied with a slap

to the face. Now, I am one.

## Parliament Rooms

... a what? What is it I seek out of history? A word, a word of course, but not the binate words 'I do'. Like a desired relationship known through its absence, it lies just beyond my grasp and reach beyond memory and experience but not beyond my knowing;

within the stuff of dreams, surreal imagination. There is an above and a just, only just, this just beneath the surface of my register.

I thought I knew my cathedrals. Canterbury, I read the lesson of shepherds and flocking sheep. Hereford, sons attended the attendant school, Gloucester where I study Greek. The internet told me I'd been stood in the narthex, a word I'm sure I've never heard

thus cannot ever have forgotten. I'm sure. A corridor. It reaches north, away from orientation, it pushes space still owned by the register of the masonry that foundationed history, mortared by power and wealth. It drives like a colon out of the cathedral 's belly

reached along and across stone flags that fulfil the resonant echoed cries of children. Arriving, a short distance from fractal arches where a long-tailed reverb recreates the endless sounds of the choir's reach into humanity. Calling off glass, stained, filial, final, the lazuli

and reds of resurrection, piety or hope. Here, just off left, past the local schools' artwork pinioned to the masonry in the cultured atmosphere in the calm of the centuries' stillness, quiet as Silent Valley, I'd sit and await an enlightened dawn where four or five thousand

years of Western wisdom were deciphered and brought to present life, one of counter-insurrection. In adjacent rooms, when plague pushed Parliament to the safety of the west, Greek is brought to light. Homeric love and fight, seeking gods' insight, masons never missed a trick.

## As West as I Can Go

There is a deep-water port not far from the earth  
that received my mother's ashes, in the way grounding  
accepts the brittle breeze of the fates, furies floundering  
destiny. This port, a haven, a receptor of international gas

that expands and fills the vacancy, grateful, eager, filled.  
The departure of the earth-bound bus, a coming of age,  
with a ticket to the tokens of horizon, a pause, before  
the climax that peers over the edge of decency, acceptability

of shyness. As swollen lips engorge me into the warm embrace  
of extended family, as pink puffed-cheeks of summer's sun  
glances blows off clouds of virgin white, as lightning pricks the solid  
skin of virtue's material calling, so say I to you: the weave of wasted

years condones no lacking tears of lonely calling, yet grieve  
not for what you did but the absence of what you didn't see,  
now tolling.

## Luck Road

I

I never took the one-oh-nine working for AA at Heathrow.  
Wanted to. Never brooked the Atlantic depths at 30,000 feet  
to Boston and its surrounding homes of new English town names,  
neighbour to New Hampshire, new to your house's old Hants.  
Native to Lowell's Confessional school, of Bishop, Plath, Frost;

rested in Vermont where you took to US schooling, you went beyond  
your skiing hills to tell me of the pilgrimage to Robert Frost's last  
laying, as I would you of a visit to Ivor Gurney on my birthday.  
Between us we would trade Top Trumps of the countries  
we had been to, I had a chance in length of time lived,

you would always win by number, interest of experience,  
dancing along the Pampas, tangos in La Puerta de la Madre de Los  
Buenos Aires, Frieda's Mexico, tramping multiple foothills,

cycling the Nile.

For me, who's only known you in later life, your travelling  
sits softer, grown to the flap of filling-fellowship spinnakers  
humbled by the waves of up and down not hello and goodbye.  
For me, my flying days are forfeited by disease and dollar  
for you flight is still forever on the serenity of sailing,

the slue and yaws not yet a yesterday. I lent you a room  
as you transited from Suffolk, gapped before your haven  
in coastal Hampshire. This was not the region of my youth,  
but close enough and you were happy driving me to pubs  
that I remembered, as Luck Rd would have it.

II

Can we locate a vaccine for latent love? Something to smother  
the volatility of treating the present as if inherited  
defects of the past are encoded in prevailing volition?

Lack of antidote for absence, the unvote of spoiled ballot boxes,  
where I love you, toxically unrecorded, the black hole of energy  
a universe afforded genes encoded so deep it weeps beyond voice.

Your house is my calm. My safety blanket, my peace. My release

in the storm of unsheltered forms alien to me. Caillebotte's  
scrapers a bond never mentioned, never moored. Solid parquet

whereas I live in a mayhem uncalibrated to your order. My poems  
composed in the repose of your kitchen, no mess. My favourite space  
in the world that unfurled to my wishes against my statements

could not exist here or anywhere else other than curled  
with my dog and you, a log fire, in maybe Cornwall,  
an unending bottle of port for a storm where I got relief

from both waving and drowning.

Garden fences: all orange and blues more Sylvia Plath  
than Ted Hughes ... ah wait! There's Frieda again. Mexico,  
there East Africa, fused in your living room. And swallows.  
I sit in early season Spring sunshine, the sun coming up

over the Channel and the Isle of Wight and think of Frost's Mending  
Wall and gaps two can pass abreast. At my feet is your fashioned rock,  
adorned with a mason's cursive calligraphy in bright lapis lazuli.

This upper boulder may have come from Afghanistan itself, knowing  
you, or a chandlers on yachting shores. I shall take the stone's advice:

*Be Still.*



# Ex Cathedra

## The Toppled Bottle

lay on its side  
like a fallen Eiffel Tower with its holes filled in.  
For how long? Certainly the eighteen months  
of uncertain Lock Downs. Unperfumed distance.

Uprighted, liberty, fraternity, during a helpful Spring's spring  
clean, but not by me, I caress the curved glass, ex cathedra,  
embrace the translucent purple of the graded timeless arcs  
whose crenelated top clerics like a castle on the beach.

Gun-slug, my thumb gives a squeeze before thought  
predicts the pixelated puff of moistures, aerified dew  
of predawn mist that hovers and expands, a squirt  
of condensed moisture, tears of a cloud, settling on my skin.

Nebulous, veiled, nosing the smells of memory, splotched  
settling on my shoulder, a colony, clinging on for days;  
I don't wash it off, who will know? The synesthetic cipher  
of woman. Ingrid Bergman, Lauren Bacall, here, in my room.

Audrey Hepburn's little black number, Breakfast at Tiffany's,  
a quarter million at Christies'. El Dolores, to save many souls.  
Moon rivers, as elusive as squirts that spurt slowly through time,  
dressed by Givenchy, of course. Film + fashion can = humanity.

*Can I have my perfume back? You asked.  
I need the bottle for a poem.  
I have an empty one you can have in its place.  
Of course, I said, loathed to lose my lucid memory.  
Very Irresistible. Givenchy don't make it any more, you see.*

## The Lick of the Lock

Yesterday

I heard the scratched kiss of the key  
then felt the taste of the ratcheted  
penetration; meaning unlocked.

My ears triggered the address of memory catching  
the registers of loss. My son. He has one.  
My friend, ex-walker of late dog, plant diviner  
of forked yew and moonstone.

She has one.

My interiority, years of disabled inferiority bereft of agency,  
a fish on a hook bleeding money, batched in loss for the all-seeing  
property Agent, authority of my life, they have one, can come and go  
as they please. A tenant, after outlay of thousands, is not a customer.

In Lock Down, on Benefits, triple-A rating, I could pay my rent.

Like the pause after a poem's reading, the brittle liminal coating  
of shyness and pride; insemination, curation and birth,  
of issuing out as the key issues in. As the tongue of the lock  
yells its retreat into taut anxious springs I wait for the gust

of the door and the tongue to engage; in my mind I run run run  
for though I know she has a key the thrill of her entry is now  
but like lost sperm in a hanky, a volatile visceral loss.

Perhaps it's time to get another key cut.

## Sew What?

Beneath my desk is a Zephyr, not Shelly's West Wind  
eddying my room, but a sewing machine. Its 1930's box saves it  
from time's marks, a faded memory of my grandfather's

trade killed by off-the-peg. Google assumes  
I want to sell it and offers fifty options none of them knowledge,  
none nuanced understanding. Material worth.

All I want to know is who was the wind of Zephyr?  
Fred Astaire would dance in the studio before the final fit sewed  
in like the last stitch through the septum of a sailor

signifying the patterns of time were waltzed.  
The Agha Khan would be measured, fitted, finalised. Order five  
hundred. Marlene Dietrich let no one measure

her inside leg. But a fine tailor's eye works fine.  
*James Bond won't wear your suits any more*  
in puerile dispute the author said.  
*My customers don't read your books,*  
Anderson & Shepherd's reply.

## Lost Wax

The tricorn colours came in a sweep of shades  
that blurred distinction and carried the eye  
into the foreground of sable's bloom. A yellowy whitish  
khaki-brown that could rotate in early morning light  
and carousel brilliance, a gun-mettle cypher of blue.

Aflame, the wick burns itself proud, encased  
harbour for the indigo intensity that grounded  
chemistry, layered reds and oranges morphed  
into yellows and the white of heat, like a tree's bark  
that grumbled into a whining squeal of appreciation.

Deep in the lyrics, the wick maintains its compass  
point to heaven, as it does what it does, it loses itself,  
lowers as burning passes, a ghost of soot  
like a dark dream of unconscious joy infiltrating  
the air but gone like you, the lost wax of a candle.

## Shadows in the Night

Night and day are not black and white like a month's worth of zebra crossings. This night the dark is cut like a surgical scar across my garden, deep, a closed door, cupboard black

released where the moon's light cuts from behind my shoulder, over the roofline of the terraces. This pale white is not the colours of snow that peaked impressionist's sable, the purples and mauves that dance and shimmer in and out.

Tonight the night is blue, dark blue, darker than the ocean. As dark as blue can be without a thinking black. The stars aggregate small questions into big answers. Not the brushstrokes of Van Gough, the subject matter of Lautrec. Techniques of god.

## Fires Fly

Fireflies stride the closed lids like stars  
that refuse the somnolence of sleep. The pop  
and puzzle that lights the inner recesses  
of a brain's reach, when I try to switch off  
my eyes pick at a retina refusing to fade  
when all the rest of me wants is sleep.

Awake, my eyes are as welcome as my breath,  
my heart, the ebb and flow of life pre-death  
where I can scout the landscape, but not a future.

## A Moon to Steer her By

The bulb, unprotected, helps navigate the world again, pushing shafts room-deep to question cobwebs with quiet quivered intensity.

A fourth gypsy moth, once more lonely, but with will within illumines the sea and the sky and takes St Frances around the world with one hand.

The moth orbits, attempts re-entry, finds the friction, the rub too hot. Risky, rickki-tikki-tavi, cobra-goading mongoose inverts life's logic.

It lacks the beauty of a butterfly or poet's metaphor sonority, its children eat my neglected cupboard suit, silently long hung.

This is not the lightbulb moment as the moth's DNA conceived.

Likewise, attracted to the light, I bump against its twin hot pain, centrifuged into an outer space of loneliness only to be pulled again.

The moth, the tuber, in my own life reveal not unrequited craving for the uncovered bulb, a particular person, each a singular woman,

for the many stanza of my curricular vitae's poems, are they a form, of form, navigation points of way; or a collective for love itself?



## Giving a Toss

The stone spins, flips the waveless lake, heads always up  
or was it tails? A rummage of dribble on the shore I'm sure,  
tracing bubbles, abandoned troubles, hoppers of hope, endured.

Images flipflop, a silicon switch, positive-negative valence  
ACDC'd like mood polarities exceeding bi-polar. Swings, tired  
tide-waves sweep in and sinusoidal out like I do I will who gives

a kiss or is it a toss? Divorce courts as busy as a condemned church,  
the pussy willow weeps its catkins in the waves of autumn wind:  
even a cat's life runs out at nine, stones never flipped that far.

## Are You There?

*For Kate Harcourt*

The dual banks, dips and swoops to the waters of the Wye.  
This road, the fortieth red 'A', was my exit and entry  
to the closest thing I've had to home. Welcome to Wales  
west, welcome to escape east. Now, March, the wild garlic

will be mingling with the iridescent purples of the bluebells  
on the bank away from you. The river runs, curves, disappears  
to the sea, no chance to ask the same question, why? As the road  
lands, easing flat, it approaches the roundabout, my eyes

swivel right, every time. Before my foot eases the accelerator  
as I pass the circle out, my eyes ease left, every time. I lived  
there for weeks, between two lives, weak, not living at all.  
On that road's bank, this time of year, the daffodils grow, silent

asleep for a year as I was, awakening to the spring sun  
beauty, nature, hope, as every left and right, I talked to you.

## Seasoned

My ingredients are words, usually best fresh  
recombined across the terroirs, same nutrition.  
Sometimes simmered, gently warmed to agitate  
the ear and the mind, sometimes poached,  
proteins lengthened and twisted, recombined  
for those where raw doesn't reign. Sometimes boiled.

Degrees of heat like the metaphors of anger  
but more finely graduated. Rage boils over,  
annoyance simmers, sous vice voce, steaming.

## Viewfinding

*On reading Anastasia Taylor-Lind's 'One Language'*

I have 60 leaves of filtering through which to look at life.  
Four years full time prism of a PhD in poetry. I regard both  
as I imagine you see the scene through

the aperture of pain that foregrounds my re-write of personal  
history, the f-stop of memory fades like a print over-chemicaled.  
I do dispassion. Sectioned time my prime lens, stopped down  
protection verging on why bother, rewinds of emotional involvement,

overexposed, caring too much when the cared for doesn't care,  
the dodge and burn of class in art too late, now we punctuate  
rarely. But you. You. You still shoot, deflect, over-expose

in poetry. For the first time in forever, I can't finish a book.  
You shoot broken sonnets in the sonnetry of precision  
where the surgeon's know is predicated on time and the empathy  
of still being alive to tell the tale through imagery matched with words.

## Mushroom Clouded

There is a ground zero, depths below the surface  
without a square for time on its three dimensional  
chessboard, no back-gamma'd quantastic forces  
where the spooky attraction through all distance  
still holds true but sine waves alternative  
frequencies resting flat, resisting magnetism spikes,

a direct cliché eluding the elide of absence.  
It is here where the mushroom cloud splits the atom;  
energy begins to well, on the surface I am well  
despite the running dry as I try to, well,  
survive a tsunami beyond the parabola of a graph  
returning once too often to the well-intentioned

empty echoes of half-life memory. In the fission  
of a fillip's moment, as if god could click  
each Geiger counter's revolve of an ever-turning  
hour glass, a finger and thumb and the universe  
turns to rubberneck the sinusoidal rhythm of distress  
where 236 and 42 amalgamate and emulsify beyond

a chemical chimera's reach. The twin polarities  
of Jacob's ladder allow angels and you and me to descend  
rung-by-rung on what turns about to be a one-way street  
through and towards the multiverse of love, ever expanding,  
ever beyond a mortal's grasp and reach. For to love,  
is to look up. To explode through the angle of a moment,

in quicker time than the quivering lipped question 'why?'  
and gravity embryos the body into a global shape:  
elbows on knees, palms glued to sockets, back bent  
through living not through time, when the forehead squeezes  
like an oyster's smile and the clench of clotted  
centred eyelids cannot hold, when the guttural

eviscerated sound reasons up, not like a happy girl's whimper  
or the groan of a little death, up through tiers of reason  
without noticing the friction of resistance to the truth,  
through the echo chamber where two solids split yet one stuff remains,  
seeps soaks gushes through the windows to a conjoined soul, sight  
unseen.

## Jabbering

The pin prick of the pin hole camera  
squirts a jet of light into the space and tubes,  
the coruscating course of blood and energy  
that is me. The me of my nation's culture,  
not a naked host of a rude violation: the scours and skulks  
on unbended knees, bringing the economy to its own.

Protection prowls like ink let loose in water,  
a drunkard's walk of Brownian motion that spreads  
with immunity, inserted with need and urgency  
and emergency procedures that ventilate  
a purer air. To needle, to bait, to aggravate

and distort the lens of reason, punctuated  
by headlines on that which is no longer news.  
A sharper focus, to pierce the most thickest  
of skins.

## Winds of Change

Three cups flow the rhythms of a sentence  
Lined on poems of horizontal plain.  
Fast, faster, slow, fast, stop and go again.  
Gyroscope in aqua, gambolling the wind.  
The vanity of tales, caught troubled by torrents  
That flow and feel the currents of see-through  
Air. An unrelenting pointer signs unseen.  
The many vanes of weathercocks stock still.

The cat jumps the windowsill, the door closed,  
peering in darkened room from outside light;  
open mouthing cries for entry go unheard.  
The door is at last opened. Lost, the cat,  
having relearnt self-dependency in hunt will  
not be welcome, no longer peering in from without.

## Counting my Eggs

Thinking within the box of the first dozen years,  
life spent abroad, there are spaces: two eggs missing.  
One cashed in north Yorkshire where I broke my left arm  
or was it right? playing chicken with a wall, maybe I was six.

The other a refund in Belfast as troubles started  
with a capital 'T'. A silence to a weekend  
down in the Ulster south. Not the silence of a sulking  
child: a secrecy quiet, of absence, stillness

beyond peace. A silence that clings, cashed cocoons in release  
of hush, restless disquiet pressures like a squeeze;  
insides come to a simmer, that somewhere of the soul.

I can't remember the ifs. Breaking my arm or the saga  
memory or family lore? Lessons like lectures.  
The Dark Mourne lives with me. Not memory, I feel it.



## Go West Young Man

I stand flamingoed, one leg entombed in Paris's  
hardened dressing, seeking balance, seeking common ground.  
Outside school. My late seventies seat on a Saturday night,  
my outstretched thumb seeks direction, a bearing of wait.

A man drives by, glances, but going north. Stops. Turns.  
'Hop in.' Which is all I can do. 'Westgate?' he asks. I nod,  
pleased because it's where I need. Odd, though, because although  
the direct route from where I stand, this road runs north, not west.

## cosmography

*For Kitrina Douglas*

I was taught to play golf at eight. Later in life, knowledgeable, I'd shoot a Ram Tour balata, coached by a bloke, unschooled, who knew more. Physics was my play up and play the game old son while in class. The Ram rotates backwards in flight, curves drawn or fading,

pimples sucking air. As I often did. If struck correctly. It lands softly, puckering the green; I never did. The galaxy opened by my mind is a hundred thousand light years across – black holes cupped white – nothing compared to the first of my hoped for million kisses the pink

and purples of spectroscopy beyond a boarding school handy-capping boys. Physics my drama old sport, to know there are more atoms in a glass of water than glasses of water in the seas; explain that with the Master's glass of blanco sherry. If all the molecules to period

the world's oceans were Ram Tour golf balls, my Watson wedge, 69 degrees of separation, now words are my physics, words that par the poems I would wish to land softly on a green, not of my choosing. Yet the contours are my course.

Now, the solar wind through the empty space of my vacuumed energy is the cosmography of astronomical units measuring both big and bigger; free electron of a grapheme molecule like balata words are to me now. Physics or poetry? And, not Or.

## Midnight's Chimes

I had always thought the clocks belled twelve twice  
in marching forward and falling back each half cycle  
of a British year. Twenty-four clicks to eternity.

Fine friend, you would have been ten today. For the rest  
of the world there's Diwali, Halloween, telly'd sport.  
Netflix for those who are able to be chilled, not cold.

We eased into Daylight Saving today, though I couldn't save you.

Summer past. In that hour that was to be your last  
you came to see me, not as I thought – so a wise friend  
told me – to ask for help, but to say goodbye.

As I raise a glass, clocks twitch past the pole star,  
beat another sixty, then, so I thought, belled twelve again.  
I lost merely an hour. Merely an hour, and you.

For you, like your planet-heart, at 12.45 that night,  
your clock stopped.

In fact, so it seems, as I'd thought for thirty years,  
the clocks don't retreat at one, don't visit twelve twice.

The clocks go back from two to one, as did  
you and  
I.

and the Bazaar

## Mark Doty

Smart man.  
Changed my life.  
By giving me permission  
to accept the permission given me  
by Heaney.  
Or at least Marie.  
To write, without commission,  
a private soldier,  
my own brand of poetry.

Youtube delivers workshops  
unlike the long uphill hike  
of the academy,  
the frequent glottal stops  
of life's remission  
help me see  
I'm not blocked,  
just seeking navigable aids  
in the fog of a night of no light

when I cannot see  
split helium atoms  
strident, too intense,  
uncommon sense, just me.

## a la Frank O'Hara

It's 0610 in Cheltenham, ten past seven in old money,  
the clocks stopped for an hour ten days since.

- I know what time to feed the cat

I tell Tracey when she offers to put it back,  
knowing my fingers can't operate the little knob.

But I also know, in my heart, it isn't that.

Lucy would have adjusted it, when she delivered the coffee  
was it just yesterday? If I'd asked.

Or later when she comes to help with the rat poison.

I used to use the analogue to know when to feed my dog.

Not the cat. Shifting dinner time a quarter every few days.

Zen was still alive when the clocks marched forward,

died in that witching hour in April, Bill's birthday.

And the date of his death, too. I lose the last of you

when I turn back time but can't turn back time.

I long for it too, Joe. What would Frank have me do?

It's 0840 in Cheltenham, Joe. This time its currency's new.

Is that what you think he'd say, if he were alive today?

- Have another drink.

I will, New York. In my will.

## This Poem Has No Title

converse

this poem  
has  
no title

and if it did  
in absentia  
it would be called This Poem.

This poem  
has no body  
no New Roman Text and if it did  
ex cathedra  
it would be about

a bishop  
arched across

a chessboard

Sicilian solit defence defeated  
a Queen with no seat.

This Poem  
if it had legs  
would be a poor King's Indian schoolchild  
like a score of faded notation

just a dancer  
musical glossed lyrics  
in silence  
a priori  
without a dance

## Sonnet for a Songbird

To do or not to do when in two minds,  
twin polarities: fate and evidence.  
To maintain intuition tantamount to faith  
by-product symposia battered by tempest.  
That faith, currency of communication,  
feels frayed and ragged as the tyre flattened  
by puncture. The sticking plaster is not love,  
but decency, loyalty, sense, communion.

It is right, ethically correct, an ethereal connect  
to offer the chance of redemption. Even if the consumptive  
clutches for air, the dying man his will, the religious  
the last call to prayer, enlightenment is realisation,  
that a relationship's revitalising breath is not romance  
but the chance to talk and a future formed anew.



## The Lion's Teeth

The sandled, white-socked foot sweeps through the wild grass and clover,  
the child falling to her knees with the ease privileged by the young,  
the fit and the able. – What's this mummy?

- It's a dandelion.

- Why?

- Why is it a dandelion? So that's it's not a buttercup or daisy.

- What's a dandy?

- Umm.

- What's that mummy? – It's a dandelion too.

- Where's its yellow gone? – Umm, it's yellow drained away.

With the agency of a finger and thumb the child flicks the stem,  
severing its greenness from the ground.

- Hold it up to your face and blow.

The girl complies.

The flower's fruit, each a bleached peacock's tail, tug,  
loosen, free themselves, lift in the breeze, pinned to the wind  
by a ghostly butterfly collector.

Until ungripped, transplanted troubadours, floating down  
like spent balloons.

Three more puffs of custard dragon breath frees all seeds from their base.

- Why have they gone, mummy. – Umm. To go and be dandelions  
somewhere else.

- Will they come back? – No, they won't come back. That's how they  
propagate.

- Will I go through the proper gate, mummy?

- Yes you will, my sweetheart,  
home is where we have to take you in  
so you can always come back  
to your roots.

## Cut Short

*For Sophie Flowers*

Flowers were culled to provide colour into my doleful kitchen.  
Now the daffodils' trumpet tune has lost its timbre in decay,  
deflated horns shrunk in on time, the droop and loss of power  
the new display. Coronas no longer glance and shine, filaments

blown like overused bulbs, popped, tepals no longer petaled in chorus.  
The concert orchestra gone home, heavy with nature's hangover.  
Mood's music in coloured hews brought to me to spring a rhythm  
in a dissonant life, the discord of a scything sighs heavy in my house.

A blaze and blast, cut off too soon, losing the lustre of the host,  
entombed in a quiet crowded bunch shelved in second-hand light, vicarious  
glow  
separated from the congregation, now more lonely, clustered, forlorn  
penned  
promises. A cessation importing luminosity as the harvester imports grain.

The lunar new year brings take-aways as a library providing knowledge  
shot shooting stars, faded wakes of a dozen yellow comets, there and  
gone.

The half-filled pint glass of water no longer lowers.

Yet.

The hosts of bygones turn ghosts to concrete memories, as if you who  
once,  
twice, accreting, filled a space as a gas fills a room, and were here

having cut short a future fortified from failure to come in addition  
like the plus of an equation away from an equals addicted to the pull of  
words.

On the other hand, when leaves carry sentence like broken taps uprooting  
nothing  
but a recollection of dejection compiled by the broom-master after

the audience has gone. An observer on the balcony remains to peer  
through  
closed curtains and disassemble meaning from the remove of another life  
lived  
on the edge of the acceptable and the mortise joint of misformed plugging  
tenderness and yew. In these new found days the sun slants to a higher  
grade.

Where the once-proud petals have peeled back, drooped like weary guests

bruised from beach to mustard, back to sand, their translucent fractal  
edges  
capture light and glance like west-facing stained-glass rain. Alive again.  
Stems stand tall and straight, tasting spring.

## Beneath the Waves

Do all dreams start *in medias res*? This one was framed in my mother's house<sup>1</sup> but I don't know how I know that. What was happening the moment before my sub-conscious opened the door and the dream-controller clicked the remote control's 'On'? This was no house my mother owned, this roost was a bungalow in the Welsh wilderness<sup>2</sup> that our sons were brought into from their births in hospital<sup>3</sup>. But, here, it was my mother giving me permission to drive her car. As I walked the back garden, it occurred that MS might run interference on my ability for driving<sup>4</sup>. It was a red one in my dream, she'd owned a flashy Nissan in the eighties. On the verge of the private road between our houses was a multitude of Postman Pat vans. Which one was hers? Mind sound travels in dreams<sup>5</sup>. The red one, but not the wheel barrow. The vans dispersed, leaving a box-shell around a bicycle which I pedalled<sup>6</sup>.

