

ACTS OF THE MIND: THE NATURE OF LYRIC EXPERIENCE

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2006

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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The genre of lyric is distinguished by the activity of the substrate of consciousness it both occasions and records. In understanding lyric to be the formal recapitulation of the neurological cycles of perception, action, and emotion as they transpire for an embedded and embodied organism, this project cultivates a syncretic theory of the genre that renders contingent, feature-based definitions interdependent and mutually generative.

Lyric, it is argued, is instigated within a social alienation figured as an exile. The threat posed by the subversive poet-singer to his society and the inevitable betrayal of the poet by that society are enlightened by Platonic doctrine, myths of poetic origin, and philosophical theories of the individual. Social dislocation motivates a complex of symptoms that sustains lyric expression, including the distillation of being to an affective ontology encompassing the extremes of lament and celebration and the attenuation of subjectivity. The displacement forces attention to the workings of the individual mind as it negotiates anomaly.

The obscurity that characterizes lyric poetry is a reification of perception's origins within environmental embeddedness. From an organism-centered perspective, potential registers somatically as emotion, which plays an evaluative role in cognition: it is realized

through action that projects potential embeddedness forward. Perception is initially an articulating mechanism whose function is to select input from the environment and to differentiate it into features by means of neuronal contrast mechanisms. Lyric poetry realizes this directionality through its deployment of deixis, musicality, and formal discontinuity. The ode, the elegy, apostrophe, and prosopopoeia are argued to be large-scale elaborations of the articulating, objectifying processes of perception embodied in the oscillating motion of neuronal networks.

Long held to be a vehicle of poetic creativity, the figure of metaphor is located within the amalgamating activity of perception. An archaeology of the pathetic fallacy locates its origins within a breach of intentionality the perceptually-based activity of metaphor seeks to remedy. Neurodynamic theories of perception (involving the application of deterministic chaos theory) are adduced in order to argue for the dynamic identity of poetic metaphor and perception as functions that reconcile the ontological and the epistemological.

Acknowledgments

With gratitude, first, to Ann Lauterbach, the spark, and to Bill Hornsby, an early fan. To Hal Sedgwick, Josh Wallman, Donald C. Freeman, and Steven Meyer, for their insight and guidance. To Walter J. Freeman for his generosity. With many thanks to Huguette Roberts, John Trantum, Dick Roberts, Annie Roberts and Chuck Ziga for the gift of time, and especially to Jane Milliken for understanding and support. Further thanks to Daniel Gressel and Jennifer Malin, my hosts, for refuge. To Mary Beth Molano, an exemplary neighbor, and to my friends, Victoria Partlow, Ana Figueroa, Scott and Michelle O'Neill, and the Hamilton women--Terry, Laura, Rachel, and Jeanette--who did not lean on the formalities of reciprocation. To Uma Ramani, Jennie Paragarino, and Donnille Trancoso for the immeasurable gift of peace of mind. To Rachel Coder-Mathew and to Ann Ford for perfect understanding. With recognition to Linda Sherwin and Marilyn Weber who facilitated this process beyond expectation. I am indebted to Victoria Alexander and the Dactyl Foundation for a rare combination of friendship and institutional support. To Nicholas Wells for all practical help and to Mathieu, for his perspective. To my mother, my sisters, Beth and Debra, and most of all to Sophie for precious sympathy and unadulterated faith.

And with special thanks to my committee, Joan Richardson, Jonathan Levitt, Joshua Wilner, and Angus Fletcher.

For Joan

You are always before me.

Preface

This dissertation sets forth the rudiments of a theory of lyric poetry; it is both embryonic and partial in its current form. Its overarching premise is that the genre of lyric is distinguished by the formal dynamic of the substrate of consciousness it both occasions and records. In understanding lyric to be the formal recapitulation of the neurological cycles of perception, action, and emotion, as such processes transpire for an embedded and embodied organism, the project cultivates a syncretic theory of the genre that renders contingent, feature-based definitions interdependent and mutually generative. The scope of the present document is limited to the emotion-action-perception cycles that are taken to be the foundation of cognitive functioning. It but gestures toward the significance of the sense of space, conceptual emergence, and subject formation that are built upon them.