Kim<sup>7</sup> was in the garden. She wore white trousers<sup>8</sup> or culottes, adorned with multi-pastel flowers and leaves, a pale block-coloured blouse, I forget which colour. You look beautiful I said, classy and elegant, perhaps you'll believe it now. She smiled<sup>9</sup>. I cadenced up the country lane to a bus stop<sup>10</sup>. I was going a few miles up to a shop, but the bus was going cross-country to stop at multiple villages. It was packed<sup>11</sup>. I fell asleep, asleep in a dream when asleep, squeezed between passengers at the back. I farted. I was embarrassed but when I awoke from my Russian Doll sleep-state, still in my dream, to be aware I wasn't on a bus but in my bed and didn't have to be embarrassed. There was no one to take offence. Then I ascended<sup>12</sup> into proper mid-state, between two worlds, neither asleep nor awake<sup>13</sup>, or perhaps both, and the dream was gone.<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> My mother, passed fifteen years, took a decade and a half to come say hello;

<sup>2</sup> in life she came to Llanfihangel Crucorney, but the bungalow was too cold

<sup>3</sup> so she contented herself with the Special Care Baby Unit's warmth.

<sup>4</sup> Multiple Sclerosis drives my life as poetry, perhaps alcohol, drive my dreams,

<sup>5</sup> to find colour, to find sound, within the black-and-white frequencies. Rebirth,

<sup>6</sup> as is my trike, pink for breast cancer, an extra wheel for balance, mobility.

<sup>7</sup> An ex-girlfriend, living proof that not all men seek their mother as a companion,

<sup>8</sup> who dressed by preference in biker's black, if memory serves,

<sup>9</sup> tall as a tree, her eyes, her smile, elevated a presence to that of an angel,

<sup>10</sup> *one stop short of God Central*. The Church of St Michael, Corner of the Wood.

<sup>11</sup> Buses in rural Wales, like my bed, always empty, except for the needing,

<sup>12</sup> there was never a double-decker to see the beauty above hedge rows

<sup>13</sup> lulling the beta frequencies of thinking into an alpha state of sleep. Until

<sup>14</sup> I meet my mother and my soulmate in another state of life, I smile and wave.

## The Empty Half

The words stopped  
coming as if a giant sized twelve paw had stepped  
on the hose and the a's and e's and o's built up a backlog  
of pressure that extended the rubber like a pig's bladder filled  
with a football's air. With the pump released from the pressure,  
gutturals began, seeping out through a clotted throat, if I have the stomach.

The rains came and washed away the two pools of bubbled bile  
and fluids, white and airy like a bride's breath, but still alive.  
The patch-work fluid of translucence, around his mouth agape  
left fractal patterns and ox-bow lakes, leaked past the lolling tongue  
in death. The sun burnt off the stain at 2.48 that day, as I drank beer

the bubbled white phlegm-like puddles lived through the burn.

Alive, the big tail swept a low table clear quicker  
than a radar sweep detected danger serpents under't.  
I could always read his eyes, which he used as a FLIR  
to search the lost souls beyond their owners' reach.

Iris pulled back near to the white, a thin rim of defensive line,  
pupils deep black with the early milky cloud of a gone-away.

Belly extended like a malnourished child, mouth agape  
as you'd expect in death, clear juices running, no petit mort.

My visceral wail at the vets, him too big for the doorway,  
four giant paws clinking the jamb

when Simon picked him up to kennel him enhearsed  
his four legs stuck out straight, into clear air,  
horizontal,  
but his tail flapped down loose like a drunkard's wave,  
not enough rigor in its mortise.

thirty quid for cremation en masse, ton-twenty  
for the single return of whatever's in the tray.  
Si, can I borr ... *I don't want your money*, he said.

Bed at half nine, he's already outside, I open  
the kitchen door. He clambered the stairs at a quarter to one,  
I tell Sam in the chip shop, he has more street smarts than me.  
He permits me to spring another cider though I've already  
out pissed my protection pants.  
He was whimpering.

He downed the stairs, closer to the world's end. He whimpered still.

I found  
an ex's dressing gown, turned on the back-room light. Couldn't see him.  
The whimpering stopped. He came asking for help, I told  
Street Smart Sam, I couldn't help him. I cried.  
*No, he didn't*, said Sam, *he didn't come asking for help.*  
*He came to say goodbye.*

## Painting a Thousand Words

The setting of the sitting for a painting stays through time beyond which is a conflated composition. Nonetheless a switch, convoluting paint to define the foreground icon of the saint it will learn to caress the canvass becoming a portrayal of its blended constitution; restitution with the alcohol of dilution will not setback from the beauty of the form that is still life, the life-blood modelling before my eyes yet somehow the blotchy knot of this is real life. Resistance to the art will not erase your grace's nature for it doesn't take a sunrise to know the sun

exists. Even at night the moon will slant its blink; it doesn't take your eyes in oblique glance to know love can still persist. Your colours come to me through waves, the curves of many sinusoidal chromatic crests seeking relief; primarily the red stenographed in the flashes framed by your anger, but red is also hot, hotter than girls-next-door. The plain Jane of the spectrum hotter than the English gypsy rose. Yet the chakra heart vibrates green, the green of your eyes that come in splashes of love and attention, of care, of the nurse, as

you check that I am there. There is the blue. It could be worse: you told me once to remember you are cold, not the cold of distance -- of hidden depth. Yet, in perspective, you are a reflective hotter than the simmered aquamarine, born in lapis lazuli that forever raises the colour of the room, from the war-torn mines of Asia, that resembles the compartment of my life. Sometimes there is a doppler shift as you leave and suck the air out of my life to leave a vacuum that is the inner pain of outer space. The tattoos'

technology allowed to move from blacken bruise to the hues of butterflies and morning dews refracting the emotions that glue the spectrum of my vitality into the kaleidoscope that twinkles then dies fading the wrinkles of a weathered face onto which you try to sketch a life less off putting. Ugly is only skin deep too. Looking at an Auerbach from the line of the mounting wall and the third dimension of the paint comes into view. The Manhattan skyline of the layers as the purple fades, swirling to blue, the deeper tones scream without microphones singing rugged perfection nonetheless.

The painting needs no decoding for it abstracts away from meaning yet issues beauty encrypted in the colours, diffuse blending of the complexion as the brushstrokes take the palette onto



canvas and with light enlightens you. Battles gained by Richard of York are fought every day between the science proponents on the right. On the left of course is art, blinding, as the lines are drawn because beauty is subjective and we claim to deal in proof. Proof, like fashion, that changes with the next generation where the vision comes from standing on other giants' shoulders beneath a starry night

where the white of the stars dwarfed by the black of the canvas costs an ear. Seurat's bathers comfortable forfeiting clothes but with Kylvijät's it's difficult to see the point, both built generations of fashion changing the cultish conventions crafted to endure a hundred years. And more. For a man who likes a night on the piss give me Pissarro any time. When you are stripped back like the bathers, it leaves an everlasting impression on the compression of canvas that is my memory. What is beauty? What is art? Is it the music of Paul McCartney appealing to millions

putting millions back into his bank while Vincent beggars more. Or perhaps the tools of a neon bible whose words can resonate through history but do not pay the bills. And what if beauty can ease financial ills? Paint. Some thing with a pain eases from the thing encoded internally alluding to the same erosion. When dawn comes to cascade through the glass, alas stained like crushed rubies still glittering, now lost of commercial worth. Now emerald is an isle and amber a traffic light, where once the painters ruled the colours, or rather, when the paint would rule the

light, or rather, the light would rule itself forgiving, living, gracious enough to lend a hand. Paint can make pictures, but people make the paint. With enthusing help of nature. Like euxanthanic piss of Indian cows, give me Pissarro any day. The illusive shimmer of abstract meaning, out of reach. Like the velveteen of the recurring aquamarine how to explain that I would dye for you? More than Titian's skies as a soldier stands by his colours until the last round has lowered the standard then split the staff; laughing as a sailor sinks to the murky depths going down

into the fathoms with their jack. As the colourmen's horses turn the wheel grinding the rocks that lead through bleak alchemist's dark sorcery from earth to the canvass like silky sails catching the wind; sublime. If you were fixed, mine, I'd soon rescind the varnish of its sparkle, still maintain the solution of the fixing so that the golden luminescence seeping from your inner glow retained, pointed, split complementary shades with the hushed hash of hexadecimal. For all time. Exponential,

yours is the ultimate curvilinear figure. A half–full hour  
glass of pleasure. Ecstatic, prismatic to squirm through the lens

of a different eye an art, a craft where rules  
of schools can scatter like fish just trying to live beyond  
the enamel. Like piglets framed in the pink pigments of the abattoir,  
a concreteness in which to sink your teeth. Optics play their  
part; you forced a change in palette where holidays in Portugal,  
the black and white of your departure can show in you  
a different light. An artist is still an artist while awaiting  
their mix of paint, thinking of the cast. You are yet  
more beautiful as nature would affirm, without the mask of make up.

## 1.1 Thesis Introduction

If there is logic and worth in categorising language into literal and figurative, and logic and worth in categorising figurative language into tropes, then there is logic and worth in breaking tropes into sub-categories of greater specificity of sub-hierarchy. This process aids both the analysis of poetry in the course of close reading, and the making of poetry by allowing the poet greater insight into attaining control over the poetic line, stanza, poem and collection.

This essay will seek to show that each of the tropes of figurative language can be broken down into more granular levels of specificity and nuance. By understanding these micro-patterns, atomic or object primitive — the level in a hierarchy most easily processed by the brain, and the level at which there is the least likelihood of a reader misinterpreting meaning — artefacts of the poetic line can be arrived at aiding the poet to achieve better control of the poem. The greater frequency of atomic level tropes per trope density and non-figurative words, compared to more complex trope structures, the more accessible the poem.

The tropes of image, symbol and metaphor considered, exist in a hierarchy and that hierarchy influences the accessibility of a poem. Accessibility is the amount of work, effort, expenditure of energy, the reader has to do to understand or derive meaning from a poem. (Harley, 2014, 375). In addition to the creation of poetry, each trope has a hierarchy of sub-categorisation which helps in the analysis of poetry to a greater close reading specificity. A close reading of a poem may be an overview, an exploration of style or meaning or an examination of every word. This thesis asserts that an understanding of these levels of specificity enables the poet's — in this case the author's — own control of style.

The greater the density of trope in a poem, the more 'poetic' the effect that is created. A poem can feel more or less dense, layered, have the qualities of 'high' art, depending upon the style of the author. This feel is subjective. The less the density of

trope (figurative language) to non-trope words in a poem (literal language or figurative language that is not categorised as a trope, (for example a figure of speech)), the more the style of poem is narrative, closer to literal language and the more the telling of a story rather than the showing. This density, or the change and counterpoint of density within the line or stanza can also provide an additional layer of rhythm to the poetic line. The essay shows how this understanding helped the author shift the style of his own poetry from more narrative to more trope-dense expressions. In order to show this for the purposes of this essay he older poems were left in their at-the-time finished state, even though they would be edited more heavily in retrospect.

The project, for which this thesis is a property, originated in the distinction between tropes of figurative language and closes with the assertion that figurative language exists on a spectrum, not a graduated scale. Saussurean structural linguistics holds that there are two polarities of significance, the word itself, the signifier, and the neural activity triggered in the reader, the signified. (de Saussure, 2013, 75 [1916]). The word 'elephant' consists of its letters and phonemes, which to de Saussure are random, inert (ibid, 78), and the sign, and the neural activity that is a mental representation of the object, the signified. However, these two polarities exclude a third dimension, not so obvious, which is the actual object itself out in the wild. This third artefact is crucial to the generation of imagery inside a reader's mind.

The image is the fundamental — atomic level — building block in modern British poetry. The prototypical image lives at a specific level of categorisation hierarchy, usually taken to be 'dog' rather than 'mammal' or 'German Shepherd'. German Shepherd is more specific but not prototypical. Exactness is can be subjective.. It has *three* components, the word on the page, the object out in nature and the concept in the reader's head. The poet has chosen this image rather than any other, thus the image is the thing in one's head plus something, the something being a specific quality that differentiates it from any old dog in the park. The something is a quality, emotive by its nature.

The image can be inert, 'dog', or have a graded complexity, 'the growling dog', 'the growling three-legged dog', and can come with intertextual references or culture specific resonance: Cerberus, Lassie. And a valence. The dog's bollocks are good, a dog's dinner bad. This valence exists in the vernacular, outside a theoretical examination of the words. If an image is not inert it is valent, a kissing gate has a different charge from a stile (pun intended); a churchyard may host a wedding or a funeral, a graveyard maybe the same locative space but doesn't host weddings. Grey's Elegy wasn't written about a country graveyard. An image is usually a concrete object. The word, and concept, 'love' has to be synthesised somehow.

A symbol consists of an image plus a deflection, the image is immediate, the symbol has to be arrived at. Usually the image represents, stands in for, something more abstract, a crucifix for Christianity, a heart for love. Thus, there is a second dimension to a symbol from the single dimensionality of an image.

A metaphor, which may have an image and or symbol as part of its structure, has a third level of dimensionality: that which emerges from the melding of the (usually) two components of its being. With an image, which is an object, and a symbol which is an object representing another object harder to define, a metaphor uses (blends) objects to produce qualities (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002, throughout). What emerges is not another object as with symbol, not a thing, but stuff. My lawyer is a shark produces qualities of lawyerness and sharkness; they are not properties of a shark, they are attributes. Properties, size, shape, habitat, are inherited by the object, and are not the same as attributes that are a human perspective. Attributes are mapped onto human qualities, thus allow each reader of a metaphor to arrive at their own qualities which are flavoured by their own contexts independent of the poet or narrator. The degree to which different readers arrive at similar qualities, whether they know it or more likely not, is a prime factor in determining the success of a metaphor. And its accessibility. The metaphors which Lakoff and Nuñez (2000) use to explain mathematics in *Where Mathematics Comes From. How the Embodied Mind Brings Mathematics into Being* may ease access to the meaning of Euler's equation,

but none-the-less are likely to be less accessible to the general public than to the mathematically trained. They are less accessible than the more culturally popular  $E = mc^2$ .

### 1.1.2 Mapping the World

This essay is split into two main components, a Theoretical Framework and an Analytic Response. In the course of the Analytic Response's use of the poetry presented in the discourse, maps as collections of symbols and signposts for memory play a central role

Towards the end of 1925 Helen Thomas, widow of the poet Edward Thomas, took some of her late husband's maps to the poet and musician Ivor Gurney (Kennedy, 2021, 363). Gurney, unlike Thomas who was killed at Arras in 1917, had survived the trenches but had been incarcerated in The City of London Mental Hospital, Dartford, where he remained for the last dozen years of his life. The maps provided a rare solace for Gurney to be able to trace his own and Thomas's walks in Gloucestershire. Maps are indicative of many aspects of image, symbol and metaphor in their differing dimensional resonances. Both in theory and as a metaphor for practice.

It is a major feature in map design to consider the nature of figure, 'the most important design unit of a map' according to Bunch (2002). The concept of Figure and Ground emerged from the German psychology school of Gestalt in the early twentieth century (Stockwell, 2002, 15). The figure is the prominent element of a poetic text, for this discourse, and the ground more easily discerned as 'background'. The word figure is also the root of the description of language being considered in this text, figurative, as opposed to literal, language. The notion of image or symbol can be considered as figure to literal language's ground. Too much figuration dilutes its nature forcing it to fade into a backgrounded quality. This affects both accessibility to the line and its rhythm.

This discourse asserts that the cornerstone of figurative language are image,

symbol and metaphor. If metaphor and symbol are the super-structure and living quarters of figurative language's signification (de Saussure (2013, [1917]), Easthope (2003)), then image is its hull, cargo holds and engine room. Figurative language and the density of figurative language supplies the *Texture* of a poem (Stockwell (2009)). The more frequently encountered trope and the bedrock of poetry is the image.

## Part 2

### 2. Theoretical Framework



## 2.1 Categories and Patterns

The human brain is hard-wired to process the millions of bits of information it has to deal with into patterns, described in neuroscience by Mattson (2014). In order to understand and communicate about these patterns they are labelled and put into categories. From the work of the German and Austrian psychologists in the early twentieth century that identified a gestalt pattern, to Eleanor Rosch's (1973) work on prototypes, categories can be put into a hierarchy with a resonant frequency: a category that is identified by the brain with the least amount of effort. Language, and therefore poetry, can be considered through the prism of this category theory.

'And the second [belief] is the primacy, in all mental disciplines, of pattern creation.' Writes Brad Leithauser (2022), in his discussion on Marianne Moore, citing the mathematician G W Hardy's (1940) *A Mathematician's Apology*, ' "A mathematician, like a painter or *poet*, is a maker of patterns" ' (305) [italics mine]

Poetry is replete with patterns, from Seymour and Smith's (1963) anthology *The Pattern of Poetry* to Louis MacNeice (1990) who wrote,

I think that all human beings have a hankering for pattern and order; look at any child with a box of chalks. There are of course evil patterns or orders — which is perhaps the great problem of our time. What I do believe is that as a human being, it is my duty to make patterns and to contribute to order — good patterns and good order. And when I say duty I mean duty; ...  
(188)

As stated, in order to understand patterning we put them into categories (Rosch (1973), Lakoff (1987) ) and in order to communicate about them we give them labels. The process of organisation creates the illusion of levels, of steps between members of different categories. These divisions exist only at levels of specificity, the more the driving-into a category the more the boundaries between an edge-case of one category and the edge-case of the next category become less distinct.

The modern systems of categorisation and hierarchies stems from Carl Linnæus.

His explanation of classification in *Systema Naturæ* (1735) is written in Latin; the English translation of his category types, now known as a taxonomy, still holds and has spread from the original botany-centric view to all walks of hierarchical organisation.

From the Britannica, (<https://www.britannica.com/science/taxonomy/Ranks;>), Linnæus’s categories with a mapping as to how these might translate into a language hierarchy.

Obligatory hierarchy of ranks			Author’s rendition of corresponding ranks in language
	Animals	Plants	Interaction
Domain	Eukaryota	Eukaryota	Communication
Kingdom	Animalia	Plantae	Language
Phylum	Chordata	Tracheophyta	Figurative
Class	Mammalia	Pteropsida	Poetic
Order	Primates	Conifer ales	Sign
Family	Hominidae	Pinaceae	Figurative
Genus	Homo	Pinus	Trope
Species	Homo Sapien	Minus strobes (white pine)	Word choice

Table 1: Carl Linnaeus’s hierarchy of ranks with a column added for a mapping onto figurative language.

## 2.2 Poetry in Philosophy

In the *Art of Living, Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, Alexander Nehmans (1998) discusses how poetry and philosophy can lead to a better, perhaps more fulfilled, life. His language illustrates how the language of poetry and the language of the every-day vernacular have become fused. A technical objective analysis of the labels of language must be abstracted away from the everyday usage.

Certain terms within the language used in the categorisation of the natural order

of animals and plants would be recognised by a student of poetry, Nehmens writes:

Vlastos believes that successful irony, as Kierkegaard would have put it, ultimately cancels itself: the listener listens to the soul, not to the voice, of the speaker. Wayne Booth makes exactly that point in his discussion of what he calls “stable irony” which he considers the central species of the trope.

(53)

and:

In his second discussion, however, Quintilian distinguishes between irony as a simple trope (tropes) and irony as a complex figure (schema or figurative). Here we must be very careful. For, though Quintilian claims that the trope doesn't differ much from the figure, “since both the contrary of what is said is to be understood,” a closer look shows that they are after all distinct.

(55)

Two common ways of dividing language into workable dimensions (two dimensions each of two categories) are function words contra content words and literal language contra figurative language. These divisions are at a high category level. At a lower level, function words can be categorised by their grammatical type, pronouns, articles, prepositions, auxiliary verbs, negations, conjunctions, quantifiers, common adverbs, (Pennebaker (2011, 22)). Figurative language can be considered as consisting of sub-categories called *tropes*: parable, analogy, allegory as next-level-down high-hierarchy archetypes; image, symbol and metaphor, for instance, at lower level, ‘gestalt’ tropes. Don Patterson (2018) explains a trope as

*Trope* comes from the Greek *tropos*, a ‘turn’. We commonly use the word to mean a figurative or metaphorical expression; in traditional rhetoric, it describes a word or phrase that ‘turns’ from its normal use. Here [in the introduction to his essay on *Sign*] I’ll use it to describe the way in which one idea turns towards or into another — and in doing so, creates an original expression to reflect this new or composite thought.

(106)

Figurative language adds to the patterns and order of a poem. The quantity of figurative objects in a line or stanza of a poem contributes to the *density* of that line and then the line, stanza, poem and collection, thus providing the texture (Stockwell (2009)), the poetic qualities and the openness of a poem.

There is slightly more unconscious brain processing (Hartley, 2014), time, and energy expended by the reader including an assessment of difficulty. This patterning contributes to the rhythm of the poem, as discussed in section 3.1.2.

Interestingly, in terms of language and the seasons, the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn are the latitudes the sun is at its highest at midday and then appears to turn, as each season turns towards the next. In section 2.3.1, Difficulty and Accessibility, the *doxa*, common meanings of words, is discussed in terms of teasing out analytical meaning from a word as opposed to its vernacular use. This is not only the case with tropes, but the word *trope* itself.

## 2.3 The Secret Life of Images

This process, of categorising and labelling, turns raw data into information. An image comes with additional qualities as information. This is its aesthetic. An image is a mental representation of a physical thing generated, in the case of poetry, by language. It can be generated by description or, more commonly in poetry, figuratively through context. Static images, 'dog', 'tree', differ from cinematic images that are dynamic. Images are directly and immediately generated from the signifier (de Saussure (2013), [1916]) and are thus easily accessed. The prototypical signifier, for instance 'dog', contains (as properties) a more specific signification, for instance for one person a German Shepherd, another a Terrier, another a Poodle. Thus, at the level down from 'dog' in the hierarchical taxonomy, different readers will resolve the prototypical instance of an image differently.

Cinematic images require holding information in memory for completion. A judge

delivering a verdict slams a hammer, the image can move through time, which takes a little more mental processing, and more words to illustrate, thus more real estate in terms of the poetic line, from the initiation of the movement to the point of the judge's gavel as it strikes the mat depending upon the specificity of detail. The context of the image alters and resolves subtly through context, a court room or an auction.

The Welsh poet Gwyneth Lewis's collection *Sparrow Tree* (2011) includes a sequence *How to Knit a Poem*. The first poem of which is 'Hobby'. It opens,

The whole thing starts with a single knot  
And needles. Word and a pen. Tie a loop  
In nothing. Look at it. Cast on, repeat

...  
(46)

'The whole thing starts with a single knot' is a stationary image with implied motion, 'the whole' and 'starts' implies more things to come, 'whole' is a sonic pun with 'hole', a word to come with important notions of absence. 'Knot' homophonically punning with the sense of negation of 'not', and the sense of absence which is the extended metaphor of this sequence. This line is an example of Lewis's whimsical playfulness of language. This playfulness adds to the register of the poem, a key aspect of differentiating one poet's work from another.

It is possible for a poem, or a song, to go on in one's head without recourse to ears or the vocal apparatus of mouths. Or one might replay a conversation that's been had with another human, thus language, words, can be alive in our brains without passing through the mechanisms of hearing. Additionally, the concept of a tree can exist as an image, along with the grapheme or marks on the page that evoke the thought or concept of the tree. The imagistic parts are inherent to the word, part of how the word is stored. If we read the word 'tree' in a poem, this comes into our sensory systems as a word, exists in our brains as a word and then conjures an image.

The image, a tree, can exist without the triggering of a word, too. The image of the tree has a materiality, it can be 'pictured': a tree as an object in the way 'love' or 'life' cannot be pictured. The materialism of a tree is something that a photograph could capture, love or (the concept of) death isn't. Imagery is, figuratively, linear. The sequence of a collection of letters read or heard, a word assembled as a word, image, mental 'picture', is generated. The process is natural, unconscious, fast and direct. It takes little effort. Imagery is straight forward. The word, for instance 'tree', (in poetry) generates a mental representation.

Consider an excerpt from an imaginary invented report issued by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds which can be compared to an imaginary poetic prism of the same scene:

The overuse of pesticides killing earth creatures means that there are fewer and fewer birds following in the wake of a tractor furrowing the ground in modern large-scale hedgeless fields.

[Note, this is an author-concocted example, not a quote.]

This is not figurative language, it is presenting facts; 'birds' here is not an image. The lifeblood of the, literal, language is *information* and its promulgation.

Now consider an excerpt from an imaginary nature poet's lament about pesticides on the land:

Now no birds follow the furrows of the farmer's steed,  
for the land is fallow, bereft of bird-home hedges.

The essence of this language is not information, although information is still embedded in the discourse. This second text is the first text plus *something*, some quality. That quality can be found in Immanuel Kant's (1790) 'aesthetic'. Poetry is information plus aesthetic, and Kant 'regards poetry as the highest of the fine arts precisely because of its capacity to employ representational content in the expression of what he calls 'aesthetic ideas' '. (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.) Zimmerman (1963) explains,

The first deduction that Kant makes is that in aesthetic experience we are not concerned with an *object* but with the *representation* of an object in the subject's mind.

(333)

[Italics in the original.]

On the surface, for figurative language, there may well now abide image, symbol and metaphor, and even if the greatest of these is metaphor, there is far more beneath the surface to the trope of imagery than would at first be thought. In this essay it will be argued that by understanding the ontology of an image as a hierarchy, rather than a single category, both the poet as creator and critic as analyst gain greater control.

The difference between figurative and literal, or descriptive, language can be seen in Gwyneth Lewis's poem 'XXI' within the sequence of twenty-five poems 'Parables and Faxes' from her debut (1995) collection, *Parables & Faxes*. There are two ships in the poem, ship being at the prototypical hierarchical level of imagery, figured by their subcategories, a tanker and a hospital ship. In the poem, Lewis's narrator explains, 'Nurses drop down /and patients are winched from the burning hulk / to the Cliona.' The Cliona we've previously been told is the tanker, and the hospital ship, unnamed, is ablaze on the Coral Sea, having been attacked by the Japanese. It's not explicitly stated that this is an account of an incident from the Second World War, but reason arrived at from the ground of the poem would indicate that it is, and it is an account: a description.

The tanker Cliona on the Coral Sea,  
called in to assist a hospital ship  
hit by the Japs and sinking in flames.  
The tanker, which carries a cargo of fuel  
so flammable hammers are banned on deck,  
for fear their sparks may ignite stray gas,  
(71).

This could be a newspaper report, other than the use of the present tense in 'sinking' and 'carries', 'are banned', would not be a prototypical register for reportage. The passage is, however, pretty descriptive with few functions of poetry other than short lines. The first two lines of the stanza, however, lines two and three of the poem, carry additional poetic weight with the chiming of the 'k's of 'tanker', 'deck' and 'spark' with the alliterative 'c's of 'Cliona', 'Coral', and 'called'. The tanker carries a cargo ... banned on deck,/ for fear their spark ...

These chimes of consonant or vowel are poetic devices adding layers to the text that provide additional aesthetics to the raw, descriptive, text. Setting the scene or milieu can be established by the ground, an additional layer to the poem, one that is not explicit but is there, to be established by connotation. The ground is the Second World War, bravery, the notion of 'beyond the call of duty', the futility and sadnesses of war. These devices are not figurative tropes, yet add to the aesthetic of the language.

In this passage, despite its descriptive nature, there are a number of words and word groupings (units of sense) that would qualify as poetic 'imagery'.

'sinking in flames'  
'sparks might ignite stray gas'  
'winched from the burning hulk'  
'Captain O'Hara holds the ship near'  
'the searing heat'  
'the undertow / brings them still closer,'.

'Sinking in flames' is discussed later, the flames, fears, sparks and searing have an additive effect adding to the flavour, texture, of the poem. This is achieved by use of successive images coming quickly, part of the qualities of this aggregation is a rhythm. These images are units of sense rather than single words.

The poem opens, 'And this too is love:' and closes 'before love and its opposite



crash and explode?’ Two lines, and each is a complete line that are definitely out of the realm of reportage and inside the realm of poetry.

Literal language is an instrument, figurative a tool, one tells, one shows. Instruments measure things, tools build things. An instrument (other than musical) is not dependent on the skill of the observer; the product of a tool is dependent in terms of its qualities in the skill and control of the person wielding the tool.

How do the two polarities of language, literal and figurative, play out by comparison in Lewis’s first collection (1995) which has an eponymous sequence ‘Parables and Faxes’? The first poem of the sequence, untitled and labelled ‘FAX’ illustrates these polarities. The first sentence, occupying most of the first stanza is fundamentally literal with a figurative finesse.

The hum was there from before the start:  
my mother, a baby, on her sister’s lap  
and the hive behind them, its whitewashed slats  
squat as a stanza.  
(50)

‘My mother, a baby’ would indicate that the narrator is describing a photograph rather than the vision in front of him / her. A hive, whitewashed, houses bees and collectively bees ‘hum’. Although with intense analysis ‘my mother, a baby, on her sister’s lap’ could be read as some kind of metaphor, it isn’t in the text. The narrator’s mother is shown as a baby and is really sitting on her sister’s lap. The sentence ends with its first piece of figuration, ‘squat as a stanza’ which is a simile within a stanza of four lines in a five stanza poem, each stanza, being squat.

This stanza, with a word count of 8-8-8-9 is of a squat format, stanza from the Italian for room or stopping place, the first stanza having a nice roomy feel, as in its shape not as in airiness. ‘As’ as a simile has a slightly weaker tie between the two ‘domains’, squatness and stanza, than prototypical similes like ‘like’, however the /a/ sound of ‘as’ asonates with the ‘a’s of ‘squat’ ‘a’ and ‘stanza’, preceded on the

previous line with 'whitewashed slats'. However, the head noun of the stanza is 'The hum' and although a hum can be associated with bees, it can't come through a photograph so the hum is present only in the viewer's mind as an aural image. The sentence opens with an image that in one, extreme sense, is a lie and ends with the metonym of metaphor, which is simile. The hum was there, 'from before the start', but the start is the beginning of something, a something for which there is no 'before' in that something's context of the line, which is the start of the poem. The hum was 'there', before the start, forcing the question where is 'there' and the start of what?

This is characteristic of Lewis's poetry, even the literal descriptive phrases can be unpacked, decoded, with alternative meaning. Lewis's poetry, as this poem illustrates, will often allude to or directly reference quantum physics: 'And now in my dreams the neutrinos sing' (poem I, line 13), 'the atom's halls' (I.14), the hum before the start elucidating a link with Cosmic Background Radiation. In the final stanza (I.17) 'the square room' (squat stanza) is now 'round' and the 'set world' is 'bucking'.

Before these two pieces of figurative language, metaphors, 'the atom's halls / are held up by talking, by great upheavals' and the dreams where 'voices so truthful that snatches fling // all sense of terror'. The atom's halls, singular use of 'atom' are 'held up' which can be both raised in the air and delayed in its progress, the punning again being endemic in Lewis's poetry.

The universe and physics are represented in Lewis's poetry through time too, as in the word time, appearing in two Fax poems, twice in the last Fax poem, XXII, additionally as a theme in the second Fax poem, poem IV. The word doesn't appear in the Parables poems. 'Your face, a river, runs from yesterday' (IV.2) 'fall back into sleep' (IV.3) 'swing the moon' (IV.5), 'the gravity pull of absent light' (IV.8) 'I am unravelling twine / whose brokenness is laid in time' (IV.12/13) and 'of blackness' (IV.17) all echo the theme of the universe and physics. Poems I and IV enclose the first two Parable poems neither of which references time directly, both of which indicate a temporal location in history, II, entitled 'Opening the Tomb', 'they knew

this prince was great' (II.11) and

*... for his flesh was tectonic plates of gold  
and under that honey, black with the burn  
of all those millennia ...*

(51)

[italics in the original]

and 'the horns of Isis' having a 'profile Pharonic' (II.24) and poem III (untitled) where 'the winter city finally fell' (III.2) and the 'arrows of the mercenaries / rained on us' indicate that the two poems are set back in history. Even without the religious themes of the Parables section, the reader is pointed to the emerging constants of the twin polarities of time, the universe of 'Time' and the past of time in history, appearing in each of the two parallel sections of the sequence.

### 2.3.1 Layered Properties

The introduction asserted that an image in poetry can be considered a trope and that a trope is a 'turning towards' something else. In Sean O'Brien's (2015) 'Jardin des Plantes'

We sit on the sodden benches,  
Stunned and half asleep, like travellers  
Abandoned by the railways  
To a doomed domestic pastoral  
Whose story lies elsewhere.

(19)

'We' sit on sodden benches and are abandoned by the railways, both straight-forward images. They have a magnitude, an arbitrary diagrammatic line that represent the transformation of a word on the page, 'railways' to a visionary representation inside a reader's brain. However, a turn also requires an angle of turn, a degree. This diagrammatic representation is a straight line along an imaginary

horizontal axis. In the case of railways there is still a turn, however, but of an angle of *zero degrees*. The image and representation in the reader's brain are closely represented, needing no decoding.

Consider 'Daylight Saving' from the same volume, *The Beautiful Librarians* (2015):

As the light fails  
Down on the path by the Metro line  
Where yellow leaves have drifted overnight  
Against the wire fences,  
(37)

Here the image is still of 'the railways' but it is a more specific category of railways, it is a *Metro line*. This image, again straightforward, has an additional, locative, property. A person from the northeast of England when in Newcastle takes the Metro, when in London taking the underground takes the tube. This poem is located in Newcastle, in northeast England. That information is delivered by an extra property of the image. That information has to be known — or looked up — by the reader therefore takes an additional amount of effort, the effort of acquiring that knowledge. The magnitude of the image is the same, here there is an element of turn, image plus extra something, in this case location. Thus, image can be considered a trope.

Constraining the scope of imagery to be words on a page of poetry, it has three entities: the word on the page, the entity generated in the reader's head and the thing that is out there in the real world, which may or may not be representative of the reader's experience. Graham Harmon's (2005, 2018) discussion of the importance of metaphor for his theory of 'Guerrilla Metaphysics', later rebadged as *Object Oriented Ontology*, discusses cypress trees and snow leopards. It is not necessary to have actually been to the Himalayas, where snow leopards live, but through documentaries and imagination it is possible to have a concept of leopards and a concept of snow thus make the snow leopard in one's mind a big cat-like creature with spots on a white background. Cypresses is a little more fraught because without

recourse to the Internet to graduate the tree-ness that isn't oak or silver birch, but might be tall and whippy and form an honour guard in file as a windbreak for country estate drives. The internet would indicate these are poplar trees, but cypress was close. Visualising the image for this particular reader. For a different reader, their cultural knowledge might be the other way round, however a poem containing a snow leopard and cypress trees would still generate imagery.

For an image to work, it doesn't matter. It's not diverting elsewhere, it doesn't need decrypting or interpreting like the more sophisticated symbols or metaphors, it just does. But, within the hierarchy of categories, it does it at a particular level, either the prototypical level or one level 'down'.

A compound image, for instance Sylvia Plath's (1971) 'heel-hung pigs', discussed below, is where imagery is layered paradigmatically, up and down the hierarchy of categorisation. Imagery expanded syntagmatically is where the image itself stays within the same layer of category, but its specificity is elaborated through layering properties.

In Lewis's poem the imagery is not merely a single word creating an image in the brain but phrases, units of sense. The ship is not merely 'sinking' or 'in flames', but 'sinking in flames', a very striking *conflated* image created by conjoining an image with available properties. There is an additional quality to this image, a property added by the context of this being a hospital ship, in theory to remain apart from the martial components of warfare. This is not the same as a *compound* image, discussed below, however, clustered, the effect adds an element of complexity to a straight forward single item image.

### 2.3.2 Compound Images

One of the more visceral images is Plath's (1971, [1962]) *heel-hung pigs* in 'Three Women',

How shyly she superimposes her neat self  
On the inferno of African oranges, the heel-hung pigs.  
She is deferring to reality.

(45)

Or less viscerally and more lyrically the title of Heaney's (1991) poem 'A Pillowed Head' from *Seeing Things*. Plath didn't write 'the pigs hung by their heels' or Heaney 'a head on the pillow' they both condensed the language that becomes an axiomatic textual property of poetry.

Then I, whose personal effect  
Consists of a spraycan of paint  
With which I write these final thoughts.

(34)

writes Sean O'Brien (1983) in 'The Wild Ass Is Skint.' O'Brien's language is less condensed, it has a closer relationship to how someone might speak thus is more narrative in its style. These examples in isolation illustrate one kind of point, say types of imagery, but it is in comparison that they start to generate lessons for an emerging poet seeking a style.

You see it best from the air:  
How salt perpetuates itself, turned from the sea  
To whiten the Marais slants, graded and sieved  
And laid in ice-white drifts beneath the sun;

(75)

Similarly with John Burnside (2007) in 'IV SALT', the IV indicating it is part of a sequence, the furniture of the poem. 'ice-white' is almost doing the same job as Plath and Heaney but not quite, because the ice and the white are almost tautological, still in the realm of description, whereas 'heel-hung' is not a normal property of pigs, other than in an open-air African market. The language of O'Brien and Burnside is still a tend more to descriptive than figurative language, more statement of facts or

events, thus less open to the possibility of metaphor. The more descriptive the language the less work the reader needs to do to unlock meaning. Metaphor, residing in figurative language, requires the reader to do some work.

Whereas Gwyneth Lewis (2011) writes in '4 Tension Square', again the 4 indicates its place in a sequence,

Till I'm so practised in the art of spite  
My needles spark and I ignite  
The *kindling yarn*.  
(49)

[Italics mine.]

Spite isn't usually regarded as an art, needles don't spark and yarn isn't usually associated with kindling. The linking of these images creates an effect that emerges without being specifically stated. 'I ignite the yarn that I'm using as kindling instead of twigs ...' Many observations arise from personal taste rather than objective analysis, the boundaries of what is an image, what is a sophisticated (poetic) image, or between an image and a metaphor, are often fuzzy, and that often the category into which different words or units of sense are put are graduated, and the boundaries between those graduations can also be fuzzy.

However, 'heel-hung pigs' creates a poetic image where the pigs hung by their heels does not, or at least creates it differently and more intensely. With the condensed language, the image is arrived at more exactly and arrived at more quickly.

In Kate Kennedy's (2021) biography of Ivor Gurney, *Dweller in the Shadows*, she coins the phrase that labels this type of image nicely, assessing Gurney's poem 'Migrants'.

Gurney layers his meditation on the starlings gathering in 'dark bird-clouds' (a beautifully condensed, compound image worthy of John Clare)  
(204)

Kennedy's expression provides a vehicle through labelling so an image can be discussed and understood at a greater level of specificity. Kennedy describes the compound image as 'beautifully condensed'; poetic textual essence.

### 2.3.3 Image Privilege

Raymond Barfield (2011) discusses what he terms 'The Ancient Quarrel' between poetry and philosophy by examining various philosophers' views on poetry from Plato to modern times. In his essay on the early twentieth century German philosopher, William Dilthey, he discusses Dilthey's 'psychic nexus': connections made in a person's psychology over time ('historicity').

This core [a core content of poetry] turns out to sound remarkably similar to the core extracted from metaphysics: 'It is "lived experience ... related to the totality of human existence through reflection ... [and thus] understood in its essence, that is, its meaning." (*Poet*, 59) [sic]

1

. The intuitions of the poets are shaped by this sort of lived experience as related to the whole. When the poet expresses this sort of vitality, our own sense of life is awakened (*Poet*, 60) [sic]. The same was true for the metaphysicians. However, the poet is different because now the connections and images that the poet offers transcend reality but not in the sense of referring to a transcendental reality (*Poet*, 76).

Dilthey ([1887] 1985), cited by Barfield (2011, 216)

For Barfield, Dilthey's deployment of imagery by a poet is indelibly linked to that poet's lived experience and this image connects with some form of the reader's own lived experience.

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1 Dilthey's (1887) essay 'The Imagination of the Poet: Elements for Poetics' is abbreviated to '*Poet*,' By Garfield.



This approach [Jacob Owensby's, see below] is altered by Dilthey later in his *Fragments for a Poetics* where he emphasises that, while these images and connections transcend reality, they nonetheless also serve to help us understand experiences more deeply (*Poet*, 115). The fact that the poet's images and connections deepen our own experiences, that "every heart with feelings can recreate and appreciate the work in question." constitutes the universal validity of the poem. Here in the *structure* of images the meaning of our experiences is made intelligible. (*Poet*, 116)  
(217)  
[emphasis on the word 'structure' mine.]

For Dilthey the choice of image to deploy in a poem is specific to a poet, and specific to that poet's understanding of their own lived experience. At a higher level of categorisation, titles and subtitles, the use of language still provides this insight. In their debut collections, Gwyneth Lewis has a poem entitled 'Parables and Faxes' within a sequence *Parables and Faxes* in the eponymous collection, while John Burnside (1998) has a poem called 'The Hoop' within the sequence and collection of the same name and Sean O'Brien's (1983) *The Indoor Park* has no grouped sequences nor a poem with that title. Sitting above the language of the poems is the author's wishes to have poems grouped (or not) creating a meta link between some poems and not others. This type of patterning sits above, hence 'meta' the patterning 'within the frame'. The images, and the patterning, a product of the poet's psychic nexus, may or may not resonate with the reader's own psychic nexus affecting things like a reader's resonance with the poem, and a poem's likeability, accessibility or understanding for any particular reader.

In part three of this document, an analysis on the making of a poem, it is argued that the making of a poem can be broken into three phases: the creativity, engineering and design of a poem. Dilthey's psychic nexus is most relevant to the creative phase where there is less thinking about imagery and where it is produced, quickly, naturally and without conscious thought. Barfield continues,

This is a transference of emotive valence from the poet, through the

narrator to the reader via the image. This does not transfer in the same way for each reader, nor to the same degree of valence.

In Jacob Owensby's (1988) explanation of Dilthey, he writes 'Dilthey's view of the nature of poetic expression, and the correlative view of understanding ...

(501)

### 2.3.4 Imagism as a Movement

Two of the main protagonists of the movement that became known as Modernism were TS Eliot and Ezra Pound who famously edited Eliot's 'The Wasteland'. Pound is also credited with the formation of the group that bore imagery's name, Imagists, although the term was coined for a woman, 'H.D.', Hilda Doolittle. Doolittle had followed Pound to London from their US homes in Pennsylvania. In the British Library, where Doolittle showed him her first poem, 'Hermes of the Ways', Pound scrawled at the bottom 'H.D. Imagiste.' (McDowell, 2010.)

In Eva Hesse's (1969) introduction to *New Approaches to Ezra Pound*, she writes

Allied as it was to the Imagist movement', the *mot juste* brings us to the image which, in [Ezra] Pound's definition, is yet another connecting device — 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' with Pound moreover, the image turns into a stratagem for reducing symbol, which in the hands of the Symbolists had become an arbitrary counter, to its concrete core, for 'the natural object is always the adequate symbol.

(22)

[Italics in the original.]

Hesse's *New Approaches* captures how image and symbol, notions that had movements named after them, illustrates the complexity of teasing tropes apart.

The Imagist movement's tenets were initially formed by 'HD', Richard Adlington and Ezra Pound in the spring / summer of 1912:

1. Direct treatment of the thing whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the

presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of the metronome ...

[quoted in Kenner (1985, 56)]

Pound's (1999, [1940]) aim was '(To break the pentameter, that was the first heave)' as stated in canto LXXXI, allowing the modernists to shunt the scaffolding of the poetic line away from setting up the next line's end-rhyme and the use of function words to control the syllabic beat of the line. From the modernists onwards, the image was afforded the privileged constructional artefact of the poetic line.

### 2.3.4.1 Deep Imagery

An extension of Pound's thinking led to the formation of a movement in the early sixties by Jerome Rothenberg and Robert Kelly (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/deep-image#>) called *Deep Imagery*. A term often used in forms of therapy and well-being today, it is described by Robert Bly (1972) as a kind of 'leaping', a leaping between the conscious and the subconscious in the course of creating poetry (and other art forms). In the introduction 'Looking for Dragon Smoke' to *Leaping Poetry. An Idea with Poems and Translations* (2008, [1972]), Bly writes

This dragon smoke ['In ancient times, in the "time of inspiration," the poet flew from one world to another, "riding on dragons," as the Chinese said.' (1)] means that a leap has taken place in the poem. In many ancient works of art we notice a long floating leap at the center of the work. That leap can be described as a leap from the conscious to the unconscious and back again, a leap from the known part of the mind to the unknown part and back to the known.

(1)

Both Bly's anthology and that of the movement's founder Rothenberg (1995) draw heavily on poetry from around the world. Rothenberg's *Poems for the Millennium. The University of California Book of Modern and PostModern Poetry* has

a section devoted to the Surrealist Movement, from where one can trace the Deep Imagery's origins.

If their goal – like that of Dada – was to challenge & overturn “logic” to make “the poem ... a debacle of the intellect (P Eluard), they claimed to do it with a near scientific precision – a research project centered [sic] on poesis, on the poem as process (= making); its subject: the hidden dimensions of the mind &, therefore, reality.

(46)

It is this author's contention, to be explored in greater depth post-doctorate, that these movements of the mind, Bly's 'leaping', the Surrealist's exploration of the movement between the physical and the spiritual worlds, also create a rhythm to the poem and a rhythm in the mind of the reader. A rhythm bouncing between two polarities. This rhythm is infinitely hard to identify and measure, as it lives within the 'liquid' and fuzzy areas of thinking and visualisation. It lends itself more to a thesis on psychology than poetry, none-the-less if a tactility can be found, it is worth the pursuit.

From Lorca's (2009, [1930s]) 'La guitarra', part of the *Poem of the Cante Jondo*, often seen as a seed for the Deep Imagists' thinking,

The guitar begins  
to sob.  
Dawn's drinking cups  
smash.  
The guitar begins  
to sob.  
You can't  
make it stop.  
Impossible  
to silence it.  
A monotone of sobs  
like water,  
like wind  
over snow.

(49-51)

The poem is thought to have been written during the Spanish Civil War in the

1930s (<https://aboutthesong.com/Blog/laguitarra#:~:text=Lorca.>) The *cante jondo* was a festival Lorca organised in the early Nineteen-Twenties. It was designed to celebrate the music of Andalusia in southern Spain (Sorrell, 2009). 'Cante Jondo' translates as 'Deep Song.' Rothenberg's anthology contains poetry by Picasso, Kandinsky and Klee, better known for their art, Bly's six by Llorca, also known for his love of music. Poetry, and the substrate rhythms of poetry, often leap between the artistic disciplines too.

## 2.4 Symbol

Use of words in the vernacular can evolve into a different nuance of words in a technical context, and vice-versa. The word and generated ideas of symbol and symbolism probably have more use in the popular vernacular than any other of the tropes of figurative language. It appears in psychoanalysis, Jung's (1964) *Man and his Symbols*, in Mathematics which is replete with symbols that act as holding values for multiple variables, and is rich in discussions of religion, myth or fairy tale as by David Fontana's (2018) *The New Secret Language of Symbols. An Illustrated Key to Unlocking their Deep & Hidden Meaning*. This creates a *doxa* of symbolism, a *doxa* being

Opinion or belief; spec. the body of established or unquestioned attitudes or beliefs held generally within a particular society, community, group, etc. ... Used typically with the implication of error or misapprehension. (Oxford English Dictionary)

In his book on categorisation, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (1987), George Lakoff expands on the notion of 'folk' theories. Folk theories are culturally held beliefs that are not scientific theories. In the chapter on language he states,

We have both folk and expert theories of medicine, politics, economics etc [and language]. Each theory, whether folk or expert, involves some idealised cognitive model, with a corresponding vocabulary.  
(121)

It is in a discussion of symbol and symbolism that the folk theory and expert theories using a similar vocabulary that language, but not meaning, converges. It is not straight forward to discuss the occurrence of symbol scoped merely to the poetic page. To understand symbol in poetry, it is necessary to tease it out from the *doxa*. For the French psychoanalyst and student of Freud, Jacques Lacan (1954), structural linguistics and the teachings of de Saussure, who was not available to Freud, led him

to evolve Freud's structure of the unconscious, ego, id and superego into the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic (Bowie, 1979). Lacan mixed with many members of the surrealist and symbolic movements in Paris who were attempting to represent and express the subconscious through art and poetry. This work is technical to psychoanalysis but not technical to poetry.

Symbolism is different from imagery in its prototypical form. It takes an element of decoding. The turn of the trope prototypically turns from a concrete image towards an abstract concept. A heart can represent positive affection, a thumbs up a 'like' but more complex abstractions often require additional cultural recognition. A symbol is like deflection shooting, the shotgun is not aimed at the travelling clay, it is aimed at a place the clay is going to be when the shell arrives. In the case of the shotgun shooter there are multiple variables that need processing in order to ensure a hit.

The prototypical symbol in poetry has two dimensions, the first being its concrete properties, often coalesced as an image. All the nuanced difficulties for the image aspect of its dimension have to be held in mind with additional mental effort: the resolution of the second dimension has to be arrived at and involves a mental redirection. The initial image needs additional qualities embedded in context. 'cross' as a word in a poem might be an angry person, mathematical multiplication, or with a pendant around a person's neck the image generated is of a crucifix. The process of imagery is the same, but the context generates an additional layer of meaning. For a crucifix, meaning is no longer merely the cross itself, but the cross on which Christ died which creates a link to Christianity, it has a significance of aggregation of properties. Christianity, or Religion in general, is a more abstract concept, it can't be photographed or materialised, thus the two 'ends' of symbolism involve the workings of imagery plus context to give a redirection into an abstract concept. However, the resolution of the link between the two artefacts of symbolism takes cultural knowledge, whereas with an image it doesn't. A friend tells a story where his mother's carer went into a jewellery shop in St Helens, an industrial town in the north

of England. She wanted to buy a crucifix and was told there were two types, plain or 'one with a little fella on it.' What can be taken as prototypically obvious in a culture isn't necessarily exhaustive within that culture (or sub-culture). To resolve the symbolism of the word 'scales' in a poem, one needs to know more 'stuff': is it referring to fish, a kitchen or the palaces of Justice?

Symbol is a word I advise my students to use very sparingly and to note the contexts in which they find it, in order to decide the meaning it has there and not elsewhere. In fact I no longer know what a symbol is.

writes Umberto Eco (2006) in *On Literature*.

[a] symbol can be either something very clear (an unambiguous expression with a definable content) or something very obscure (a polyvalent expression, which summons up a whole nebula of content). (Oxford English Dictionary).

... we must pass from the private, if also delusive order of what he calls Imaginary, to the social order of the Symbolic. (Eco, 2006, 12)

John Sturrock's (1979) edited collection of five essays that each study five French critical thinkers that developed the idea of Structuralism from the teachings of de Saussure, including Jacques Lacan, illustrates how the notions of sign, signifier, symbol and the turn of trope can become blurred. In his own essay on Roland Barthes, Sturrock introduces how the contextual realm of these notions plays a part,

The method derives from his [Barthes'] experience as a mythographer, rather than the other way round. It derives also from linguistics, or, more accurately, from semiotics, the study of sign systems and signification. It is not too technical, involving little more than an alertness on the part of the student of myths to the difference between the denotation of a sign and its connotation(s). The denotation is its literal meaning, the connotation the mythical meaning: for the sake of argument



connotation can be classified as a symbolism, since connotations are, as it were, additional meanings present along with the literal meaning of the sign in question.

(63)

The notions each of connotation versus denotation, show versus tell, figurative versus literal language and the artifacts of structural linguistics often blur the boundaries between each of these ideas and the role played by image and symbol as constituent parts.

### 2.4.1 Difficulty and Accessibility

As the words of a poem step up through the hierarchy of figurative language they take more effort to decode. They become more difficult. In his essay *On Difficulty*, George Steiner (1978) postulates four levels of difficulty in an approach to a poem:

Contingent (Epiphenomenal)

Modal

Tactical

Ontological

Steiner's essay on difficulty is a difficult read.

Poetry is knit of words compacted with every conceivable mode of operative force these words are, in Coleridge's simile, "hooked atoms" so construed as to mesh and cross mesh with the greatest possible cluster of other words in reticulations of the total body of language.