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Chapter One

An Introduction

*Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
By help of dreams can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man
My haunt, and the main region of my song.*
Wordsworth (The Recluse 788-794)

*The imagination is, as it were, the self-consciousness
of instinct.*
George Santayana

From lyric's inception as a critical and a categorical term in the West, the poetry it aspires to affiliate has chafed at the bit of definition. Contrary to the prevailing assumption, the classical, foundational attempts to codify genre arguably omit the lyric altogether. Plato's attitude toward the genre, if he indeed meant to impart one, is divisive, ambiguous, and ultimately latent. If he refers to the lyric, he does so only indirectly in his classification of direct, indirect, and mixed telling ("Republic" III 394b). Plato's express topic in his "Republic" was *diegesis*, a rubric under which he lumps the "elegiac poetry" of the dithyramb, a form that also narrates tales of heroism.¹ Aristotle's view, if he in fact promulgated one, is not extant, although his discussion of lyric is sometimes presumed to have been among the missing portion of the *Poetics* or even, as Gérard Genette points out, incorrectly assumed to have been part of the treatise's subject matter. Genette is quick to remind us that the genre that is, with epic and drama, a member of the classical triumverate, is a belated construction of the neoclassical age grandfathered into the venerable schema with all of the conviction and ambiguity myth-making affords (3-8).²

This is not to say that an awareness of lyric as an especial type of poetry is not long-standing. The idea of lyric is as ancient as it is capacious, and it pre-exists modernity as a concept if its assumption into the official triadic schema does not. The retrospective invention of a mythical lineage for the term is symptomatic of at least three facts. First, in comparison with other genre concepts, the lyric has, as far as we know, received scant consideration; the handling it has received is more or less obscure. Second, the lack of attention has been thought flagrant enough to warrant redressing. Third, in order to remedy the omission, the critical imagination has been willing to forego empirical rigor and to content itself with an aura of mystique.³

The subsequent history of lyric inquiry is fraught with a tension between revision and continuity. It is marked by a course of attempts at definitive arrest, of loosening and retrenchments, enlargements and salvagings. Beginning with Plato's however unintentional extrication of standard elegiac poetry from the remainder of the genre--the implicitly substandard non-elegiac lyrics--the category has been ranked, reconceived, flanked by epic and drama and, by fits and starts, described. Yet its contours remain nebulous, shrouded in the trappings of legend, undefined and to some indefinable, a rubric without a chapter or, to invert Stevens's title, a place without a description. The critical quagmire surrounding the lyric remains in part the result of the doubly centric nature of a genre that must somehow revolve around the poles of musicality, first literally and then vestigially, and what is usually deemed to be the romantic notion of self-expression, or subjectivity. Clearly, neither of these customary characterizations withstands broad enough application, nor do any of the minor and contradictory

characteristics a core body of criticism has assigned to the genre, including brevity, unity, and fictionality.

Nor is the poetry any less elusive than the criticism that attempts to fix it. Speculatively the oldest genre and perhaps actually so, the extant body of lyrics and lyrical poems is still more remote than the understanding of lyric as such. Older and farther-ranging, the eclectic assemblage compasses the traditions of the Anglo-Saxon riddle, the Pindaric victory ode, the medieval Arabic “lament for lost cities,” the Japanese *tanka*, and the love song of the Provencal courtier. The subgenres and poetic forms comprising the genre, including the complaint, the ode, the elegy, the song and the sonnetta, sonnet, riddle, and charm, are a group that, superficially, at least, is anything but homogenous. Yet this malleable category is distinguished. If they do not readily bear the strictures of definition, lyric poems remain enduringly recognizable. Despite the advent of a romantic hegemony and the castigations and disinheritings of the twentieth century, the poetry the lyric describes will not tolerate the term’s disposal in either its nominal or adjectival form. Lyrics continue to surface, to be aired, and it is in that airing, in their vital ephemeral dissemination that lyric depths remain audible. We hear, in the melodies and in the discords of the poetry, remembered echoes and hauntingly pertinent refrains.

As a discipline, literary studies tends to suspect definitions, especially those whose purview is thought too sweeping and those that must be agile enough to withstand retrospective application. In the latter case, it is maintained, the act of reviewing performance brings interceding developments to bear. By way of example, although the Anglo-Saxon tradition produced a solid body of lyric poems, the Old English lexicon contains no one word that corresponds conveniently to a modern understanding of the genre. Viewing the

attempt to define as one that confines and thereby inhibits innovation, of inclusion and conversely, exclusion, we eschew the categorical, imagining we do a political service in rebelling against what must be at best inexact and at worst oppressive constraints. Yet the aversion to the use of the categorical as a literary tool is not a general one. All but the most dedicated post-structuralists are perfectly comfortably installing, for instance, a particular metaphor as a full-fledged member of the subcategory metaphor and the category figure or trope. Marginal members are usually in dispute because they may be read literally or metaphorically (a condition recognized by de Manian deconstruction as an especial quality of lyric poetry) in which case they are simply awarded dual citizenship within categories that are either co-extensive or alternatively present. The concept of categorization itself is not called into question with the same consistent resolve.