(264)

Steiner's use of 'knit' as a noun when the word sits easiest as a verb causes a jolt, a pause to assimilate the context. The word 'mode' has many modes of meaning. Coleridge's use of atom comes before Rutherford espoused the metaphor of the atom as a planetary model thus easing its popularity. Whatever 'hooked' may mean here in this context, be it the context of Coleridge or the context of Steiner, it can

change depending upon understood context. This ambiguity of language and reference is also what can make poetry difficult. The more difficult the less accessible to the greatest number of readers. To rationalise difficulty is difficult. It is nuanced, transient, to a degree or other abstract. To analyse difficulty in poetry more so. However, necessary: it is key, along with ambiguity, to the accessibility of a poem and poetry in general.

Stephanie Burt's (2019) explanation of Steiner's first level of difficulty is an easier read:

The first is contingent, like crosswords: a puzzle has a solution you can look up, a word has a rare meaning but you can find it, a cultural reference might be accessible to me but not to you. Not all such difficulties, not all such reference, are matters of high culture, historic elites, educational privilege.  
(172)

She goes on to say

Steiner's four categories may sound as arbitrary as Empson's seven types of ambiguity: there could easily be six, or fifteen.  
(175)

Likewise with an understanding of, or a study on, symbols.

Steiner's essay itself, especially in comparison to Burt's easier language, illustrate how the nature of language style can alter the accessibility, difficulty, of understanding in normal discourse. This holds true for poetry, which often has more condensed use of language and greater density of figurative language and has as a variable property degrees of accessibility. In constructing poems, it helps the poet to beware of their own injection of difficulty which might be deliberate or otherwise. Only aspects of the accessibility can be controlled: the psychic nexus of the poet's, not the reader's.

## 2.4.2 Single Shot

There are occurrences where the differentiation between the different types of figurative language, and subsequent labelling, can become blurred, or fuzzy. Metaphor is usually described within the realm of two domains, or in the terminology of IA Richards (1936), vehicle and tenor with a third emergent property: ground. However, the two pillars of metaphor do not always have to be present for metaphor to work. In these cases, often the distinction between what kinds of figurative trope is being deployed is fuzzy.

Consider the following three phrases overheard in social vernacular situations within the last year:

'He's got to stop acting like a Nazi.'

'It's not rocket science.'

'I love you more than the moon and stars and sky.'

'Nazi' is a single word, 'rocket science' a compound and 'moon, stars and sky' a single unit of sense. In each of these three examples, the second dimension of the metaphor is constructed by symbology. A Nazi as a metaphor is self-blended by the symbology of Naziism, more so than Fascism or Stalinism which are shorter on symbols, certainly in the popular imagination. In a paper for 'Metaphor and Symbolic Activity', Lakoff (1987) discusses the notion of 'one-shot mappings' by identifying what he termed 'Image Metaphors'. Lakoff evidenced his term citing Andre Breton's 'Free Union' (translated by David Austin):

My wife whose hair is a bush fire  
Whose thoughts are summer lightning  
Whose waist is an hour glass  
(183)

'When Breton writes, "My wife ... whose" (p183) we understand this as an image mapping in which the mental image of an hourglass is mapped onto the mental image of his wife ...' [219]

Lakoff states 'it's important to understand their nature and the way they differ from conceptual metaphors.'

In this case the shape of the hour glass is merely one property of the hour glass and it is not the resonant property for metaphor. The prototypical image for metaphor is the sands inside the glass falling through the narrow aperture and representing the passage of time.

if my boy should race the rainbow bridge  
with the hour glass of endless sands  
if he should pace the green grass ridge  
where the clocks tick without hands

I wrote in a pre-MA poem not included in the collection but available in the Appendix. In Breton's example the only property of the hourglass being mapped is its shape, and although the shape clearly creates a mental image, it is not here being used *as* an image, in the way the image 'tree' is of less specificity than Christmas Tree or Oak. Here, hourglass is being used as a symbol. The shape redirects to something else, while at the same time not being metaphorical. However, owing to the nature of the ubiquitous use of 'symbolic' within and without the doxa; I term this specific use of a symbol as *symboline*. It has a symbolic property while not being used specifically as a symbol. The shape of a German Shepherd (alone) is not what evokes the mental image of dog, it is a representation of dog; for the image to 'work' it requires additional properties, properties supplied by the reader. The shape of the crucifix alone does trigger an image (there are more varieties of dogs than of crucifixes), and its use is symbolic. Here the shape of the hourglass is not an image, it is descriptive in a figurative way.

### 2.4.3 Why do Poets Lie?

In the discussion of Lewis's first poem in the sequence *Parables and Faxes*, above, it was stated that the first line of the poem was 'in an extreme sense, a lie'. John Burnside's (1988) debut collection was called *The Hoop*, one of its two sequences is

called *The Hoop*, as is a poem in that sequence. It appears in the eponymous poem's epigraph as a quote from Black Elk, '*The nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no centre any / Longer and the sacred tree is dead.*' [Italics in the original]. The word *hoop* appears in three of the poem 'The Hoop''s five sections and in two other poems within the collection:

In the title poem,

Yet I bear it all:  
the scattered hoop, the poison in the grain,

The Hoop, (1)

Here it is safe to assume, with the use of the word 'scattered' to go with 'hoop' making a unit of sense, the use refers back to Black Elk's epigram.

something else that almost fails to be

turned in upon itself and, knotted tight,  
centres the hoop and makes a hern of light.

The Hoop, (4)

Here, the hoop is a circle of light projected onto a surface. The word *hern* is glossed as the poem opens

*Hern*. I only heard the word used once  
and yet it echoes down the tunnelled years.  
I search in books for significance

books do not give, although the word appears  
in lexicons: *Old English, secret place  
or corner, (rare, obscure).*  
[Italics in the original.]

The entrance and exit of a tunnel can also be seen as hoop-like. Once the hoop is centred, a hern, not a hoop, of light is made after we're told the word echoes down

the 'tunnelled' years. The jacket cover of the 1988 edition of *The Hoop* has a pipe opening into the sea, pipes and tunnels having similar profiles.

The hoop is scattered now, and yet I know  
the tree is rooted in the broken stone.

The Hoop, (5)

Back to Black Elk's usage.

Other than a colloquial name for a bullfinch and the transitive verb, a hoop is

A circular band or ring of metal, wood, or other stiff material; esp. a circle of wood or flattened metal for binding together the staves of casks, tubs, etc. (Oxford English Dictionary)

In 'After Viking', the shape of a virus,

But form is the sub-organic  
hoop of the virus

the hoop of the virus is not literal, not metaphorical but could be a symbol, although the virus is literally a 'sub-organic' form since neither the singular molecule of nucleic acid nor its capsid sheath are organs. Hoop as synonym for the virus's circular shape becomes symbolic by thematic context.

And in 'Inside' back to the association with light, although Burnside doesn't indicate the type of light, nor is it clear in trying to deictically resolve the use of 'this',

but never step  
beyond the patio, and night is best  
appreciated in this hoop of light

it is light that is appearing as a hoop, the oval of light appearing on a floor or stage being the projection from a beam or shaft, not a flood.

Black Elk's quote comes from his reminiscences in 1932, *Black Elk Speaks*,

And so it was all over.

I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream.

And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth,—you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing, for the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.

For the Oglala Native Americans, there is the mythology of the 'Sacred Pipe' with which they commune with Mother Nature. This use of pipe is a smoking vessel. If this is the source of Burnside's references, it is not an easily available cultural resolution of the symbol (and perhaps the sewage pipe on the book's cover is a joke), it takes hours of research and lies on the edge of cultural appropriation. In *The Sacred Pipe*, Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux, the word 'hoop' appears once in the preface written in English (ie translated, Black Elk didn't speak English) referencing the 1932 statement and at the end of the account in a song. While preparing for the Throwing of the Ball ceremony, rich in symbolism, Moves Walking sings the sacred-pipe song. This has four verses, the middle line of each being 'when you stand within this holy circle / ...', but in the fourth and last stanza the line is translated as 'when you stand within this sacred hoop,'. This change of synonym is not explained nor referenced anywhere else in the text, the sacred circle appears throughout. The evidence indicates the word 'hoop' is synonymous with the word 'circle' in sacred circle and is a slip of the translator's tongue.

This analysis is not a critique of Burnside or his poem. It is contingent with the observation in the Analysis section of my own poem 'Leucippe' and how the meaning became distorted by being based on incorrect, or at least inaccurate, information. Sometimes the lie of the poet is not one of intent, it is one of innocence.

## 2.5 Metaphor

From the opening chapter of *The Routledge Handbook of Metaphor and Language*, 'Conceptual metaphor theory', Zoltán Kövecses (2017) defines metaphor thus:

The standard definition of metaphor is this: *A conceptual metaphor is understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract) in terms of another (that is typically concrete.)* This definition captures conceptual metaphors both as a process and as a product. The cognitive process of understanding a domain is the process aspect of metaphor, while the resulting conceptual **pattern** is the product aspect.

(13)

[Italics in the original, emphasise added.]

As with many aspects of language study, ideas have two dimensions or polarities. Metaphor can be a concept as thought or a material thing as a word or unit of sense on a page. Specifically within literature, for Semino and Steen (2008) writing in the chapter on metaphor in literature in the *Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, metaphor on the page is privileged:

Scholars operating within the tradition also suggest that metaphor in literature is different (and superior to) metaphor outside literature because of the way in which metaphorical expressions interact with one another and with other aspects of the literary text in which they occur. Nowotney (1965: 72ff.) points out that poems are more highly structured in linguistic terms than other text-types, and that metaphorical patterns in particular can contribute to the complex textual organisation that leads to a poem's significance and effects (see also Leech, 1985).

(234)

Metaphor in literature is just one application of metaphor. Both Routledge's handbook (2017) and the earlier Gibbs (2008) Cambridge handbook have large sections on the application of metaphor in real world disciplines, Psychoanalysis, Healthcare, Law, Politics. Although from the time of Ancient Greece metaphor has been studied with interest, in the last forty years the study of metaphor has become



more widespread and to a greater degree of depth. And pervasive in use.

### 2.5.1 Three degrees of metaphoricity

Lakoff and Turner (1989) state in the preface to *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*,

Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it. It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about. It is accessible to everyone: as children we automatically, as a matter of course, acquire a mastery of everyday metaphor.  
(xi).

In an account of Emily Dickinson's 'Because I could not stop for Death' they assert that Dickinson's poem introduces five *basic* metaphors for death.

Life and death are such all-encompassing concepts that we need many different conceptual tools for understanding and reasoning about them.  
(8)

The five basic metaphors are:

DEATH IS THE END OF LIFE'S JOURNEY

DEATH IS A DEPARTURE

DEATH IS NIGHT

HUMAN DEATH IS THE DEATH OF A PLANT

DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION

'which are used naturally, automatically and largely unconsciously.' (8) They go on to say Dickinson extended and composed these metaphors 'in novel ways.' These two statements assert that there is a category of metaphor that is a basic metaphor and that writers, in this case a poet, can reconfigure the metaphor, with varying degrees of success and varying levels of hierarchy. These different levels of hierarchy

make the metaphor less basic (more complex) thus slower to process, less automatic and if there are degrees of unconscious rendering, less sub-conscious, to render.

These basic metaphors are object primitives, objects at their prototypical level. They are not the same as *reified* metaphors, like depression, nor *dead* metaphors like table-leg that are used so frequently and commonly that they have ceased to be regarded as metaphors. Object primitives, in terms of metaphor are still metaphors, but at the lowest level of metaphor hierarchy still recognised as metaphor in living, current language. For Lakoff and Turner (1989),

we usually understand them [Conceptual Metaphor at an object primitive level] in terms of common experiences. They are largely **unconscious**, though attention may be drawn to them. Their operation in cognition is largely **automatic**. And they are largely **conventionalised** in language, that is, there are a great number of words and idiomatic expressions in our language whose interpretations depend upon those conceptual metaphors.

(51)

[Highlighting mine.]

Gwyneth Lewis's last poem in her collection *Sparrow Tree* is entitled 'Sea Virus'. The word 'Sea' is an object primitive image, but not taken as metaphor without context. Which means if it is a metaphor, it isn't object primitive after all, it needs some additional work. Stepping out of the frame, if the reader is aware of Lewis's documented trip in a sailing boat with her husband, they were planning to go around the world but made it to Spain, then it is a metaphor for LIFE IS A JOURNEY etc. 'Virus' has a much more lucid reference a decade after the poem was published, but even without Covid, triggers ideas of disease and perhaps death. Again, its metaphoricity is not at the primitive, atomic level, it needs more context thus takes more work thus is less accessible. It emerges from context. It is a harder-to-decode sign.

In Lakoff's (1987b) investigation into the nature of categorisation and the human mind, his early chapters take a look at where current thinking (at the time of writing,

the mid-eighties) had led to. He cites the work of Brent Berlin (1968) who was coming at the problem with a background in anthropology, following in the tradition of Linnaeus (see section 2.1), studying fauna in a remote part of Mexico. Berlin arrived at the following hierarchical list:

- UNIQUE BEGINNER (plant, animal)
- LIFE FORM (tree, bush, bird, fish)
- INTERMEDIATE (leaf-bearing tree, needle-bearing tree)
- GENUS (oak, maple)
- SPECIES (sugar maple, white oak)
- VARIETY (cutler stag horn sumac) (cited in Lakoff (1987, 33))

Berlin termed the level 'genus' as the 'folk-generic level' as a psychological resonant frequency for the human mind. It is at this level of a hierarchy, any hierarchy, that the object primitive of a category resides. Which maps to:

- DEAD metaphor
- REIFIED metaphor
- BASIC metaphor
- EXTENDED metaphor
- COMPLEX metaphor

Dead and rarefied metaphor are not registered as metaphor, it is at the level of Basic metaphor that the existence of metaphor is recognised and most quickly resolved. Basic metaphors are recognised as prototypical.

The phrase 'metaphorically speaking' is part of every-day parlance, the language interface of the doxa as discussed in 2.3 Symbol. The speaker may know nothing of the theory of metaphor, but inevitably the speaker and receiver know what is being said: 'don't take what I just said literally.'

To be speaking metaphorically does not mean to be speaking in metaphor. Take the opening sentence of Sylvia Plath's (1992, [1958]) *Owl*.

Clocks belled twelve.

(101)

It is a syntactically coherent and grammatically correct sentence. It is not using a metaphor, but in a sense it echoes the job the metaphor does, it almost looks metaphoric. Clocks, in the next-to-beds variety at least in the late fifties when the poem was written did not 'bell' although they would have had two bells above their body and a clangour that would leap between them. A clock's alarm prototypically rings, as do bells. Clocks in the church tower sense, as 'Big Ben' is often taken to be the clock tower rather than the bell inside it, don't bell either, they tick and the bell behind them doesn't bell, it rings. However, we can emerge with meaning. The poem is called 'Owls', owls tend to hunt at night, the strike is for twelve so the temporal setting is midnight. Plath opens the poem by telling us: It's midnight. Even without direct use of metaphor, the job that metaphor entails is still being executed.

Should this be taken as a metaphor, this is a case of priming, similar to cues. Priming in art is where a painter takes a canvas and first covers it in a wash. It is used heavily in advertising to 'cue us up'. Priming operates here because if we take a copy of Plath's (1992) *Collected Poems* and randomly open it at any page, we are expecting 'poetic effects' because we know we have a book of poetry and more complex poetic effects because we already know it is the work of Sylvia Plath.

In *Conceptual Metaphor and its Expressions*, in his essay in 'Cognitive Poetics in Practice', Peter Crisp (2003) invites his readers to put into practice the observations in his essay by providing a rendition of the beginning of John Keats' (1819) 'The Fall of Hyperion'. The first two sub-clauses of the opening sentence go:

Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave / A paradise for a sect;

The words underlined are Crisp's opinion as to where metaphors lie in the text. In an initial conduction of the exercise, neither my poetic colleague nor I, in conducting this exercise, underlined 'dreams'. Either a/ Crisp is right, it is a metaphor, or b/ I and my colleague are right it isn't (or c/ metaphor is a matter of opinion [excluding d/ 'all

of the above’]). It takes a great deal of confidence (or arrogance) to resist the priming of Peter Crisp’s to differ with his opinion (a policy with which he holds and encourages in the exercise) given his place in the ranks of those who research metaphor. Does this mean the business of metaphor identification can be a matter of opinion?

In a later discussion of this point during supervision, it became ‘clear’ to me that, after a well-argued point by my supervisor, that ‘dreams’ is indeed metaphorical. A discussion of the Metaphor Identification Process (MIP) (see below) by Semino (2008), it was observed that different analysts will consider a particular word or unit of sense metaphorical and others might not. In the case of ‘Fanatics have their dreams’ it can be seen that a particular analyst can change their mind too, illustrating the often slippery, or fuzzy, nature of metaphor study.

## 2.5.2 Identifying Metaphor

Much of the work proceeding from Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) ground breaking *Metaphors we Live By* revolved around the newly developed notion of Conceptual Metaphor. Semino (2008) discusses a sub-category of metaphor in *Metaphor in Discourse*. For Semino, metaphor in a discourse can be identified by a precise process known as the Metaphor Identification Process (MIP) (see Appendix II). The precision of this process is moot,

The primary difficulty with this line of work [studying metaphor] however, is that researchers often differ in their intuitions about what constitutes a metaphoric word or phrase.

(1)

The MIP was a product of the Pragglez group. The group consisted of ten eminent academic researchers of metaphor, the name being an acronym from each of their first names (see appendix 1). Running Sean O’Brien’s (1983) first stanza, the only one included owing to reasons of brevity, of ‘The Snowfield’ through the

Pragglejaz's MIP shows it is light on metaphor (see Appendix 1). However, the poem does illustrate the degree to which figurative language is difficult to isolate in poetry, because much of the language can be taken to be literal, and at the same time imagistic. This illustrates where image serves as an entity in its own right and imagery being used as scaffolding for other tropes like symbol and metaphor.

Writing about metaphor in Gwyneth Lewis's poetry, spotting, identifying and correlating metaphor still seems a tricky, slippery subject. Step I of the MIP provides a 'methodology' for Lewis's poetry, suggesting to start by identifying 'merely' figurative language, assessing whether a phrase was literal or not. Once it was not it was catalogued, then looked at further for its metaphoricity.

In poem VI, *Fax*, from *Parables and Faxes* (1995) and entitled 'The Dance', Lewis's writes and her narrator tells:

She wants to be transported all the time  
but has fallen further than the theatre floor,  
the girl whose pain moves like a pas-de-deux,  
the sordid partnering the sublime.  
(55)

'She', whoever she is, wants to be transported, which can be both literal and metaphorical, 'all the time'; here it is difficult to be literal because she's asleep for some of each day, as all of us are, but an expression used comfortably in the daily vernacular without seeming to be metaphorical, a phrase often allocated the term 'dead' metaphor. Thus, she has 'fallen further than the theatre floor', a phrase that could be literal but seems, if one has paid attention to Lewis's language in the five preceding poems of the sequence, a likely candidate for metaphoricity. To fall literally further than the theatre floor would be the orchestra pit or the walkway around the stage, given a prototypical theatre floor, but the notion of theatre doesn't appear anywhere else in the poem.

What could be a literal phrase takes on the guise of a metaphor given the context of the rest of the poem. This is an example of language's fluidity, one type of turn of phrase chameleoring into another which then gives the context, which a reader doesn't arrive at until the rest of the poem has been read. 'Pas-de-deux', in italics and appearing French, can be decoded by looking it up. A 'borrowing' from French, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, implying it is now conventional English. 'Dance (esp. Ballet).' Which fits with the title, specifying, if only by inference, ballet as opposed to any other dance. 'A dance for two people. In extended use: a partnership or liaison between two people, countries, etc., esp. one which is difficult to initiate or requires careful handling.' This is rich territory for metaphor, especially if one speaks French or is familiar with the terminology of ballet. 'The pain' (VI.3), one thing, 'moves' like a pas-de-deux, a comparison with another thing. The pain moves as in a partnership and requires careful handling. This, as a metaphor in a poem in English, is not straight-forwardly accessible, one 'domain' of the metaphor, the 'vehicle' in the parlance of I. A. Richards (1936), needing to be looked up and then worked at in order to 'get' the metaphor, elaborated in the next line 'the sordid partnering the sublime.' Here the metaphor is almost described with the two domains, although not straightforwardly distinguishable as a tenor and a vehicle but none-the-less clearly not literal. The sublime, in terms of poetry, is often associated with Wordsworth and the Romantics.

This could be a level of intertextuality, or intertextual labelling. 'She' wants to be transported, but there is no sense of to where, thus the she of the poem presumably wants to be transported to anywhere, anywhere that isn't 'here', the here of the person in the poem's location. A dance is an activity usually conducted in the horizontal plane whereas the well-worn metaphors for feelings that are less than optimum are feeling 'down' or 'low' and the reified metaphor for feeling really or clinically 'low' is depression. The second stanza starts with the statement that the 'world falls upwards', counterintuitive for the word 'falls' — other than its use in 'falling' in love — and although the world doesn't fall at all, it spins and moves

elliptically through space, if it falls upwards and depression is down then falling upwards would be a 'good' thing, but the narrator admonishes that the 'it' resolving backwards to the world which is falling upwards ought to be beaten down (5).

The world can be beaten down with booze and 'speed' punning on the velocity of travel through space and the group of narcotics that would marry nicely with 'booze', also known as 'uppers', drugs that 'speed up' the messages of the nervous system. However, these two entities 'disguise the danger of the looming ground' which is counter-intuitive, a neat figure-ground reversal. The ground is conceptualised as falling upwards towards a static observer rather than the more usual figure falling towards a static ground.

The world is falling 'upward', the opposite direction from the path to the ground which is downward in 'normal' body positioning relative to the ground, and in the third and last stanza the 'she' that is the first word of the poem becomes second person, 'once you have climbed' (VI.9), 'blown your back-ups', 'you see' (10). The term 'back-ups' is a nice example of Lewis's playfulness with language, back-ups in computer-speak or risk-averse endeavours being means of retaining stability if things go wrong, but also literally returning to an 'upward' direction as two words, 'back' and 'up'. The second stanza, reiterates the foreign language italicised words, *bouffées*, *entrechats* (VI.6) and *jeté* (7) *entrechats*, which the OED translated as 'a lively dance, of French origin in common time', here pluralised, also a term in ballet: 'A vertical jump in which the dancer crosses the feet repeatedly while in the air, sometimes also striking them together.' And *jeté* being 'A step, [in ballet] having a wide variety of forms, in which a spring is made from one foot to land on the other'.

The poem is just two sentences, the first being complete for the first stanza, with 'she' being the subject, the second of two being another complete sentence with 'you' being the subject; the poem is like a three stanza twelve-line sonnet, the Volta being a turn of subject and location, but continuing the dance, ballet, theme introduced by the title, at the end of the first stanza. The third stanza also contains a simile, which are not that common in the sequence, where by looking 'down' in the



text 'and you see, below, / how car tops look like plumped-up pillows', a rather pleasing image. The final line of the poem, leading on from the plumped-up pillows is 'and — here it comes — concrete like an easy chair.' The 'it' of here it comes is not easily resolved although outside of the frame of the text echoes the punchline of jokes or the older music hall entertainment that would have a compare who would often announce to the audience in metaspeak what was happening on the stage, like out-loud stage directions. The final simile is typical Lewis irony, concrete which one could see below from 'your staircase of air' (VI.9) in an urban environment, but it hardly equates to the idea of 'an easy chair' redolent of comfort and ease.

This poem, VI, follows on directly from the previous Parable poem in which the Saxons are 'vertical', the verticality being themed throughout this poem although the thematic resonances of a dance, or ballet, do not appear in any of the other poems in the sequence, Fax or Parable.

References to the Universe and the nature of Physics build a significant theme in Lewis's Fax poems. This theme is arrived at by metaphor extension. For instance:

I

And now in my dreams the neutrinos sing  
from a hive in the corner and the atom's halls  
are held up by talking  
(13,14,15)

IV

swing the moon  
on its cantilever  
(5,6)

the gravity pull of absent light,  
the seed inside the sacrament  
(8,9)

to give purchase to crystals till my spacious halls  
can house you  
(14,15)

And although Religion is a more prevalent theme in the Parables, geometry appears, another example of Lewis's playfulness is the punning of angles with the frequent occurrences of Angels:

V Dark Ages

an apex of geometry  
(21)

that draws the Angles to their heights;  
though fantasy  
must know the fear of gravity  
(22-24)

While considering the opening of this poem, 'Saxons are vertical,' a search of the literature reveals an essay by Sarah Eddings (2016) entitled *The use of the Vertical Plane to Indicate Holiness in CS Lewis's Space Trilogy*. Eddings writes,

First, I will demonstrate how positive (upward pointing) verticality and defiance of gravity indicates the acceptance of Maleldil and negative (downward pointing) verticality or submission to gravity indicates refusal ... show how Lewis uses wave and water as a common example of verticality throughout the trilogy to indicate holiness and willing submission to Maleldil.

Writing well before the advent of Cognitive Metaphor Theory (CMT), C.S. Lewis is riffing on what would be identified as the VERTICAL IS POSITIVE conceptual metaphor.

In another use of mangling the grammar to create rhyme, after mentioning that Saxons are vertical, the narrator says 'circles we, / hence the mutual hostility.' Geometrical shapes are not usually hostile to each other, or possess a hierarchy of positivity, but it is an interesting development of a metaphorical theme.

Poem XXIV, the penultimate poem in the sequence, the last that isn't the epilogue, is almost an amalgam of two themes, or almost-themes. Labelled as a

Parable, it would be expected to resonate with either emblems of Christianity or ancientness, Saxons. The poem is entitled 'Chernobyl Icon', Chernobyl being near Kiev (at Pripyat, mentioned in the second line where the narrator saw a 'vision'), so would be expected to have nuclear and explosion resonances: 'geigers', 'shower's rods', 'reactor's core'(and 'reactor's walls'), ' nuclear', 'isotopes', 'blinding flash' (lines: 7, 9, 12, 16, 20, 25, 43 respectively). At Pripyat, which still remains a deserted town, 'something exploded / from inside a tomb.' A tomb being the entity from which Christ was resurrected and a fitting image for the place, where, behind thick and heavy concrete walls, a nuclear reactor would be stored. The 'shower's rods' creates an image of the streams of water from a shower nozzle that the first responders would have fruitlessly used to try and clean themselves and their kit (there were no survivors from the first response firemen cohort) and wash away contamination, likewise, the shower's rods, many modern nuclear reactors are immersed in water, 'fail to restore / innocence / to the reactor's core.' None of the reactor, the town and surrounding countries nor the nuclear community would be devoid of any innocence or pretence at innocence. The word vision appears twice in the poem (lines 1, 27) and 'the stars fail to see / God become one' (39), the senses of vision and failing to see being echoed in the word 'rods' which are one of the two vision sensor cells in the eyes. In this poem the subject matter ('as the isotopes / massacre children / on the vision's slopes') belies the playfulness off the poet's language, creating an irony of context.

The word 'universe' and its contextual meanings within the domain of holistic healing is one that it is easy to fall into between the lines of the tonal registers of Lewis's poetry. Holistic, 'alternative' healing is sometimes superseded by the term 'secular' spiritualism, in order to differentiate it from the type of spirituality embraced by the promulgators of religions like Christianity. Applying holistic healing to Lewis's discourse is problematic because it is not in the text. However, the optimism that is difficult to identify and classify in analysis that exists as a felt presence, at least by this reader, can be more easily discerned in Lewis's not-quite-memoir *Sunbathing in the*

*Rain*, published in 2002, seven years after this collection. In her introduction to that 'alternative' view of depression, Lewis writes

If you can side with the internal *nuclear winter* of depression and come through it without committing suicide — the disease's most serious side effect — then, in my experience, depression can be a great friend. It says: the way you've been living is not for you. And it teaches you slowly how to live in a way that suits you infinitely *better*.

(xv)

[Italics mine.]

The subtitle to Lewis's book is: '*A Cheerful Book About Depression*.' [again, italics mine.]

In middle age there are dragons which have to be fought. And to be defeated in that battle is no shame,

(17)

she writes of an elegy at a friend's funeral who had passed by his own hand.

'A dragon's head smokes in the darkening air / and talk turns to wonder'

she has her narrator say in 'XVII *Bonfire* FAX' (line 2). And although

The dragon roars on,  
blotting out sour cherry and lime,  
for his sentences blind us — he talks of Beauty

This is not to say that poem XVII *Bonfire* is an optimistic poem, it is not. The passage just quoted goes onto say, '... that bound him tight with her terrible calm / and bought him, grotesque, to his gracious knees, / a monster forever.' but that it contains optimism within the more obvious, surface, valence. 'Calm', 'gracious' within and to a degree subverted by 'terrible' grotesque', 'monster'. The optimism isn't hidden, it's in plain sight, but it is overwhelmed on initial readings.

Taking just a few poems from a single sequence, it shows how Gwyneth Lewis can

use language in all its multiplicity. Words may or may not be metaphor, metaphor weaves in between the layering of meaning, of poetic devices, which proves illusive where a phrase can be taken as literal, reportage, or figurative. With playfulness, Lewis can manipulate the fuzziness of metaphor, and where metaphor might be distinguished from other tropes of figurative language, delightfully.

### 2.5.3 Metaphor in Blends

Fauconnier and Turner (2002) build their case for Conceptual Blending by considering 'the simplex network in which Paul is the father of Sally' (140). They go on to say:

This simple network is only the beginning of a long gradient of increasing complexity. Let us look at the gradient of networks all using the father-child input and, crucially, the word "father". One result will be that the word "father" will seem to have many different meanings.

They go on to discuss:

'Zeus is the father of Athena. She was born out of his head, fully clad in armour.

Joseph was the father of Jesus.

A neighbour who takes care of Sally for the day while Paul is away (a father figure)

The Pope is father of all Catholics.

The Pope is the father of the Catholic Church.

George Washington is the father of our country.

Newton is the father of Physics

'Fear, father of cruelty'.

(Ezra Pound)

'The Child is father to the Man'.

(William Wordsworth)'

The topic and role of blending is outside the scope of this essay, however, an emergent property of this discussion is the point at which metaphor 'kicks in'.

'The Zeus case does not entail figurative speech or analogy.' In terms of the

Joseph case 'Again, this case of "father" is not felt to be metaphorical or analogical'.

In the neighbour standing in for the father for the day example,

We have moved along the continuum from the pole of simplex networks. But clearly, we have not reached a point on the continuum that would be felt intuitively to be metaphorical.

In the first of the Pope examples, 'The word "father" is now felt to have a different meaning, but not a particularly metaphoric one.'

With the George Washington case:

This abstraction [away from a literal father] increases the perceived difference between the two inputs and their domains. The *impression* of metaphor is undoubtedly stronger.

[Italics mine.]

They go on to state the next statements are 'increasingly metaphorical'.

The notion of 'increasingly metaphorical' explicitly admits the notion of degree of metaphoricity and the earlier analysis shows that language can be figurative without being metaphorical yet there is a point on a figurative continuum where language moves from being non-metaphorical to metaphorical.

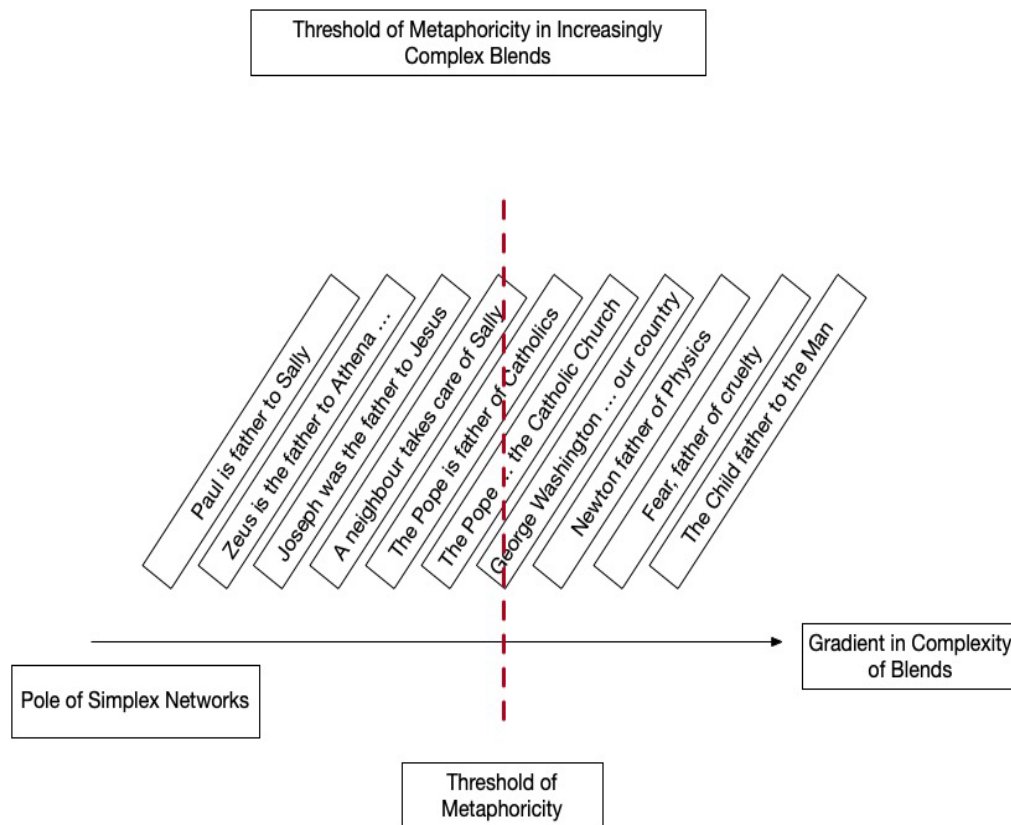


Fig 2: Window of increasing metaphoricity

In this diagram the threshold is a discreet line, however, as discussed with the Crisp example, what constitutes metaphor can be subject to opinion thus the discreet line ought be a window. And if there's a window at the threshold of low complexity metaphor there must be a window at the more complex end where metaphor morphs into some other form of language.

Following Lakoff and Turner's (1989) efforts to explain their concept of a 'basic' metaphor, basic, is on the left in the figure above, the least complex, part of our continuum in this diagram. They also go out of their way to distinguish between the two domains of metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor, which happens in the brain, and the implementation of metaphor through the language. LIFE IS A JOURNEY verses 'I foolishly took the path less travelled.' In order for a (conceptual) metaphor to be basic it must fulfil three criteria in its operation within a culture:

we usually understand them [Conceptual Metaphor] in terms of common experiences. They are largely **unconscious**, though attention may be drawn to them. Their operation in cognition is largely **automatic**. And they are largely **conventionalised** in language, that is, there are a great number of words and idiomatic expressions in our language whose interpretations depend upon those conceptual metaphors.

(51)

[Highlighting mine.]



## Part Three

### 3 Analytic Response

Part three of this document is an analytical response to part two's Theoretical Framework as seen through the prism of my own poetry presented in Part One. Additional observations are made on how my own poetry, both as a response to other theory and an absorption of subliminal exposure to other poets' work, can be assessed and informs my own poetic techniques. It will explain why and how my poetic technique is very different at the culmination of four years of intensive study from the style with which I embarked on the PhD, a style which itself had changed from prior to my MA. Not only does it examine a change in style, it illustrates the major changes in process.

## 3.1 Research Methods

A discussion on the use of Research Methods in a creative PhD is complicated by a number of factors: the prevalence of positivist approaches throughout the last few hundred years of academy output, the relative newness of Creative PhDs in the academy and the language used. "Research" is something of a buzzword among writers of popular novels ...' writes Jane Goodall (1999, 200), a line I found interesting, adding:

To someone coming from a background in the academy, and especially from the humanities, research means something rather more. It is an investigative process designed to reveal new knowledge or new models of understanding.  
(ibid)

However, this is further complicated by the names given to the concept of research for creative disciplines within the academy. The editors of the book containing Goodall's essay is called *Practice Led Research, Research Led Practice*. 'In using the term practice-led research, we as editors are referring *both* to the work of art as a form of research and to the creation of the work as generating research insights which may be documented ...' (Barrett & Bolt. 2009. p7) [italics in the original.] whereas 'Research-led practice is a terminology which we use to compliment practice-led research', their point being scholarly research can lead to creative work.' (ibid)

There is a further complicating term: 'Practice-Based' as opposed to Practice-Led. The nuances of this difference are defined by Linda Candy (2006) as,

- If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution of knowledge, the research is practice-**based**
- If the research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-**led**.

(3)

[Formatting in the original.]

This essay describes a practice-*based* process in order for me to better understand and explain the *process* I employed in the construction of a poem from scratch, and practice-led in terms of the use of, for example, imagery.

The idea of research being formalised in the arts has developed from the practice of a growing number of arts being taught at university, especially at the level of PhD (Nelson, 2013). In my own field, Creative Writing, the impetus for this owes much to the breaking away from the study of (and research into) literature at places like the University of Iowa's MFA program (Myers, 1996) and in the UK the University of East Anglia under writers like Malcolm Bradbury and Angus Wilson, with the accelerating momentum of Myers' 'Elephant Machine'. In the contextual introduction to *Creative Research. The Theory of Practice and Research for the Creative Industries*, Hilary Collins (2010) states

The role of research in the creative industries has a diverse background. Research methods have been *borrowed* from the fields of visual research, sociology and management.

(9)

[Italics mine.]

Being the new areas of academia, research in the creative industries has the disadvantage of scepticism and resistance to change of the established research paradigms and the advantage of being able to cherry pick and mix methods. That of course is creativity. Creativity stemming from culture, society and personal background (the domain, the field and the individual) produces novelty (Collins, 2013, 99 citing Csikszentmihalyi, 2001, [1992]) and novelty is not always welcome in any sphere of endeavour. Research in the creative arts needs to spread from the spectrum of 'hard facts to liquid knowing' (Nelson, 2013, 48.) It is within the realm of liquid knowing that the creative arts researcher finds difficulty in explaining a process that others can follow. Science tends to deal in facts, art in product. Rarely does either get involved with the process. To assess the process, some is tangible events,

some fuzzily explained creative insight. For me, it is within the realm of fuzzy creative insight that liquid knowing exists. And it is here that metaphor plays a crucial role, especially in the task of reflexive expression. Liquid knowing describes a state that is more abstract than the abstract, i.e. 'love' being abstract 'belief' being more so. Here, metaphor can help greater understanding.

Once understanding the nature of research within the creative arts the problem then becomes one of how do I apply that process to me? What is the nature of research with rigour as opposed to a curiosity — how to apply that to a process founded on thought and feeling? For me, the three processes of developing my poetic technique, studying the literature for extant knowledge and developing a sound research methodology, found a home in the process of understanding Autoethnography.

At this point it is necessary to determine the distinction, divided by a very fine line, where autoethnography and reflexive research depart. Autoethnography is usually inherited in the finished product. As discussed below, this differs from autobiography. However, in order to explain the creative process – within the state of liquid knowing – it is sometime necessary to step into the realm of autobiography in order to provide creativity context and framing.

My parents didn't like her, I didn't notice, she didn't care.  
'A Tree Remains' (13)

Can be construed as autoethnographic in the sense that other people may identify with the concept being subjectised. The creative process that led to

Tracey took him home as she would again when  
I broke my ribs during Lockdown.  
'The Plurals of We' (20)

Or

I tell Tracey when she offers to put it back,  
knowing my fingers can't operate the little knob.  
'A la Frank O'Hara' (52)

Reflexivity can sometimes only be explained by contextualising with autobiographical information. The first is like a dedication, a privilege of the poet to say a secret thank you, owing to the extraordinary human response of particular people, here metonymically represented by Tracey, in response to the Covid pandemic and Lockdowns. The second, as a finished product, is a homage to Frank O'Hara's style.

### 3.1.1 Autoethnography

What is autoethnography?

Autoethnographic stories are artistic and analytical demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience. With autoethnography we use our experiences to engage ourselves, others, culture(s), politics, and social research. In doing autoethnography we confront "the tension between insider and outsider perspectives, between social practice and social constraint.

states the introduction to autoethnography in Adams, Hollman Jones and Ellis (2015) *Autoethnography. Understanding Qualitative Research*.

A process that arose from the evolution from anthropology through ethnography to reflexive ethnography. Autoethnography emerged from the ethnographers in Sociology departments of American academia in the late seventies, early eighties, at the same time as Cognitive Metaphor Theory was finding traction. Earlier I discussed the difficulties of newness in established methodologies. Both Autoethnography and CMT are central pillars of this thesis, and both are relatively new, aggregating the liquidity that a discourse like this is obliged to synthesise as concrete knowing.

The introduction continues:

Hence, autoethnography is a research method that:

- Uses a researcher's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.
- Acknowledges and values a researcher's relationship with others.
- Uses deep and careful self-reflection — typically referred to as "reflexivity" — to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political.
- Shows "people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles."
- Balances intellectual and methodological rigour, emotion, and creativity.
- Strives for social justice and to make life better.

(2)

For me, a reflexive examination of the creative process in poetry, and how that changes in time, fits naturally with the goals of autoethnography. The challenge was to convert what was a natural and unconscious activity into a research discipline. In a crude and simplistic piece of reductionism, autobiography is about events, actions. Autoethnography is about emotions. Emotions come with different degrees of abstraction and where there is abstraction, metaphor thrives. Love is more abstract than anger, anger lies in a hierarchy with frustration, irritation. Where there are degrees of abstractions and hierarchies, metaphors of differing complexity emerge, the more complex the less accessible, less easily decoded. Autoethnography aids the accessibility of figurative tools for explaining abstractions.

However, there was a subtlety of categorisation of autoethnography that eluded me until informal discussions with Dr John Hockey and notes on café napkins. It was the notion of types of autoethnography and how *data*-led reflexive examination which might lend itself to a student of Sociology was not the same as reflexive *emotional* examination which would lend itself to the Humanities. The boundaries between the two poles is not clear-cut, but lies on a continuum.

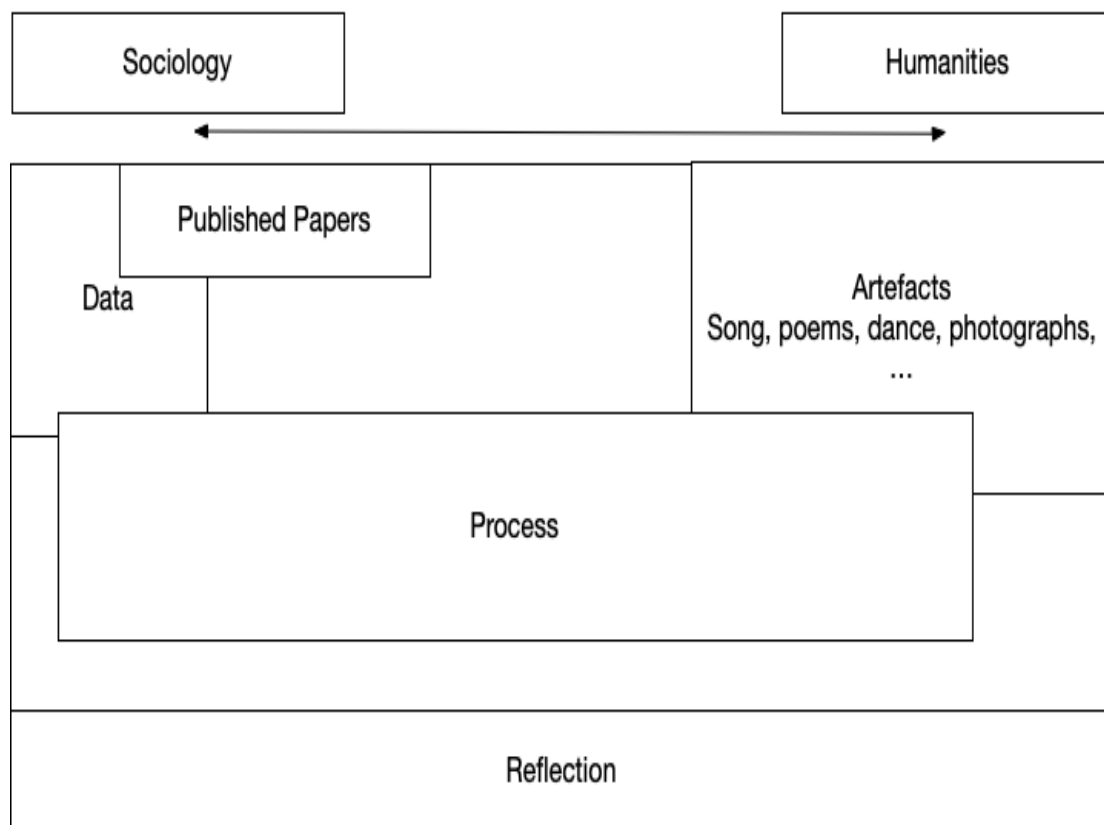


Fig 3: Continuum of Autoethnography from Sociology to Humanities and the various outputs

Even within 'emotive', rather than analytical reflexivity there can be all types of autoethnographies and narratives. Often these are not clear in the process and only become clear in the output. For me the output is poetry, for others it is music.

For example, a high-quality musical film adaption is: 'Taking it home: A film by Kitrina Douglas & David Carless' presented as the Keynote at the *2022 International Symposium of Autoethnography and Narrative* and is an excellent production example of how output can look and feel. In the film Douglas states

In January 2022 we were invited to give the keynote address at the International Symposium for Autoethnography and Narrative. We used the occasion to explore the contribution of songs within our autoethnographic practice, and the significance "place" and "objects" (such as a guitar or yoga mat).

...

We have to set sail and trust we'll bring something home not try and tighten it all down so we're sure about it coz we might miss the catch.  
(23.02 mins)

However, that is not the kind of output to which a non-video shooting and editing poet would aspire. And, trying to reverse-engineer the process, there is an additional methodology applicable to poetry and other literary sources.

### 3.1.2 Close Reading

The second method that became intrinsic to my approach to a reflexive regard to poetry, my own and others', was developing a much more fine-grained understanding of the technique of Close Reading.

In the introduction to *Close Reading*, one of the editors Andrew Dubois (2003) states,

Paying attention: almost anyone can do it; and it's not requisite for reading, but for reading well? At any rate, attention, properly paid, will, over time, with personally productive tendencies or habits of focus and repetitions of thought remembered into generally applicable patterns, beget method.  
(2)

Close Reading was a technique I felt I 'ought' be fluent in but was weak. I was helped by a course with the Department of Continuing Education at Oxford University in Literary Criticism, one of seven I felt fleshed out my areas of weakness. It also sat easily with my fascination of the separation of Yates's (1926) 'the dancer and the dance', reading within the frame.

There is no single influential manifesto or statement of purpose that insists on the term itself as the sole name for a particular practice.  
(3).



Dubois continues.

As with many things discovered as I grew into my studies, terms, methods and meaning could prove illusive. However, that elusively gave 'permission' for me to introduce the 'I' into my thinking and to write with capital letters where they ought be and something I had eschewed. I felt at this level of thinking, even with an objectivists' schooling, it was correct to do so.

It is spirit, such as it is, which led me to poetry, at first little more than a pastime, then the full business of my life.

Basho (c 1644), *On Love and Barley*,  
(10)

Robert Frost 'considered the term 'poet' a praise word', so writes Dr Neena Sharma (2011)

For Robert Frost, poetry was life. He made perpetual efforts to relate poetry to life and life to poetry. He refers to poetry as beginning in delight and ending in wisdom. He has in his mind the balance of sensibility and substance ,of emotion and thought. According to him, a poem must not be merely a trick , but a performance. He mixed his conception of poetry the sense of emotion and the mind.

(1)

[punctuation as in the original]

For a number of reasons, all of which were attenuated as my PhD developed, poetry became and is my life. I identify immersively with Basho's Seventeenth Century sentiment. But there was something gnawing at me underground. So what? My poetry was not meant to be an autobiography which led me to develop my own theory of autoethnography and how it was not autobiography. Autobiography is telling the reader about me to better understand me. Autoethnography is telling the reader about me in order to better understand themselves.

One crucial aspect of my understanding of my own poetry came from outside the

poets I had chosen to study. A close reading of a Plath poem, and a close reading of a Hughes poem on the same subject, and comparing the two side-by-side, directly informed my own technique. This happened both consciously, and as I mull over and digest the thinking arrived at in comparison, and unconsciously. I can study the density of metaphor in the Plath poem against the density of metaphor, and the degrees of metaphoricity, in the Hughes poem, and use this as a loose template for my own poetry. However, much as I was drawn to finding more poems that Plath and Hughes wrote about the same subject and found it infinitely interesting, I didn't think it was contributing to an analysis of the poets I had chosen to study in my original Research Questions. However, stepping up from the density of metaphor to an analysis of *accessibility* of figurative or referential language in my three chosen poets could. One developing area of interest for me was this notion of accessibility. I felt intuitively the Hughes poem on the same subject was more accessible — more easily understood — than the Plath poem. However, I enjoyed the layering of figurative language in the Plath poem more. It interested me more. It could then help me in judging my own levels of accessibility. My aim was to be able to deliberately move my poetry between these levels of accessibility (as defined by me and loosely more Hughes-like, the Hughes of *Birthday Letters* (1998), or more Plath-like) as and when I wanted to. This ability would be a major factor in my self-designated measure of control. A higher level of control than the coal-face use of language itself. Once I had mastered this level of control, and the control of syntax and sound, then I wouldn't have to worry about quality. Quality would look after itself. Irrespective of a poem, or a collection's, acceptance or rejection.

This can be seen in the changes to one of the first *Three Miles* poems, 'How the Wind Would Sound'<sup>1</sup>

the 272 between West Meon and Petersfield  
is a Fellowship of the Ring kind of place.  
Trees tunnel the road, rainbow colours  
of Persephone's rule, if the rainbow was centred

on orange. Bends lend themselves to a biker's  
tilt, farmland, pasture, the first whimper  
of the Downs, awaiting the inevitable Wimpey plot.

Take a sharp left. The road to Steep is, well, steep.

Became:

The 272 is cut like a Caesarean scar across the southern shires  
of England, a fellowship kind of place with its tunnels of trees.  
Imprisoned by my youth, I travelled this road many times,  
skirting the new-born M25 bringing blue, like a canal to the map.

Ping-ponged between the gaol of home and the bird-cage of school.  
This blue of progress, a future four-laned car park holds more weight

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward Thomas's first published poem was called *Up in the Wind*

in the hierarchy of roads than the red of the As or the yellowed  
B's. This isn't the sea, this isn't the rivers, map makers' colours running

out of Cartesian cartographers' ink. Here, the lumps of history, these flat  
contoured ups called Downs. West Meon to Petersfield, home to the ghosts  
of charcoal burners summer's all-consuming green become rainbow colours  
of Persephone's rule, the spectrum from magenta to yellow to brown;  
with leaves left out, nature's brown is the map's woods' green.

Bends lend themselves to a biker's tilt, farmland, pasture, the first  
whimper of the hills, awaiting the inevitable developers' progress plot.  
The shrieking wind scrubs the land again, its grainy sough tooth, cruising  
gears and the contours easing leaves towards the low pressures

of depressions. I have come to know downs.

Take a sharp left. The road to Steep is.

The full texts of each version are available in the appendix. The poem has  
developed in a number of ways. It takes much longer to get to the road leading to  
the village of Steep which is itself steep, hence one part of the process is the growing  
of the poem rather than the redrafting; the imagery is developed, for instance the  
road becoming 'like a Caesarean scar', the 'gaol' of home and 'the bird-cage' of  
school. Part of the development, crafting, process of the poem is growing it, part is  
altering, part surgery.

One of the metrics I felt might help overcome the 'difficult to explain' was the *density* of figurative language. In these two poems it is similar, however, in a poem that started off in a particular style and is then redrafted or grown into a different style: 166 words in the original with a density of 10.2% of figurative language, the final 477 at 11.3%. However, how significant is this change?

### 3.1.3 Figurative Density

Chefs use the term 'reduction' when enriching the flavour of a sauce or gravy. (Flavour of a food is picked up through the nose, taste through the tongue.) The process is to boil the liquid, the water content evaporates whereas the meat fats, wine or stock essence don't, these items have a higher boiling point than water. Water adds nothing to the flavour, it is translucent to the nose. Before boiling, the elements that are evaporating from the surface of the liquid have a higher concentration of neutral water, thus with less water, and fewer molecules evaporating as a percentage as the liquid reduces in volume, the more intense the flavour that remains. The reduction is denser and richer in flavour.

This too happens with language, especially poetry which is the archetypal reduction or condensed use of language. For simplicity, language can be said to consist of function words and content words. 'Infernal', by Sean O'Brien (2011), chosen randomly from *November* (because it's relatively short),

It **strikes** you: you are here. It's quite a **sight** —  
The **pitchblack blazing lake** of **Hell** by **night**  
(The **postcards stole** their **ancient joke** from **Hull**).  
And all alone, although it **must** be **full**.  
There **must** have been a **mixup** on the **quays** —  
You **told** them but the **staff** weren't **listening**.  
*Teabreak's over lads — back on your knees.*  
*All hail the chief. Prepare to kiss the ring.*

Ignoring the last two lines for now, (which I'll get to), the first six lines consist of

51 words, 20 of them highlighted as content words. Not far off 40%, matching Pennbaker's (2011) prediction.

The hills step off into whiteness.  
People or stars  
Regard me sadly, I disappoint them.

The train leaves a line of breath.  
O slow  
Horse the colour of rust,

Hooves, dolorous bells –  
All morning the  
Morning has been blackening,

A flower left out.  
My bones hold a stillness, the far  
Fields melt my heart.

They threaten  
To let me through to a heaven  
Starless and fatherless, a dark water.

Plath's 'Sheep in Fog'. 69 words, 38 of them highlighted as content words, 55% of them content words making Plath's poem denser, more reduced, 57% before the last stanza almost a reverse of Pennebaker's 'normal' usage. Plath's poem is a different kind of poem from O'Brien's. Not in terms of form, or other poetry categorisations, but in density of imagery and figurative language. This is a sensual quality in Harmon's (2018) terms, a flavour of the poems. Content words do not necessarily imply use of figuration, however do give added layers of texture to a poem.

How dense can we get?

Altarwise by owl-light in the half-way house

The gentleman lay graveward with his furies;  
Abaddon in the hangnail cracked from Adam,  
And, from his fork, a dog among the fairies,  
The atlas-eater with a jaw for news,  
Bit out the mandrake with to-morrows scream.  
Then, penny-eyed, that gentlemen of wounds,  
Old cock from nowheres and the heaven's egg,  
With bones unbuttoned to the half-way winds,  
Hatched from the windy salvage on one leg,  
Scraped at my cradle in a walking word  
That night of time under the Christward shelter:  
I am the long world's gentlemen, he said,  
And share my bed with Capricorn and Cancer.

The first stanza of 'Alterwise by Owl-light', Dylan Thomas. 105 words, — it's easier to count the unhighlighted ones — 49 function words, thus 56 content words. Surprisingly, 53%; it *feels* more dense than Plath's poem. This feeling comes about because of more complex syntax and greater cognitive load (Harley 2014). My own view is that this 'feel' comes about because of the form, this sonnet form seems more dense as a block of words than 'Sheep in Fog' which is much more predicated on white space. The sonnet form itself feels more dense, more full of flavour, than words strung out with much more white space around words. This I suspect has got something to do with an inner rhythm created by the movement of the eye across the page.

A John Burnside sonnet:

Someone was walking in the room next door.  
I thought the house was empty but it seems  
someone was pacing round the bedroom floor

a moment since. His footsteps crossed my dreams  
as I was waking; sunlight bleached the wall,  
and on the other side it must have gleamed

upon his **space**. Each **step rang hard** and **small**:  
a **slow, deliberate measurement** of **pain**.  
At times, these, **old, familiar sounds appal**,

at times it **seems** the **morning light** is **stained**  
from **utter blackness**. Yet I **bear** it all:  
the **scattered hoop**, the **poison** in the **grain**,

and **naked angels, shattered** in the **fall**.  
My own **steps echo** in an **empty hall**.

111 words, 52 content words, 47% and although a sonnet, a different form of sonnet. A form with much more white space. None-the-less it feels more O'Brien than Plath. More narrative. Removing the line space gaps doesn't alter the impression:

Someone was **walking** in the **room** next **door**.  
I **thought** the **house** was **empty** but it **seems**  
someone was **pacing** round the **bedroom floor**  
a **moment** since. His **footsteps crossed** my **dreams**  
as I was **waking**; **sunlight bleached** the **wall**,  
and on the other **side** it **must** have **gleamed**  
upon his **space**. Each **step rang hard** and **small**:  
a **slow, deliberate measurement** of **pain**.  
At times, these, **old, familiar sounds appal**,  
at times it **seems** the **morning light** is **stained**  
from **utter blackness**. Yet I **bear** it all:  
the **scattered hoop**, the **poison** in the **grain**,  
and **naked angels, shattered** in the **fall**.  
My own **steps echo** in an **empty hall**.

Here is Frank O'Hara's (1953) 'On Rachmaninov's Birthday' from *Lunch Poems* (1953). It is an interesting example because it contains proper names. The other

aspect of this poem that is important is that it illustrates how the density of figurative language is not synonymous with density of layering or meaning. A symbol or metaphor may consist of a single registration for a content word, but as discussed below can have many properties of interpretation, ambiguity or layering.

Quick! A last poem before I go  
off my rocker. Oh Rachmaninov!  
Onset, Massachusetts. Is it the fig-newton  
playing the horn? Thundering windows  
of hell, will your tubes ever break  
into powder? Oh my palace of oranges,  
junk shop, staples, umber, basalt;  
I'm a child again when I was really  
miserable, a group pizzicato. My pocket  
of rhinestone, yoyo, carpenter's pencil,  
amethyst, hypo, campaign button,  
is the room full of smoke? Shit  
on the soup, let it burn. So it's back.  
You'll never be mentally sober.  
(7)

Forty-two of the poem's words are deemed content words at a first pass — this figure can often change on reviewing the analysis (for instance is 'it's' or 'I'm' in or out?) – of eighty-seven words, 48.2%. It 'feels' less dense than that, and one of the aspects that can cause an inflated density is list-type sentences. O'Hara lists six items in his pocket, for example. There is also 'palace of oranges, / junk shop, staples, umber, basalt;' a line which might well get scrutinised in a work-shop as not being poetically-grammatical, to many. These lines weight the density reading. Although the line still has its own syllabic, stress and caesura (commas) contributions to rhythm.

Analysis of content word density is only one tool available to the analyst. A useful one, but of more use when melded with other tools such as metaphor analysis and close reading.



For one of my own poems: my most recent poem as at time of writing (May 2022), 'Giving a Toss'

The stone spins, flips the waveless lake, heads always up  
or was it tails? A rummage of dribble on the shore I'm sure,  
tracing bubbles, abandoned troubles, hoppers of hope, endured.

Images flipflop, a silicon switch, positive-negative valence  
switched like mood polarities exceeding bi-polar. Swings, tired  
tide-waves sweep in and sinusoidal out like I do I will who gives

a kiss or is it a toss? Divorce courts as busy as a condemned church,  
the pussy willow weeps its catkins in the waves of autumn wind:  
even a cat's life runs out at nine, stones never flipped that far.

99 words, 58 in red, 58%. This is where I now want my poetry to be, not all of it. Too much, too dense a gravy, over-powers the whole dish, but I am at a place where I feel I can control the density of a particular poem and at the same time blend poems together, like different food groups, to control the overall dish. This was a major change from the *Three Miles* poems.

It was not until I took a poem written much later than the *Three Miles* poems, 'Jabbering', written after Covid jabs in late 2020, but at a much greater distance of poetic journey than elapsed time, I realised what I was trying to distinguish. 'Jabbering' is 118 words at 28.8%. One of the latest poems written for this document, May 2022, 'Giving a Toss' is 99 words at a density of 58%.

'always' and 'up' could be marked as non-functional (either a content word or figurative language.)

## 3.2 Technique

The output of poetry is of course poems. A key theme of this discourse was considering in a reflexive analysis how the way I engaged in the output of this process had changed.

As mentioned above, my output has changed enormously in character in the last ten years (six of those being part of the academy), changes accelerated exponentially in the last four. I thought the changes in character could be grouped into three stages: 1/ all time before my MA, 2/ the two years of my MA and then 3/ the four years of my PhD. At the pre-2016 community writing group I use to attend, the organiser would offer a topic the week before, I'd mull it over in a purely mental arena then on the Tuesday at group I'd start. Often a couplet would come to me as my hook, the rest would follow. It would be read out and often was well received. I was the only person who wrote poetry. This poetry was often short lines written to the ballad rhythms of Kipling or Tennyson. However, although well received in an informal situation, and one of them a 2015 prize winner for the charity *Words for the Wounded*, all poems were written in lower case with little punctuation. I felt that although the poems were pretty, they were well short of what I considered to be quality, but I didn't know what to do about it. I wasn't worthy of writing proper poetry. A key difference between then and now is that they were rarely edited. If 80% of the time was the writing of the poem, 20% (usually less) was editing. Now the figures are reversed. (An example of a pre-MA poem is included in the Appendix along with another example, 'Port Stanley', discussed below which was written recently but with a 'pre-MA' mindset.)

Pivotal for me both as a writer of poetry and the feeling of identifying as a poet was the second phase consisting of an introduction to the concept of workshopping. Weekly attendance on the MA involved my poetry, and that of my colleagues, being talked about, analysed, revised in the light of comments and developing thoughts about the different dynamics of a poem. This was the trigger for the 80-20% of effort

to become 20-80%. The third phase, the PhD, can be further broken down between the development of the poetic process and additionally the need to apply scholarship to that process which itself has four additional stages:

1. Understanding processes that are to some degree intuitive
2. Understanding some processes that are complex
3. Explaining those processes for others to read
4. Explaining those processes in a scholarly register.

These four phases as a whole were foundational in my coming to Practice-Led Research at a doctoral level and the pivotal role of Autoethnography.

It is not difficult to imagine a version of imposter syndrome gnawing at the internal identity of a poet. Am I a poet? Am I any good as a poet? As one explores experimentation with form or style: is this a poem? External verification can come through publication, a round of applause at a poetry club. But. What about internally? Especially if the person in question is no stranger to doubt. Does the degree to which I do or don't identify as a poet without external reference affect the quality of my poetry? One measure maybe consistency. All measures require output. One notion that developed was the processes involved in forming a collection.

Prior to the PhD I had never written a collection of poems, knowingly relating them. The first poems that felt like they were building towards a collection were the early poems in what became *Three Miles up the Hamble*. Much as there was a feeling pre-the academy that my poems were raw, unpolished, there was a nagging feeling in these early *Three Miles* poems that they were too descriptive, narrative, telling not showing and not quite what I was trying to achieve.

A couple of times as the overall PhD developed I've felt as if I've been given 'permission'. I'd have doubts about something I'd written along the lines of 'is this poetry?' Rather than imposter syndrome, I suspect this is more a sign of a gnawing desire to be good and not being there yet and not knowing what to do about it. The

first was a BBC documentary<sup>2</sup> about Seamus Heaney where his wife, Marie, talks of the circumstances of being in a park in Belfast on a Sunday afternoon. The poem that describes the situation is 'Tate's Avenue' in Heaney's (2006) *District and Circle*. It was as if I had a sudden realisation that the kind of poetry I had started to write in *Three Miles* was poetry after all; it was 'OK' to write about that kind of subject matter, in that kind of style. It wasn't the reading of the poem that gave me permission, it was the subject matter of the poem and the style describing a set of circumstances. The personal nature of geography, setting and context.

Despite 'permission' and workshops with two fine poets, neither of whom would be shy of honest judgement, I was floundering with belief, belief of being *worthy*. I had moved away from the inferiority complex of not writing in capital letters or punctuating, but what was I moving towards?

The second permission I've already touched on. It was a set of private exercises where a friend wanted to revisit Hughes' (1998) *Birthday Letters*. I'd recently read a book about Plath so we ended up with six or seven workshops comparing the poems of Plath and Hughes side-by-side where they were writing about the same event as discussed above. This drove a momentous insight for me. The completely different styles, not in the sense of Romantics v Georgians v Modernists, but two poets sitting in the same room (metaphorically) with differing use of language. It was the first time I'd sat with two different styles of the same event side-by-side. A close reading of each poem individually wouldn't have had the same prism. At that point I *knew* what I was as a poet and at the same time what I wanted *to be*.

The third was a YouTube documentary of Mark Doty (Doty and Lehman, 2010) talking about Frank O'Hara. Doty picked up and recommended John LeSueur's

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<sup>2</sup> Having seen the documentary on BBC iPlayer, when I went to retrieve details it had been removed.

(2003) biography of O'Hara's poetry life. The fact that Doty, a poet I admire, in

turn admired O'Hara was fabulous (second hand validation and permission) but in addition, LeSueur's book, as well as being an excellent read, nonchalantly mentioned O'Hara's 'I did this, I did that' poetry (LeSueur, 2003, 55) and gave it a name, a label. Poetry I was familiar with but had a secret sub-surface self-questioning. What makes O'Hara's 'I did this, I did that' poetry? Answer: it doesn't matter, it just is.

### 3.3 The Nature of Control

The golfers move like penitents,  
shouldering bags and counting strokes  
towards the justices of handicap and par.

writes Gwyneth Lewis (1995) in 'A Golf Course Resurrection'.

For many people familiar with the difficulties of striking a golf ball, merely making a good connection and making the ball fly is satisfaction enough. But the good golfers 'control' the ball in flight. The angle and 'loft' of a club can cause the ball to move laterally in the air, arcing left-to-right or right-to-left, depending upon the lay of the land, much as a tennis player puts 'spin' on the ball. For me, and this is totally personal, outside the norm and highly unusual (except perhaps for Frank O'Hara), I have not needed the hit of publication. What I wanted was to feel 'in control' of my poetry much as a spectator may merely see the outcome of a golf shot, where the ball ends up, but the golfer knows they have applied control to the ball in order to reduce the factor of luck of how and where the ball hits the ground (for instance, the effect of wind on the ball in flight).

The Ram rotates backwards in flight, curves drawn or fading,  
pimples sucking air. As I often did. If struck correctly. It lands softly,  
puckering the green; I never did.  
(48)

I write in my poem 'cosmography'. It opens 'I was taught to play golf at eight.

Later in life, knowledged, I'd shoot / a Ram Tour balata, coached by a bloke, unschooled, who knew more.' A Ram Tour is a golf ball and balata a type of skin that gave greater control of the ball but was easily damaged by a poor strike contact. The control of the ball moves it right or left through the air, technically a fade or a draw, and the backspin causes the ball to 'stop' on the green. For me this is a metaphor, although oblique, for knowing when a poem is done, complete. When to stop fiddling. I liked the image of the back-spin of the ball even while it maintains forward momentum. 'Curves drawn' plays with the technical term for moving the ball left-to-right in the air and sketching shapes with a pencil. A quality golfer will know the left-to-right movement is not caused by backspin, a feature of shorter shots, but I elided the 'lie' knowingly (see section 3.5). With 'pimples sucking the air' followed by 'As I often did' and 'puckering the green' followed by 'I never did'; I felt I was gaining control over the line.

Without the various drafts or explanation, this is not obvious in an analysis of extant poetry, published in its final form.

The whole thing starts with a single knot  
And needles. Word and pen. Tie a loop  
In nothing. Look at it. Cast on, repeat

The procedure till you have a line  
That you can work with.  
It's pattern made of relation alone.

Patience, the rhythm of empty bights  
Create a fabric that can be worn,  
If you're lucky, practised. Never too late

To catch dropped stitches, each hole a clue  
To something that's bothering you.

Writes Lewis (1995) in '1 Hobby', which opens the sequence 'How to Knit a Poem'. These lines feel controlled. 'The procedure till you have a line' for both poetry and knitting, the word pattern and the patterning, 'the whole [hole] thing' 'tie[ing] a loop / in nothing', 'each hole a clue'; a golf course is eighteen 'holes', the Ram tour

pimpled, the ball 'puckering the green' (leaving a hole). Control of the ball, control of poetic technique.

The issue of control of my poetry lifts the output from an issue of external identity, being a poet as recognised by publication, to privilege the internal identification of a reflexive recognition that the poem holds a poetic-aesthetic quality that sits as a layer on top of technique. I open the poem 'A Tree Remains' (14) with the line 'My parents didn't like her. She didn't notice, I didn't care.' As I 'send out' my poetry, I need to not *care*, or care too much, if it is accepted or rejected because I know it has the required level of craft, thus do not *require* feedback.

I'm working three  
Axes. First, a new personality  
Made from patience.  
(53)

from '8 Hypnosis Knitting', part of the same sequence of Lewis's. The three axes of making a poem for me, and contributing to the internal identity of being a poet are creative, crafting or engineering and control.

The last one is a feeling, not easily measured or explained.

Stephen Spender (1970) opens his essay 'Warnings from the Grave', about Plath, with,

Poetry is a balancing act of unconscious and conscious forces in the mind of the poet, the source of the poetry being the unconscious, the *control* being provided by the conscious. If the poet thinks about his poetic ego, he visualises, I suppose, a point at which conscious and unconsciousness meet. The unconscious forces are below the threshold at which he becomes aware of himself as having an *identity*, but his [sic] 'name' is also below the threshold where it requires attributes of character, performer, reputation, family and all those things. That is why labels attached by chairmen, editors and award givers to poets are so irrelevant.

(199)

[emphasis mine.]

Much of the 'work' of being recognised externally as a poet is in the demands of poetry readings and the hunt for publication. For me, owing to limiting life circumstances, it was important to find 'permissions' as inner justification. Spender's words aggregated the notion of being given permission, and then me giving myself permission, to seek control as an inner metric of success,

### 3.3.1 Figuration

The Theoretical Framework discussed Lewis's poem XXI where the imagery is not merely a single word creating an image but units of sense, for example, a ship is not merely 'sinking' or 'in flames', but 'sinking in flames'. In my own poem 'Lost Wax' (48), I tried to echo this conflated use of imagery by concentrating on the property of a candle that is burnt away; in order for the candle to produce its main effects: light, atmosphere, smell, it has to lose itself.

the wick maintains its compass  
point to heaven, as it does what it does it loses itself,  
lowers as burning passes, a ghost of soot  
like a dark dream of unconscious joy infiltrating  
the air but gone like the lost wax of a candle  
(35)

The use of conflated imagery in Lewis's hospital ship sinking in flames, or a candle losing its essence to provide its worth, creates additional richness of texture and layering of imagery by the density of figurative language.

However, I hold that in an autoethnographic or practice-led observation this is a valid stance. For me, 'kindling yarn' is closer to 'Pillowed Head' or 'heel-hung pigs' (as discussed in the Theoretical Framework) than either of the O'Brien or Burnside excerpts discussed in section 2.2.2).

In 'A Moon to Steer Her By', which is an intertextual reference to John Masefield's (1902),

I must down to the sea again,



The lonely sea and the sky<sup>3</sup>  
And all I ask is a tall ship  
And a star to steer her by  
(38)

I wrote 'and its [the moth's] children eat my neglected cupboard-suit, silently long-hung.' where I wanted a compound image 'long-hung', which is much more important to me than merely 'hung' and also loosely nods to Plath's image, whereas the poem exits

What is the moth or the lightbulb in my own life? For the uncovered bulbs in the many stanza of the poem of my life, are they each particular women, or a collective for love itself?  
(38)

In this instance I knew I did not want to 'heel-hung' my last line, 'an isolate love-collective', or 'a love-collective' because I want to control the pace (and slow the pace by thinning out the figurative language) of the line and for that pace to be uncluttered by poetic effect. This harks back to the passage (section 2.3.3) in which I talk about using the density of imagery to control the rhythm of a line, rather than classic notions of stress or accent. For this line, exiting the poem, an image, let alone the more intense compound imagery, would alter the feel of the poem's exit. I wanted the exit to be cleaner, less cluttered by poetic effect and thus more accessible, particularly as 'a collective for love itself' is a rather abstract notion. I was after that abstraction in an unaltered, unexplained by concrete imagery, effect.

The examples quoted in the theory section (section 2.2.2) were not trawled for. The books that happened to be on my desk were opened at random pages. I would argue that heel-hung pigs creates an image where the pigs hung by their heels does not, or at least creates it differently and more intensely. With the condensed language, the image is arrived at more exactly and arrived at more quickly.

About this time, the time of compiling this essay, I was reading Kate Kennedy's (2021) biography of Ivor Gurney, *Dweller in the Shadows*. She coined the phrase I

was searching for whilst assessing Gurney's poem 'Migrants' as referenced earlier.

The expression 'compound image', which to the best of my knowledge is a coinage by Kennedy, was an expression I needed in order to communicate with *myself* about my poetry, it differentiates a kind of image from another kind of (more sophisticated image) in a way I needed to think further on 'pillowed head' or 'heel-hung pigs' and which I could insert into my poetry *deliberately*, when it suited me. It also gave me a vehicle so that I could talk about it. Kennedy describes the compound image as 'beautifully condensed'; for me that is it. The essence (see my poem 'The Toppled Bottle' [32]) of what differentiates certain kinds of poetry, for me. Poems that are light on figurative language, or a least symbol and metaphor, with simpler forms of imagery are more narrative. The deeper the density of figurative language, the more self-referencing the poem becomes as a particular type of poem, my own view being the closer to a prototypical view of what a poem 'is', and the less accessible a poem becomes because of it. Less accessible means less accessible to the greater number of people. My poem 'The Toppled Bottle' is more densely populated with figurative language (there is not the required scope or word count to run comparative poems through the MIP and it's equivalent for symbol and image) than the Hampshire poems. The reason this is important is because the poems became denser with figurative tropes deliberately. I knew I wanted to shift my poetry from Hughes's (1995) *Birthday Letters* more to Plath's (1965) *Ariel*.

In the course of creating the poem 'Lion's Teeth' which as a first draft was 'Lion's Gate', something rather particular and unusual happened. I was enjoying myself, pausing what I was doing to consider how would I create a metaphor of this or that to arrive at this, how would I ... how would I ... When I arrived at the final draft, final for now, of the poem four or five drafts in, the poem gave me pleasure. It was not just, merely, an intellectual exercise, it was fun. This is not something I remembered experiencing since pre-MA days. When nothing counted — after all I wasn't a proper poet. I wanted the poem to 'sum up' the collection. I don't mean as the last poem in

a book, but as a summary of where my thinking had led me. None-the-less, I knew I wanted a child — for some reason that had to be a girl talking to her mum — blowing the clocks off a dandelion head. Where do the seeds go? How do they get there? A dog's leg brushing, a grass cutter spewing, a child's breath blowing?

Three more puffs of custard dragon breath frees all seeds from their base.  
- Why have they gone, mummy. - Umm. To go and be dandelions somewhere else.  
- Will they come back? - No, they won't come back. That's how they propagate.  
- Will I go through the proper gate, mummy?  
(45)

But I also knew I wanted to deconstruct the prototypical form of a page poem from the norm of what makes a poem, but for it to still have some qualities of better poetry. I wanted the clear division of direct speech juxtaposed with poetic devices — figurative language, image, symbol, metaphor, in the same place and for this in itself to be a metaphor, however obliquely disguised. This refers back to the direct speech of O'Brien's 'Infernal' (see section 3.1.3)

- Hold it up to your face and blow.  
The girl complies. The flower's fruit, each a bleached peacock's tail, tug,  
loosen, free themselves, lift in the breeze, pinned to the wind  
by a ghostly butterfly collector.  
(ibid)

I wanted the rhythm of direct speech counterpointed with the rhythm created by repeated images, not an image repeated, the repeating of a placeholder for image. Something like image, image, function word, image, image, metaphor, image function, function ... etc. This is an example, not the analysis of the line. The function words allowing the reader's working imagination time to breathe. But I knew, above all, I wanted the polarity of reported speech to counterpoint the density of image and image derivative, symbol and metaphor being image derivative or image deflective. Derivative being where the author guides where the reader arrives at, image deflective being the author permitting the reader to arrive at a terminus of

their own choosing, their own agency. The first being privileged, the latter reader agented. The point to which an author is 'allowing' the agency of the reader is interesting and one I'm trying to explore as a substrate to the poem. Does the dandelion clock give up agency to the wind, or was that the dandelion's intention all along? A child has little agency in where it lives, where it goes to school and how those aspects will influence it culturally, little agency but huge effect. But what is the nature of the symbiosis of the dandelion clock and the wind? Agency is willingly forfeited for the rationale of the greater good, the force of nature, the happenstance of God.

### 3.4 Collection

There was a difficult decision to be made in the final review of the whole collection as produced for this document. It was whether to revisit the initial poems included for this project with the mind and craft arrived at after years of development, or to leave them (mostly) as they were written. I felt they weren't really tuned as to how I would have written them at the end of the process, however, in order to talk about the process itself it was necessary to have (show) examples of my poetic style at the beginning of the process and then examples at the end of the process. Reflexive investigation and description (telling) would thus be better served.

An example of how a poem might have been redrafted at the end of the process appears in Appendix IV. 'Sonnet for a Songbird' () was deemed to be too abstract on submission. A comment with which I agreed. The Appendix shows the poem as submitted in this document and how I might change it now. Note, part of my thinking here was to deliberately leave the first stanza of the sonnet as it was written and subject the second to major surgery. I felt this process would nicely (if subliminally) enhance the nature of a sonnet's Volta.

### 3.4.1 Aggregated Themes

Beneath the great white horse's one green eye,  
The goods-train steam in blue-black miniature  
Away from us ...

...where are we now? Not on the O. S. Sheet.

...

The next time round we take the train to see  
The watchers down the line, preoccupied  
With maps and catalogues, white horses, us.  
(14)

Sean O'Brien (2001), 'Ravilious', from *Downriver*.

There are no trains this afternoon  
(11)

opens 'The Eavesdroppers.'

For the dizzy grind of the coal-train / Or even the Metro ...  
(ibid)

'Somewhere the rails can run through ...' (25) 'Baltica', covering three of the first eleven poems of the collection. Railways, especially the Metro, are a running theme in O'Brien's writing, both poetry and prose. As mentioned, prior to my PhD, I had never formed a 'collection' of poetry before with a coherent theme knowing from the beginning poems were going to link. I knew this was needed for the degree but didn't know if I should start with a planned theme or let it grow free-range. Before the MA, I had issued books on Amazon Kindle that had grouped some poems, but these poems had nothing of commonality other than they'd been written in the same time-frame, or were a 'group of poems written in the Army', or a group of poems out of my feelings for this woman or that woman. *Three Miles* was the first time I'd written poems knowing they were going to be grouped together with a coherent link. And this was two years into the degree, other ideas which I thought would work just hadn't coalesced. The other major development for me was after the initial

poems had started to form as individual entities, I started to think about poems that I would have to write to do a specific job for the collection, not a job solely within the boundaries of a specific domain extant at the time of beginning.

In order to reflexively explain the origins and evolution of the thematic landscape of a collection it is sometimes necessary to step out of the realm of autoethnography and into the realm of biography. In this kind of situation the nature of the autobiography is to give reflexive context, it would not appear in artistic output. Not in the same form. The first few poems were situated in Hampshire where my parents had lived when I was a teenager and I revisited to stay with a friend.

Two groups of seven poems each were submitted for workshop, the first in November 2019, the second in January 2020; and both contained a poem that I would drop. One because I felt it wasn't good enough and one because I felt it didn't fit the 'theme', and it was only at this point that I realised there was a theme and I had arrived at it. The theme, not at this point a specific theme (other than the broad 'Hampshire Revisited' which I had in mind as a grandiose 'Brideshead Revisited' pastiche, but more a pastiche of my life than a pastiche of the book), but that the idea, the principal, of a theme existed. At the November workshop I had recently come back from Hampshire. No poetry was planned, poems were triggered there. My friend's new home was four or five miles from the town where my parents had bought a house on returning to the UK. On my first day I asked her to drive me to the estate where the house was, I hadn't been there for twenty years after a violent falling out with my father (see 'The Cruel C' (25)) where I deliberately broke my reluctance to invoke taboo words, a reluctance born of exposure to taboo words or subject matter merely to shock as opposed to artistic intent). In order for it not to be too self-indulgent, we'd stop at pubs I remembered as we revisited the geography of memory.

The bar splices two long walls, one shelved with that morning's freshly baked bread, waiting to fly out the door, the other a framed expanse of coastal Hampshire mapped in grids and contours.

This quilted patchwork of colours is the territory of one of my lives.  
Although not nine there have been many, identified without by uniform  
or pay check, within by displaced thoughts like jigsaw maps  
with unkempt contours and no explained colours defining land or sea.  
(18)

From 'A Yew, a Brook and an Inn'. Maps, identity, different lives, colours. These were the themes that were emerging, the creative side, Spender's 'below the threshold' (see section 3.3 above). I then had to consider the engineering, crafting side at the thematic level of scope, not the crafting of a single poem. Up to this point themes were emerging, now I had to consider riffing off themes that I was beginning to identify to produce a coherent product.

### 3.4.2 Management of Production

By early February (2020, this is still pre-pandemic Lock Down, but the signs were there), I had twelve poems grouped in a computer directory called *3 Miles Up the Hamble*, an ad-hoc title from one of the poems that I grew to like and has persisted. In February and March I would "version control" the document in which these poems resided in a single entity that I had taken to workshop. Up until then poems had lived in single files, each draft becoming a new file (rather than overwriting the parent file). Version controlling was now at the collection level of the hierarchy, even if I worked on only a few of them, rather than the single files of a poem that incremented in number. From now on, even edits to a single poem would increment the Collection version number, a system based on my time in software: small numbers were changes, 'upgrades' in software parlance, to individual poems, eg v6.4.2 -> v6.4.3, (version 6 of the collection, the fourth poem into the collection and the second to third draft of that particular poem). Changes to the Collection (ie multiple redrafts to individual poems) were the first numbers, eg v6.4.3 -> v7. [I cannot physically write, thus redraft in the classic paper-based way, thus have to try and use my old computer smarts to mimic drafting in a way that I could use versioning as a cipher

for my PhD diarised notes and somebody down-the-line has a chance of following what I was doing.]

At this point I had fifteen poems, I knew I wanted about 24. The obvious on-the-surface connection was south Hampshire and its geography, but I knew, intuitively rather than through structured conscious thought, that I wanted, if geography was a theme, for geography itself to be a theme, rather than the specific geography of one county that was one of many in terms of my life's associations. If I substituted geology for geography, I felt I had the idea of geography dimensioned through time, and through history. The other thing that was niggling was the idea of roots and geography, or rather rootlessness in what ought be a comforting anchor point of a person's grounding. A third, sprouting dimension to geography was maps, an essential part of the outdoorsman that coalesced identity for me in my schoolboy scouts, Army and hill walking years.

Although each of the major advancements to the collection as a whole were triggered by three visits to the area that physically and temporally located me in Hampshire, it was the fact that what was triggered was memories, not a collection of nature poems, or poems-of-place. And with memories came other locations, other geographies by association.

We drove the country roads on this cold but clear December day,  
roads I'd run in preparation for the Army, and walked their dog.  
My mind map of geography through time unerring, after a quarter  
of a century, I could still navigate the lanes with certainty.  
(11).

From 'Pork Balls Sweet and Sour'.

For me the key word here is 'unerring'. As the PhD moved through time, I was becoming more focused not so much on memory itself, but the inaccuracy of memory, the rewriting of history. There are numerous reasons memory can become inaccurate and yet still hold its own truth. It feels unerring even when it errs.

The carpet was new, nothing else. My grandfather



had fallen on floorboards while his sons continued playing darts. *I'll remember you*, he said as I picked him up. If he meant in his will, he didn't.  
(17)

From 'Grapeshot'. On revisiting a pub to which I had once been a regular, two and a half decades before.

There was a vineyard too, hence *The Bunch of Grapes*.  
Fine English wines, I was told, which was news to me,  
a once regular, a once frequent.  
(ibid)

I didn't know if I'd forgotten that they produced their own wine, or whether I'd never known in the first place.

My association with home was tempered by spending more time in a Boarding school than this house and then the Army. School and the Army had other locations, other geographic evocations. So, although the Hampshire poems were setting, I wanted a few poems prior to the move to Hampshire, (both temporally and topological layout) so that I deliberately wrote three poems, 'Counting my Eggs', 'Go West Young Man' and 'Thresholds' to insert before the sequence. Later I decided 'Thresholds' was a threshold so wanted an additional third pre-school poem. 'cosmography' was the last poem written for the whole collection. Later still, among the very last changes, on advice I shifted these poems elsewhere to open with 'Thresholds' which was deemed to be a stronger poem.

The different locii of my early years centrifugally left me with the idea of a spiritual home, rather than a physical home and how even without knowing where a spiritual home is, by being too young or too inexperienced, I could know where my spiritual home wasn't. Grounding had been forced upon me through the agency of other people or institutions (parents, Boarding School, the Army).

Later, as I sat composing  
poetry in a current life, as consciousness attracts the culled awareness  
of the past, I hunted for a book,

(3)

I would write in the third section of 'Thresholds'.

As the third 2021 Lock Down had its first signs of easing, I asked my friend, who owned the house on the outskirts of Hamble and who had taken me on that first visit to *The Jolly Sailor*, a pub three miles up the Hamble but not one of the pubs of my memory, if I could come down for a few days with the dog, if she'd cover walking the dog, and I could 'clear the decks'. I wanted to inject or graft the major tectonic-plate shifts in my thinking about style, form and attitudes to poetry that had happened rapidly in the new year into the poems that had existed from my first visit; locate scattered files of poem snippets or ideas that I had been tinkering with, synthesise any new thinking and start to form the poem ordering into an arc within the collection. For reasons that are more 'out there' than under any internal control, I wanted to do this within the geography of where the whole thing had started. It also meant I was free of the noise of my day-to-day living in Cheltenham, much of which is inherited by living on my own (with two animals) and a few disabling conditions. I also wanted to review my thinking about the entry into the collection and the exit out of it.

### 3.4.3 Revisits, poems and place.

Sometimes in poetry it is best to let things gestate. Even, perhaps especially, when it isn't planned. In late October 2021 I opened up my grouped poems *Three Miles Up the Hamble*. The last time before had been early May when I had just received some feedback from my PhD workshop. The workshop was the working day after my dog had died, ie the Monday from the Friday. I am not sure that on that early May day I deliberately 'put them away', for an unspecified time, but in retrospect I think I probably did. Even though I knew there was something unspecified, something unsatisfied, incomplete about them. Unsure what it was, what to do about it, how to proceed or how to not proceed, and thinking overwhelmingly about my dog, Zen, I

just put them away. I felt it was ok to do so, not to be 'pressured' by the PhD, to give myself, and the poems space, *feeling* it was for the right reason. I had tried to write a poem called 'The Empty Half', after a poem in *Three Miles* called 'The Empty Quarter' — referencing a huge desert in Saudi Arabia — which was about my house being empty after I broke my ribs during Lock Down and a friend (the friend from Hampshire) picked Zen up to look after him. 'The Empty Half' represented a very different kind of emptiness, of absence, but I couldn't write it. So memory serves.

'The Empty Half', I now notice, had gone through six iterations, the last saved in June. In retrospect I think these changes came through a kind of poetry muscle-memory rather than conscious thought. This 'muscle-memory', like endless hours of hitting golf balls on a driving range, was built on a discipline and application that wasn't present in my pre-MA attitudes to poetry. Indeed, I didn't know it existed or in what form it took. These iterations were more growing the poem where it had petered out through painful associations than technical rewrites. The poem was coming to me, in a creative sense, in starts and stops.

The words stopped  
coming as if a giant sized twelve paw had stepped  
on the hose and the a's and e's and o's built up a backlog  
of pressure that extended the rubber like a pig's bladder filled  
with air like a football.  
(60)

From 'The Empty Half'.

Even so, given the fault of memory's fallibility (having thought there was just one iteration), I knew I wasn't 'blocked' during that time, I just needed my mind, and the bit of it that is connected to my creativity, to rest. Not in peace, but in quiet. I noted the difference in the specific memory of file management to the general memory of how I felt. I knew that I had to untangle the grief as a part of life from the grief as fuel for creativity. Although the collection had been put away, which wasn't 'about' the dog anyway, the poetry as a living experience hadn't.

### 3.4.4 Expanding the Collection

I grew aware that *Three Miles* was not the full collection; I wanted to limit it to twenty-four poems but would need more for the degree's requirements. At this stage I had recently gone back to the area of Hampshire from where the first poems came. I knew in the revisit I was happy, comfortable, content, with the collection, or the sequence, and was happy with the title (although not happy with the quality of finish of the poems within, but happy with the *idea* of the poems) and that it would stay, but that it was only a sub-set of where I was going. A way-point. A sign-post. But I didn't want to 'betray' the idea of it as a coherent unit if I strayed elsewhere. Other poems would grow it, like layers of the brain through evolution, yet others would create another sequence. As an atomic core, as an element, however, it was complete. (But not *finished*.)

The poems that were emerging in this period were emerging in my head without recourse to scraps of paper - or computer files in my case. The theme, the idea of a theme, based on the theme of *Three Miles* was evolving, emerging, too. What was the theme? I knew it was emerging, or meta-emerging, but hadn't yet emerged and I was reluctant to prod it along. By 'meta-emerge', I mean if the theme was, say, memory, or maps as symbol, they may have emerged, whereas the feeling, much more fuzzy, that *something*, the right thing was emerging and evolving but needed more time and nourishment, to develop. The three geographies of the sequence were based around the See of great Gothic cathedrals, but much of the theme was outside of the cathedrals themselves, the baggage train and camp followers rather than the army on the march. Not the army itself.

Although the three cathedrals of Winchester and Canterbury in my return to the UK and Gloucester in my flight to Cheltenham were major contributiond, I also knew *Three Miles* wasn't about the cathedrals as image, symbol or metaphor either. I returned in my mind again and again to the early days of Open Source software and

the movement that grew around the teachings of Eric Raymond and his (1999) book  
<sup>4</sup> *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*. The two decades I spent in software before a  
diagnosis

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<sup>4</sup> The essay was first presented at a software conference in 1997, to which I was exposed, published as a book in 1999  
ended my working life saw many changes including the advent of free software  
products. The early pioneers of Open Source set the ethics and mores for the  
movement, including Raymond's licensing model, the GNU General Public License.  
For a while *Three Miles* expanded into *Three Cathedrals and a Bazaar*, three foci of  
geography (geology) poems and a free-for-all at the end, but I felt it was  
cumbersome and playing lip-service to the three of *Three Miles*: the pub where the  
first poems were born was literally three miles from the mouth of the river Hamble.  
The iconography of the three cathedrals felt like a schoolboy pun. It wasn't until I  
glanced over the phrase 'ex cathedra' in a book I was reading, glanced in the sense  
of not getting the crucial insight until after I'd finished the book and forgotten where  
I'd read it, but it had somehow lodged in my mind, that all of the imagery that I was  
looking for in the title came together. I loosely knew what ex cathedra meant but  
didn't exactly, as in a dictionary definition. It was like a gothic cathedral as an  
expression, highbrow, old, not of common use, and at the same time illusory and  
knowing. Sitting there unmissable on the horizon, even if one doesn't go in. Like  
memory.

Ex Cathedra.

And the Bazaar.

Uprighted, liberty, fraternity, during a helpful Spring's spring  
clean, neither by me, I caress the curved glass, ex cathedra,  
embrace the translucent purple of the graded timeless arcs  
whose crenelated top clerics like a castle on the beach.

(32)

From 'The Toppled Bottle'.

I wanted to explore the notion of overbearing or unwarranted authority, a notion explored as 'What is The "color" of Law?' in Steven L. Winter's essay from *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor* (op cit). Here ex cathedra refers to something (someone) who is gone, no longer present. I liked the idea of ex cathedra representing a kind of absence, not just the absence of authority or attachment. I additionally liked the idea of being at a remove from the literal derivation of the expression, the Pope ('from the chair') making decisions from his throne.

### 3.4.5 Revelations

As the calendar clicked from 2021 into 2022, and tugged with it my sixtieth birthday, I knew what I wanted. The architecture of the poems for my PhD was in place. Teasing my life away from the crafting of poetry was becoming more difficult. The overall collection, *Ex Cathedra and the Bazaar* would include a pamphlet sized sequence of poems grouped as *Three Miles Up the Hamble* which I would make ready for a submissions policy: *Three Miles* as a pamphlet, the others as single poem offerings. Any further learning on the analysis side of my studies centred on figurative language would not affect these poems. The *Bazaar* part of the collection would include any of the poems that I felt were informed by studies post-*Three Miles* creation that were illustrating points (even if only to me) but weren't thematically connected to *Three Miles*, and I'd have a third category of poems that were related to a fuzzy theme that I would allow to develop post-doc but for now would be anchored in my first year poems collected under the title *The Armistice Within*. This thinking came about from the December 2021 poem 'Port Stanley', discussed below. The Bazaar section was where I gave myself permission to play.

Since starting the PhD I had 144 poems of varying degrees of quality-satisfaction, 24+ for *Three Miles* and 23 post-Covid which I regard as a marker for a change in my life, change in my thinking, and among the last changes in attitude, or stylistics, or

application ... in the quality of my craft. I feel I now have the required degree of control I set out to find. Now, as the esteemed South African golfer Gary Player is said to have said, the more I practice, the luckier I get.

Up until my PhD was underway I had considered there being two modalities of a poem's coming to life, one *creativity*, one *crafting*, hewing, polishing.

The word 'hewing' was chosen deliberately there, the process of turning wood from its natural tree or branch shape into lumber — the sawn flat shape of lumber being usable wood for construction purposes and a nice little play on the metonymicity of lumber for stanza shape, a metaphor both obtuse and of poor choice, but it gives me pleasure. To play with the words, the form, to explore the *bazaar*.

I presented a poem I'd written about Sylvia Plath to workshops, none of the attendees at either workshop picked up on the references to Plath and I didn't mind. The poem was only a homage to Plath for me, I wanted it to stand on its own hewn feet. My poem 'about' Plath, 'Cut Short' contained the lines,

Moods' music in coloured hues brought me to spring a rhythm without a beat  
in dissonant life, the discord of a scything sighs heavy in my house.'  
(56)

The word 'hues' as you would see in a Word document is picked up by spell-checker, plays a number of games for me including referring to Plath's husband Ted Hughes, all of which becomes too-clever as part of the poem and the poem's accessibility. At some point, and like the bends for a rising diver, difficult to know where the point is arrived at but clear when you feel its effects, means the obtuseness of certain design aspects over-complicates the poem.

However, the poem was also 'about', on a much more private and bank-vault level, a relationship with somebody who had cut short the relationship. Nobody is going to get that reference, possibly one person if in the unlikely event she read the poem and made the connections, and other than I have just written about it in plain

sight in this document. But for me, and for me alone, even when the poem is released into the wild, it is an enduring aspect of the internal design, like a ship's bulkhead doing a job encased in steel beneath the waves but a job integral to the ship and to shipping. It gives me pleasure solely for its own sake, although it is imperative it doesn't interrupt the poem, as this spelling does here. A property of control is why the internal design is transparent to the flow of the poem.

And it is to a poem's design that I now wish to turn.

When my dog died in April 2021, I put poetry on hold. I tried to write a poem about him but couldn't and felt bad because I thought I should. This was not the same as writers' block and the decision was not at the conscious level. The whole thing went a long way to making a small change, a change in perception, in understanding, that made a big difference to me. To my sense of identity. Know thyself. Because the *poetry* didn't stop, the *writing* did. More specifically, the writing of poetry; for other writing, academic writing in the form of essays, didn't. If anything, I immersed myself in reading and research as a deflection from the dog's passing. By 'the poetry didn't stop' I mean it continued in my head, but at a different level. A more 'design' level than word level. John Burnside noted in a YouTube interview that he would walk back from a girlfriend's house and carry a poem in his head and when he felt ready would write it down on paper. In the last six months I've been thinking about my poetry differently. But then something else changed. There was an event that triggered a poem as a poetic unit of words rather than conceptually, and this poem then triggered a poem about my dog. However, the two conceptual poems haven't come out in a dump as well, they're still in there. Prior to the MA poems would usually crystallise around a line. A few words strung together felt right, words still in my head. This process usually continued until I had a couplet, then it would be 'put down on paper' (a computer file) and more words would grow. The guts of the poem developed from the words, which usually came from a prompt or an event. Latterly, poems were developing as a concept before the words came. The abstract of the



poem, the *idea*, developed before the concrete of the poem, the *words*. This switch in process, but arriving at the same place, was almost a metaphor for metaphor itself. And it explained the concept of more control. By words being driven by the concept I was freer to find words exploiting devices like assonance and half rhyme in a way that was more difficult when the words came first. By concept here I mean concept-in-depth. Not 'oh look. There's the house I use to live in, memories ...' but 'there's the house I used to live in, what does it represent? what happened here? was the house a home? How good a home was it?' etc.

The two conceptual poems were triggered by visual events, me noticing something that had always been there but had until then remained unnoticed. The event was the seeing but what I was seeing was a situation. But still, contextually, they were visual events. 'The Lick of the Lock' (32) was an aural event, I heard something and it seemed to operate at a different 'level' of the brain. It was more immediate, more specific. More, in one way, concrete; or at least less abstract. It's as if the ear image was closer to my poetry brain, or the level of words in the poetry brain, than the visual ones. (Or, the aural event had a more visceral trigger, or was at a greater remove from the death of the dog.)

Yesterday

I heard the scratched kiss of the key  
then felt the taste of the ratcheted  
penetration; meaning unlocked.

My ears triggered the address of memory catching  
the registers of loss.

(33)

The opening lines of 'The lick of the Key.' The other poem that had been gestating the longest had a lot of rumination about the title, which in itself is unusual for me because the title doesn't usually come first (nor last either, it arrives when it arrives). There was a perfume bottle that must have been left by a woman, and owing to the time warp of Lock Downs, must have been there a while. It was a nice-looking bottle and it was on its side. I had the image of a fallen bottle but didn't feel the

sound, then 'like a fallen Eiffel Tower' used up the word with a 'll' of fallen linked to a 'file' of Eiffel, and then 'toppled' popped into my head and I liked the 'ppl' of topple with the 'tel' of bottle. And although the image of the bottle on its side and its resemblance (conceptually, surreally) to the Eiffel Tower in the curve of its sides was pleasing, it wasn't until I accidentally — or rather absent-mindedly — pushed the top and got squirted with a cloud of women's perfume that I had the shape of a poem that could fit in with a sequence of poems about memory. The thing I found interesting about this perfume cloud was not being reminded of a specific woman, I knew exactly whose perfume it was, but about women in general, or, more private, women in the bedroom ('women in the bedroom' is not meant as a sexual euphemism, more a shared-living and intimate one). In general. How do I put that, 'shape', the physical shape of the bottle linked to the Eiffel Tower is straight-forward, how about the amorphous shape of the cloud representing fuzzy memory, into a poem?

Gun-slug, my thumb gives a squeeze before thought  
predicts the pixelated puff of moistures, aerified dew  
of predawn mist that hovers and expands, a squirt  
of condensed moisture, tears of a cloud, settling on my skin.

Nebulous, veiled, nosing the smells of memory, splotched  
settling on my shoulder, a colony, clinging on for days;  
I don't wash it off, who will know? The synesthetic cipher  
of woman.  
(32)

The aural poem, 'The Lick of the Lock', was when I returned to my house having been out all morning to allow the letting agency to do an 'inspection' the first in two years. In the past these were done in the morning. I returned, put the heating on, the telly on and cracked open a tin of beer only to hear the scrape of the key against the lock. Because of the dog, a big German Shepherd, inspections had been arranged over the previous five years with me in the house to marshal the dog, thus I'd be opening the front door. My son has a key from when he lived here, my dog walking

friend still has a key, now for emergencies. The only other key, other than the agent's, was and presumably still is, held by a woman who is extremely unlikely to be at my front door, but when I had heard the key in a previous life it would cause a fission of excitement.

Although I had to move quickly (ish) to greet the agent and apologise for being in (Covid protocols more than propriety) the images came at the word level, 'the kiss of the key', 'the lick of the lock', and the concept level at the same time. This, I realised later, was a significant development for my poetry journey.

### 3.4.6 Army Dreaming

Pre-MA my poetry was in a sense 'to order' in that that week's lead of the writing group I belonged to would set a topic for the session and, while others would write the start of a short, or flash fiction, I would write a poem. The theme or topic was set for me. None of my poetry was that way inspired from the beginning of the MA onwards. It became much more write a poem about anything and the workshopping became the guide. That changed back by an out-of-the-blue and extraordinary event pre-Christmas, 2021. He told me that his young granddaughter also shared the same birthday as he and I. In response to his donation of a number of thousands of pounds, and the upcoming three birthdays, I felt 'compelled' to write a poem. It was the only thing to offer in return.

I have mentioned there are three broad, delineated, sweeps of my poetry formation: pre-MA, MA and PhD. These map neatly, and unsurprisingly, to the development phases, corresponding to *creativity*, *engineering* or craft, and *design* of poems. Control stretches over all of these. Within the four years of my PhD, stage III, the phase itself has become much more graduated and the three different phases much more meshed. I am no longer aware of different phases, just different stages of output. With this particular poem, looking back, I reverted to pre-MA 'Creativity' as the output. I thought about what I wanted to say, which is phase III, but pretty much

it just came. Referring to my notes, I see there were six drafts, so it wasn't quite as one-shot as I think now, although even only a few weeks later that is what my memory would serve.

As mentioned, there have been a few instances of being granted 'permission' within stage III. It is ok to write like that, or write about that, despite current fashions, because this person or that person did or does. Heaney was the most important, but quickly followed by Frank O'Hara. O'Hara took me back again into my on-going dancer and the dance duality in my thinking. John LeSeur's biography of his life with O'Hara, reminded me deeply of my years at Heathrow airport. LeSeur describes a gay environment in 1950's New York with which I was very familiar at a vicarious remove, and although that is not my particular orientation, I find aspects of it deeply attractive. LeSeur writes of O'Hara's 'I did this, I did that' poems which premises me to think about poetry outside of Plath's complex imagery or Heaney's rich language, and despite the reductive nature of language, form or subject matter, it was still poetry. From *Lunch Poems*, an excerpt from 'Cambridge' (1964, [1956]), not one of O'Hara's better known New York poems:

It is still raining and the yellow-green cotton fruit  
Looks silly round a window giving out on water trees  
With only three drab leaves left. The hot plate works,  
It is the sole heat on earth, and instant coffee.  
(18)

If O'Hara is allowed to (whatever that means) write like that, I'm allowed to (whatever that means) write about my teenage life in south Hampshire. The thinking might be defensive, but it's mine.

In 'Edwin's Hand', O'Hara (1964, [1953]) writes an acrostic to his friend Edwin Denby.

Easy to love, but  
difficult to please, he  
walks densely as a child  
in the midst of spectacular  
needs to understand.

(90)

In the delight of discovering this poem, like an adult rediscovering a childhood hobby that is still ok to like, further drawn to playing with form, tweaking it, pushing the boundaries of the matter of identity of a form, and because the nature of the work, my soldier colleague Pete (who bought the trike) and I were doing in the Falkland Islands just after the war, it felt right to play with the form of an acrostic, a kind of code. Argentina had bought two submarines from Germany and we were tasked with picking up their brief and intermittent radio transmissions, no easy task. There are many variables and some of them are classified. In order to establish radio contact with base, the submarine would surface, or close enough to the surface to transmit, and open with the phrase, in morse, The Quick Brown Fox ... which covers each letter of the English alphabet, a valuable exercise to check clarity in morse code. Our watch, Pete, detected the transmission, which allowed us to geographically locate the submarine with its military defensive implications and at two o'clock one morning senior British officers turned up in our small 'office' with bottles of rum. In the poem I wrote for Pete as a thank you for the trike, most of the gesture was writing it for his granddaughter Emily as an 'in' to what and who her grandfather was in a time that for her would be ancient history, I acrosticised The Quick Brown Fox, but using the words themselves rather than letters.

Later, I added a second, exit stanza with the 'Q' Code QRX acrosticised. British military units don't say 'over and out' either but morse operators make use of Q- and Z-code abbreviations, also used by Ham radio operators on HF frequencies in pre-internet days. QRX means 'Until the next schedule', or, over and out.

For the purposes of this essay, I feel the flavour of the poem doesn't fit the collection, but the background to it does fit reflexivity. It appears in the appendix. It represents all of the poems written during the PhD that contributed to my technique and thinking, but didn't make it into the final collection.

This poem is important to me and my poetic development. It is a little obtuse, or esoteric: the expression 'Roger imi king' (line 8) will mean nothing to anybody who

isn't a morse operator (note: for all movies' hype of the term "copy that", it doesn't work in real life. 'Roger' in morse is 'I've got that', 'imi' is turning it into a question, 'have you got that?' And 'king', although one letter in morse and four letters in sound, thus apparent waste, differentiates it from the phonetic 'Kilo' for 'K', thus is the morse equivalent of "over" to indicate the end of transmission, your turn to talk. This poem represents all of the values that were formed for me, as part of the formation of an identity, that remained with me in post-military life. I can bring them to my poetry life, my internal identification as a poet, as opposed to somebody represented by the artefacts of poetry: poems.

This poem was important to me, not in the context of my PhD but personally. The reason I feel it is relevant to the reflexivity aspect of the PhD is because it provides a bridge, a glue, between my old poetry self and my new one.

It is the first time I've written a poem, known nobody will get the reference, some people may question its poetic validity, and ... not cared.

### 3.4.7 Felt Absence

In the lectures delivered to Kent University that became the essays for *The Government of the Tongue*, Seamus Heaney's (1988) first lecture is about his fellow Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh. Heaney opens the lecture with the story of an aunt planting a chestnut fruit.

Over the years, the seedling shot up into a young tree that rose taller and taller above the boxwood hedge. And over the years I came to identify my own life with the life of the chestnut tree.

(3)

The aunt's affection, the fact that it had been planted the year Heaney was born, 'came to be symbolised in the tree;' When the family moved away, the new owners felled the tree.

all of a sudden, a couple of years ago, I began to think of the space where the tree had been, in my mind's eye I saw a kind of luminous emptiness, and once again, in a way that I find hard to define, I began to identify with that space as years before I had identified with the young tree.  
(ibid)

Among the other pertinences, of interest, is the phrase 'I find hard to define.' When I started the sequence that would become the first poems deliberately considered for the artistic factor of the PhD, I did not start with any themes or devices defined a priori. I just started. I went somewhere, it affected me, triggered poems. At some point, with reflection, themes emerged. Even as I applied analysis to emerging themes, which entails a coldness that can, to a degree, halt the natural emergence of those themes, (over-thinking can often interfere with the creative birth) there was an element of symbology that was there that I hadn't considered until I read Heaney's essay and, in that light, became obvious. Hidden in plain sight. The symbolic importance of trees — and their roots — both in my studies and my poems.

When I revisited Hampshire and went to Edward Thomas's village, there was a specific pub I wanted to visit for lunch. It was close to the village graveyard in Corehampton which had an ancient Yew tree, but we didn't have time to go there too. Thinking of this tree took my mind to Sylvia Plath's 'Elm' which she could see from the window of her writing room in Devon.

I know the bottom, she says. I know it with my great tap root:  
It is what you fear.  
I do not fear it: I have been there.

It is the sea you hear in me,  
(25)

My poem, which eventually became called 'A Yew, a Brook and an Inn', has no direct references to Plath's Elm, but Plath's tap root was in my mind, unused. One of the reason's was Semino's (2014) analysis about the 'talking tree' which I had read differently in my numerous readings of the poem. However, there was one poem, the

first I wrote for the sequence, for which Heaney's chestnut, Plath's 'Elm', and Semino's analysis had a huge and significant impact. The poem is 'The Old House Looks the Same'.

The poem, in all editions and through each workshop had started,

Today I visited the quarter century of my life  
ended twenty one years before. Here is the house  
where I ushered in my teens back, back when?  
(5)

much later it mentions a cedar tree that was in the garden of the neighbouring house. That house which was much older than the — then — new estate and whose land limited the growth of the nascent estate. I was uneasy about the opening of the poem, but in one of those 'in a way that I find hard to define', but more than that didn't know why or the fact that I *was* uneasy until it became clear what the poem was about to me, thus what the opening needed to be and why the symbolism of the tree was so important. In the new light the opening seemed clunky. And uninteresting. The poem now starts,

The lore of local legend would have it the seeds  
of the old cedar were brought back from Lebanon,  
Crusader booty. The Internet of knowledge tells me  
the oldest UK cedar is four centuries old. I prefer

how local lore and knowledge would have it.  
It was no longer there on the day I returned  
to a quarter century of my life truncated twenty-one  
years before. A great hole in the skyline of absence.  
(ibid)

The poem, the sequence and the collection, is predicated by the symbolism that signifies roots, and rootlessness, specifically seen through a retrospective prism on time and memory. For me, this is the essence of poetry as a making. The stuff that appears from the ether of my mind, combining with the stuff that emerges, melding with the stuff of applied thought.

This enabled me to introduce another aspect of theme, local, and personal,



'knowledge' against memory against fact.

In the introduction I mentioned I had been much taken by a story I'd read that the late Edward Thomas's widow took maps to Ivor Gurney, incarcerated in a mental asylum in south London, many miles from his Gloucestershire home. I was fascinated by the idea of maps grounding — they are representations, symbols, of ground — locating memory, and identity, especially cutting through the noise of mental illness. Another piece of symbolism, but one I was conscious of early in the construction of the sequence, was maps. Specifically, the colours on maps. The pub, *The Shoe Inn*, had one half of a long wall, a quilt-work of maps stitched together, Ordnance Survey maps of the south coast. I watched the map for a long time, thinking about how often blue, and colours in general, come up in Plath's poetry, to the consternation of my lunch companion. I was struck by the proliferation of blue on the real estate of the maps, for the south coast and Solent. Blue is also the colour used for motorways, fast moving arteries of traffic and trade — and the colour in Plath's 'The Moon and the Yew Tree' from which I echoed the title.

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary.  
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.  
(47)

My friend who is a felt presence in many of these poems sails a lot, hence her location, and she had a nautical postcard of the Isle of Wight and Solent, in white, the land boundaries etched in a thin line of outline for the coasts. It had a sniper's scope cross hairs over the village of Hamble and its coordinates which became the title of the poem. I liked the simplicity, the white-ghostliness of this map. What more was needed? I had lived on the Isle of Wight during a fractious period with my father while I waited to join the Army,

This was not my Hampshire, but the Hampshire that was  
my Hampshire was never mine anyway. Not my home,  
my maritime. Not my blue; nor camouflage greens and browns.

(18)

I also knew that the poem was a stanza short, the actual symbology of the bleached whiteness of the map and how that represented, symbolised, my teenage years. I also liked the idea that the whiteness of the Isle of Wight, its gestalt shape, symbolised for me an absence without pain. The absence of colour does not define an absence of meaning. Even in lost love, there still resides meaning. And presence, if only in outline.

The Shoe Inn. To return there is to find, who knew? it still is.  
The bar splices two long walls, one shelved with that morning's  
freshly baked bread, waiting to fly out the door, the other a framed  
expanse of coastal Hampshire mapped in grids and contours.

This quilted patchwork of colours is the territory of one of my lives.  
Although not nine there have been many, identified without by uniform or pay  
check, within by displaced thoughts like jigsaw maps  
with unkempt contours and no explained colours defining land or sea.  
(ibid)

These stanza will not survive editing unscathed as I prepare the sequence to be ready for release, but the essence of the symbology is there. That will be retained.

### 3.5 The Ancient Quarrel and why poets lie

Since I have known the body better,' said Zarathustra, to one of his disciples, 'the spirit has been only figuratively to me; and all that is "intransitory" - that too has been only an "image".'

'I have heard you say that before,' said the disciple, 'and then you added: "But the poets lie too much." Why did you say the poets lie too much?'  
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

My seventh course with Oxford University's Department of Continuing Education in support of my PhD was *Poetry and Philosophy. The Ancient Quarrel*. The 'Ancient Quarrel' refers to Plato expelling the poets from his Republic. The course came too late, and the scope of my thesis too narrow, to fully explore how I thought the course and its indicative reading would benefit my PhD, for instance Kant's and later philosophers' view of the aesthetic. One of the things it did make me think about was why I had spent so much time researching John Burnside's use of 'the Hoop' in his first (1998) collection and the use of the collection title as a sequence title therein and the title of a poem. Lewis had done this too in her debut (1995) collection, *Parables and Faxes*, although *Parables and Faxes* was more figurative than Burnside's, on the surface, hoop.

During studies of Greek Literature in the Parliament Rooms of Gloucester Cathedral — see my poem 'Parliament Rooms' (27) — I was introduced to one of the five or six extant Ancient Greek novels, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*. The lecturer had stated Leucippe meant 'white horse' from the Greek *ippe* for horse. The title of my poem 'Leucippe' (16) was taken from this 2<sup>nd</sup> C BCE novel and the given information, because of this link to the image of a sea's choppiness being referred to as white horses and I had no idea where this derived from. However, introducing *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the editor of Cambridge University's edition, Tim Whitmarsh (2020), states in the notes,

The title of the work was uniformly transmitted as *The Matters Concerning Leucippe and Clitophon* ... these 'titles' were, however, not

fixed as they are for modern novels, since their primary function was merely to identify genre and content;  
(6)

This interested me greatly. My contention is that titles still have an important job to do in terms of framing. Dan Simmond's (1989) novel *Hyperion* does not signal its Sci-Fi genre in its title, it relies on the cover and blurb to do that, but does presage the significance of John Keats and his poem of that name which creates the infrastructure for the novel. This is the extent to which a poem, once it is released into the wilds, belongs to the reader. In discussing the significance of names in the Ancient Greek novel, Whitmarsh states of the name Leucippe in the notes,

salacious readers, on the other hand, may have thought of the Aristophanic phrase 'white horse', slang for 'penis'.  
(20)

In relation to this new information, I elected not to update any of my imagery, symbol, or metaphor for this poem. However, it does address another theme, or sub-theme addressed in some of my poems.

'There is a recondite allusion to the snow-white horses of Rhesus' [King of Thrace] (27) he later states, a reference I am considering blending into the poem from a conversation I had had at the time the poem was born. I have decided, for now, not to add this in order to not complicate the poem even further. 'Leucippe' is the title but not a signalling of the narrator nor a character in the poem.

I had taken as read, not researched (initially) as I did for Burnside's 'The Hoop', because the explanation for the name Leucippe came from an eminent professor of Greek. Standing in front of the sea on the south coast of England with my dog and my friend, when I asked 'why are they called white horses?' and she said, 'after the white horses of Vienna', I was happy to take that as an explanation too. It wasn't until I bought the book referenced in the Greek Literature lesson, a number of years after the lesson and in an exercise of researching the reference, that I was alerted to the

idea that Leucippe meaning white horse could well be apocryphal and embarrassingly so. I wasn't concerned for the poem, but it made me think about an aspect of my poem then titled 'Chimes at Midnight' which had important implications for my main theme. I had found it easy, and lazy, to arrive at the focus, half a dozen poems into *Three Miles*, that my theme was about memory. But it wasn't. It was about deviant memory, misremembered memory, how we can often re-write history sometimes for psychological purposes, sometimes innocently. Maybe owing to disease, ageing, running out of space as older memories get weeded out like a full computer memory drive. I had lived my whole life thinking the clocks went back from one am to midnight again, but found out that they didn't, they went back from two am to one am. The writing of a poem caused me to find that out, and I liked that, a layer of poem triggering truer-to-lifeness than my own belief systems. What I believed I knew, what I knew I knew, was wrong.

It also led to one of my favourite lines that hadn't been in the original draft:

The clocks went back from two to one, as did  
You and  
I.  
(48)

I had watched a documentary about Shakespeare 'in the cinema' that referenced Orson Welles's *Chimes at Midnight* — as of writing about compound images, now the compressed 'Midnight's Chimes'. I couldn't quite remember the reference but knew: 'that's my title.' It took me back to the *Henry IV* plays which I had studied for 'A' level at school. It includes the line 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.' which I remembered — solidly — as 'heavy hangs the head that wears the crown.' In my memory I was sure I knew the line well, I had quoted it often. But my memory, when presented with the text, I looked it up in my 1979 edition, deviated from the reality. Ironically, this was also the case with the title of this discourse which I was sure as I knew to be the motto of the Stock Exchange. It was pointed out to me in my final supervision that I had the word order wrong. I retained my incorrect, although well-

'remembered' word order as a metaphor.

This, this deviant memory, was what I wanted to explore in a couple of poems that deviated from what I initially thought I was exploring in *Three Miles*. These are issues of memory gone wrong, or not fully knowing in the first place, or taking the word of an eminent professor because they are an eminent professor. These are truths, as the poet or narrator knew it, at the time. Not lies.

The poems that form the artistic portion of this document fall broadly into two main categories with a third sub-category. They can be grouped as two styles, the style coming into the four years of a PhD and a style coming out of it. The first 'half' forms a collection with coherent themes and poems that relate to each other, if somewhat obliquely at times. These poems tend to be more narrative, more story telling with far more function words to content words (thus figurative language, abstracting away from the dual nature of prepositions). The middle section contains poems that are more dense in figurative language, and are related not by theme but by technique: the use of figurative language (almost) for its own sake to create a 'feel', a rhythm — more poetic. These poems may be less accessible, easily understood ('I don't understand some of your poems,' said Tracey, who appears in some of the poems by name and was exposed to them all.) Many of the *Three Miles* poems were written in a particular geographic location that had decades old memories, written mainly in someone else's house and in their company. The 'ex Cathedra' poems were written for individual events, stand-alone poems that call to each other through *language*, not *content*.

From early on I was struck by how Gwyneth Lewis's poems were much more playful, whimsical in language and imagery than either Burnside or O'Brien's. I liked that playfulness. The third grouping of my poems are playful in form, exploring appearance privileged over sound. 'Beneath the Waves' being a sonnet formed from footnotes of a prose poem itself residing beneath a blank page. 'Lion's Teeth' being mainly direct speech; 'Cut Short' being two conjoined sonnets ostensibly about some

cut flowers that died, at a layer beneath that about Plath but then about someone else at a layer further down and at a layer deeper still about relationships themselves, the two sonnets representing the two energies in a prototypical relationship, often for the complex reasons of life, cut short. Each of the two sections, treating *ex Cathedra* and *the Bazaar* as one, were poetic journeys, both informing each other through editing and redrafting that only became clear to me as two sides to the same process by comparing them side-by-side, as I had for instance with Plath (1992) and Hughes's (1998) 'Rabbit Catcher'.

After love is gone, as an absence, what fills the void, what's left, is memories.  
Often imperfect, sometimes rewritten.

Deep in the lyrics, the wick maintains its compass  
point to heaven, as it does what it does it loses itself,  
lowers as burning passes, a ghost of soot  
like a dark dream of unconscious joy infiltrating  
the air but gone, like you. The lost wax of a candle.  
(36)

## 4 Conclusion

The structure of his discourse echoes the content. On the surface, a creative PhD is split into two: a creative part (the poetry) and a theoretical part. However, as with my theory of sub-dividing the categories of trope, the theoretical thesis can be subdivided, categorised, in to two parts, the theoretical framework, examining the tropes of image, symbol and metaphor, and a creative part, how the examination of theory influenced my own poetic development.

This discourse asserts that by Pound and the modernists' desire to 'break the pentameter' imagery was given the privilege status in the poetic line. Dilthey explains to us how a poet's use of imagery gives insight into the 'psychic nexus' of the poet, which can go some way to help us answer Yates' question

O chestnut-tree, great rooted blossomed,  
Are you the leaf, the blossoms or the bole?  
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,  
How can we know the dancer from the dance?  
(127)

By breaking the categories of trope into smaller sub-categories we can better understand a poem. Even within the New Critics' strict 'within the frame' mantras we can better understand how to construct, control our own poetry. And, at the end of the day, when the sun goes down, when the moving finger writes and having writ moves on, we can better see that the tropes of Image, Symbol, and Metaphor don't turn, they dance.

Much as my poetry changed during my six years in the Academy (including my MA) my motivation for this document changed too. I came in with a very poor mental and emotional well-being and this was my interest of study. I choose for my PhD two poets who had written about mental health outside of their poetry and one who, to the best of my knowledge had not. In parallel, a developing interest in the technical aspects of figurative language grew into a fascination with the fuzzy



boundaries between figurative categories and the often chimeral difficulties in capturing definition. In her 2022 biography of John Donne, *Super-Infinite*, Katherine Rundell describes an incident where Donne's usually astute political acumen let him down and he ended up in prostrate apology to King Charles I, 'Metaphors, Donne was reminded, are slippery beasts: they can escape out of your hands and bite you.' (281)

This interest in the magic of non-conforming figurative language, non-prototypical tropes, coincided with the birth of my *Three Miles up the Hamble* sequence and a reflexive, as well as subconscious, interest in how faulty memory can cause us to rewrite history. 'No memory happens in the past.' writes John Burnside in *I Put a Spell on You*, 'To say this in so many words is, no doubt, to state the obvious – our memories happen now, ... in the present.' (268) True, but they turn to the past, like a trope, have a hidden dimension, like some metaphors. And are open to interpretation.

As I considered the three prongs of the PhD's requirements

The tricorn colours came in a sweep of shades  
that blurred distinction and carried the eye  
into the foreground  
(35)

I wrote in 'Lost Wax': a reflexive interpretation of my own creative process, an academic register and analysis of figurative language and the major portion of the discourse, the poems themselves, I realised that in aggregation the whole thing was about more than language, seeking meaning and understanding, or satisfying the Academy. It was a love story.

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# Appendix 1

The Pragglez group consisted of ten academic scholars of metaphor who came together the name coming from acronyming their first names:

Peter Crisp (Chinese University of Hong Kong),  
Raymond Gibbs (University of California, Santa Cruz),  
Alice Deignan (University of Leeds),  
Graham Low (University of York),  
Gerard Steen (Vrije University of Amsterdam),  
Lynne Cameron (University of Leeds/The Open University),  
Elena Semino (Lancaster University),  
Joe Grady (Cultural Logics),  
Alan Cienki (Emory University), and  
Zoltan Kövecses (Eötvös Loránd University).

Here is their Metaphor Identification Process:

1. Read the entire text-discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text-discourse.

(2a. Determine the units of sense [UoS] in the TD.)\*

3.

(a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in the context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit. (UoS)

(b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be

- more concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, taste.
- Related to bodily action.

- more precise (as opposed to vague)
- Historically older.

Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

(c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current-contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

4.

If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical.

\*is my own elaboration of the process, hence in parentheses, where I wish to look at the difference between a lexical unit as metaphor, a lexical phrase as metaphor and a unit of sense. Its implementation is outside the scope of this document.

Sean O'Brien's first stanza of *The Snowfield*

It is so simple, being lonely.  
It's there in the silence you make  
To deny it, the silence you make  
To accuse the unwary, the frankly alone.  
In the silence you bring to a park  
When you go there to walk in the snow  
And you find in the plant house,  
Next to the orchids in winter slow-motion  
And sleeping unreadable mosses,  
Sick men, mad, half-born, who are sitting  
As long as the afternoon takes.  
Left there by helpers hours ago,  
As if preparing for a test,  
Each holds a book he cannot open.

Word: It

a/ contextual meaning: deictically pointing referring back presumably to the noun of the title

b/ basic meaning: object neutral referent

c/context vs basic: no contrast  
 Metaphorically used? no

#words, literal v metaphorical: 0-1

This process would then continue for every word in the discourse being analysed.

## Appendix 2

How the development of the opening of the poem 'How the Wind Would Sound' shows the difference between a poem being extended and edited.

14 11 19	7 02 20	08 22
<p>How the Wind Would Sound</p> <p>the 272 between West Meon and Petersfield is a Fellowship of the Ring kind of place. Trees tunnel the road, rainbow colours of Persphone's rule, if the rainbow was centred</p> <p>on orange. Bends lend themselves to a biker's tilt, farmland, pasture, the first whimper of the Downs, awaiting the inevitable Wimpey plot.</p> <p>Take a sharp left. The road to Steep is, well, steep. A false village, stone church locked against the heathen, hedgerows tall enough to satisfy an ageing man's bladder. Beadles' Public School</p>	<p>How the Wind Would Sound</p> <p>The 272 is a cut like a Caesarean scar across the southern shires of England. I travelled this road many times in my imprisoned youth, taking in the earthworks of the nascent 25,</p> <p>the M's blue on the maps will trump the red of the A.</p> <p>as I ping ponged between school and 'home'.</p>	<p>How the Wind Would Sound</p> <p>The 272 is cut like a Caesarean scar across the southern shires of England, a fellowship kind of place with its tunnels of trees. Imprisoned by my youth, I travelled this road many times, skirting the new-born M25 bringing blue, like a canal to the map.</p> <p>Ping-ponged between the gaol of home and the bird-cage of school. This blue of progress, a future four-laned car park holds more weight in the hierarchy of roads</p>

<p>with its BMWs clogging the lane.</p> <p>The 900-year old church where Edward Thomas worshipped for a decade has a 'M' roofe ranscept like a saw-toothed sin wave, a square terracotta ** with its spire a Samurii's (hat). The beautifully engraved Thomas</p> <p>window sit like twins, both dedicated by RS Thomas on Edward's centenary, one reincarnated in 2010 or this was the point of entry for the criminals. For me, in the week before Remembrance, the front door of the church was unlocked.</p>	<p>Here, the lumps of history are called The Downs.</p> <p>Oh, how I know down. Between West Meon and Petersfield, the road is a Fellowship of the Ring kind of place. Trees tunnel the road, rainbow colours of Persphone's rule, the spectrum from yellow to **.</p> <p>Bends lend themselves to a biker's tilt, farmland, pasture, the first whimper of the Downs, awaiting the inevitable Wimpey plot.</p> <p>Take a sharp left. The road to Steep is. A false village, stone church locked against the heathen, hedgerows tall enough to satisfy an ageing man's bladder. Beadles' Public School with its BMWs clogging the lane.</p>	<p>than the red of the As or the yellowed B's. This isn't the sea, this isn't the rivers, map makers' colours running out of cartesean cartographers' ink, here, the lumps of history, these flat contoured ups called Downs. West Meon to Petersfield, home to the ghosts of charcoal burners summer's all-consuming green become rainbow colours of Persephone's rule, the spectrum from magenta to yellow to brown; with leaves left out, nature's brown is the map's woods green.</p> <p>Bends lend themselves to a biker's tilt, farmland, pasture, the first whimper of the hills, awaiting the inevitable developers' progress plot. The shrieking wind scrubs the land again, its grainy saugh tooth, cruising gears and the contours easing leaves towards the low pressures</p>
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	<p>The 900-year old church where Edward Thomas worshipped for a decade has a 'M' roof transept, like a saw-toothed sine wave, a square terracotta tower with its spire a Samurai's (hat). The beautifully engraved Thomas</p> <p>windows sit like twins, both dedicated by the eponymous RS on Edward's centenary, one reincarnated in 2010 for this was the point of entry for the criminals. For me, in the week before Remembrance, the front door of the church was unlocked.</p>	<p>of depressions. I have come to know downs.</p> <p>Take a sharp left. The road to Steep is. A false village, stone church locked against the heathen, hedgerows tall enough to satisfy an ageing man's bladder. Beadles' Public School with its BMWs clogging the lane.</p> <p>The place of my pilgrimage the 900-year old church which saw Edward Thomas among the worshipers; it has a transept roof in an 'M', a saw-toothed sine wave; a square terracotta tower with its spire a Samurai's jingasa.</p> <p>Beautifully engraved, Thomas shrine windows sit like twins, in eponymous RS dedication, celebrating Edward's centenary. One, reincarnated in 2010, broken, an entry point for thieves.</p> <p>F</p>
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# Appendix 3

Two poems referenced but not for the creative component.

## Port Stanley

The wind comes over two thousand miles of ocean  
quick and cold, tuned to southern ice. Tree culled,  
brown land, desolate as loneliness, home to penguin,  
fox, and soldier. Whale bones bleached, frequency  
jumps like clouds caught without time; bands, read  
over and over, philomel orchestra, certo cito sounds.  
The dots and dashes of encoded isolation, find me if you can.  
Lazy imagination of indolent people, not us, roger imi king.  
Dog daze, men being men of old and young, friends forever.

Quick, aye, but not cold. To you Emily, eternity. Some stuff lies beneath.  
Remember this, men don't do love and warmth, it's said.  
X marks the spot. We each share the 29th, your granddad the better man.

## Over the Rainbow Bridge

if my boy should race the rainbow bridge  
with the hour glass of endless sands  
if he should pace the green grass ridge  
where the clocks tick without hands

if he should leave this realm of mine  
before his fate dictates his time  
the rainbow door opens once more  
to the misty valleys and dells divine

my heart bleeds as your face recedes  
and you leave me far behind  
but you will be more than a memory  
in a special corner of my mind

i know that he will wait for me  
until we as one are whole  
in peace at play 'til late we'll stay  
two halves of the same soul



# Appendix 4

## Sonnet for a Songbird

To do or not to do when in two minds,  
twin polarities: fate and evidence.  
To maintain intuition tantamount to faith  
by-product symposia battered by tempest.  
That faith, currency of communication,  
feels frayed and ragged as the tyre flattened  
by puncture. The sticking plaster is not love,  
but decency, loyalty, sense, communion.

It is right, **ethically** correct, an **ethereal** connect  
to offer the **chance** of **redemption**. Even if the consumptive  
clutches for air, the dying man his will, the **religious**  
the last call to prayer, **enlightenment** is **realisation**,  
that a relationship's revitalising breath is not **romance**  
but the **chance** to talk and a **future** formed anew.

## Sonnet for a Songbird

To do or not to do when in two minds,  
twin polarities: fate and evidence.  
To maintain intuition tantamount to faith  
by-product symposia battered by tempest.  
That faith, currency of communication,  
feels frayed and ragged as the tyre flattened  
by puncture. The sticking plaster is not love,  
but decency, loyalty, sense, communion.

My poem lies in the present. A sign, token.  
There is no love that dare speak its name  
in plain language, the words are flowers,  
presents, cards. Poems. Each word sits  
with another, one plus one a couplet, a team;  
stanza each room, compartments of a mind.