It may be that the resistance is simply based on a perceived problem of referential breadth. Is it that we are at our ease as long as the literary work as a whole is not labeled and in our minds reduced? The present moment is heir to a kind of literary folk wisdom that advises with all the conviction of unexamined belief that our terms are indefinable, and most resistant to definition are those denoting genre. Motives fueling the perpetuation of this truism range from the frustration that no doubt prompted Frye's tongue-in-cheek throwing up of the hands in describing lyric as "anything you can get uncut into an anthology" ("Approaching" 31) to Marjorie Perloff's absolutist polemic:

No definition of the lyric poem or of the novel can, in short, be wholly transhistorical (18).

and

It seems in any case impossible to talk about something called “the lyric” as if the genre were a timeless and stable product to which various theoretical paradigms can be “applied” so as to tease out new meanings. . . . Form, to adapt Robert Creeley’s well-known injunction, is *never* more than the extension of culture. (29) (emphasis added)

Perloff, of course, does not string together absolutes naively: her etiological bias is cultural, and it is admittedly essentialist. She begins the volume *Poetic License* by conceding the irony that the two prevailing stances toward poetry--humanism’s claim to a universal relevance based on the singularity of human nature and the relativist culturally-driven model--are equally essentialist. (“Ironically, this stance toward poetry turns out, at least in practice, to be just as essentialist as the first” (2).) I would suggest that the phrase “in practice” should be stricken as a qualifier. Perloff’s stance is essential to the extent that it assumes its own overarching truth-value and its own objectivity, and, in making determinations as to the significance of difference, it is as reductive as any undisguised universalizing tack.

Perloff’s conclusion that cultural products such as art are constituted exclusively of cultural influence has the support of legions. But surely we have moved beyond the use of humanism as a straw man and the literally pointless oscillation between essentialisms that mires the discipline in a horns of the dilemma fallacy. Relativism is a fact that follows from the acknowledgement of diversity. Yet so is the consistency against which it must be defined. The span of human life on earth is rather short relative to other ontologies. The human brain has evolved--these are basics. But the human brain has also remained fundamentally and functionally unchanged over the last 150,000 years, a

duration far longer than the historical period (literally, in the sense of the period of recorded history) by which one is confined with respect to any study of literature. The human organism may in the future evolve differently, in which case human products may also alter substantially, perhaps even radically. It is time to admit a biological paradigm, not as a substitute for a weathered humanism, but as a synthesizing model that renders cultural relativisms indispensable, if partial, and in so doing, allows a view into the lyric.

Unlike humanism, the argument for the structural and functional consistency of the human brain is buttressed and not undermined by difference. The disfunctionality conferred by pathology is often the window into the typical, non-pathological, fully functioning brain. This speaks to the consistency of dynamic laws like natural selection that have produced a product that is more or less functional. We can identify if not a permanent, a consistent biological basis for this particular human artifact: that basis is not transcendent, but it has been with us as long as has our literature. The unfounded rejection of biology as a literary tool is based partly on the inheritance of humanism and partly on the horrific consequences of the misappropriation of the mechanism of natural selection by Social Darwinism. The argument will be made here that the informing power of cultural circumstance, as inclusive of the social and the biographical, is realized only in conjunction with an informing biology that shapes our cognizance of the same *as it is shaped by it*. To defer to a biology is not to claim that it is ultimate—neither biology nor culture is a source, strictly speaking, but a contribution to a source. Alone, neither is meaningful because each exists as it constructs the other.

If the difficulty in pinning down the lyric is due, in part, to the multiple incarnations it has enjoyed, the lack of commitment to the term that characterizes most

contemporary approaches is further complicated by the twentieth-century response to romanticism. Controversy at the moment tends to refer to two different foils that are incompatible with one another, yet continue, sometimes tacitly, as movements--romanticism and New Criticism. Objecting to the former's aggrandizement of the self (what Charles Olson called "the lyrical interference of the individual ego" (24)) and the latter's myopic preoccupation with tidy unities of form--or both--it is possible to conclude that contemporary poetry is not lyrical or that it is so differently lyrical from either touchstone as to preclude an understanding of the genre as such. Any definition of lyric one musters must be at best outdated and at worst stifling or oppressive. The "blame-it-on romanticism tack" is taken by Annabel Patterson:

Lyric remains a name for an ill-assorted collection of short(er) poems; but the genre continues to be defined normatively, in ways that exclude dozens of poems that their authors once thought of as lyrics. The reason for this is clear. The modernist view of lyric as an intense, imaginative form of self-expression or self-consciousness, the most private of all genres, is, of course, a belief derived from Romanticism. (151)

Patterson, who also voices a majority opinion, is correct in pointing out that a strict romantic conception of the lyric is too narrow. At the same time, it is the romantic form of the lyric Day Lewis has in mind when he complains that it is too widespread ". . . as it was, from the late eighteenth century, the lyric impulse became diffused over an ever-widening area, till today one could almost say that there is no lyric poetry since every poem has a lyrical quality" (13). The poetry that adopted Olson's and Creeley's theories rebelled against these perceptions as well as the New Critical correction whose

fearful symmetries were thought equally inhibiting to innovation. The rebellious new lyricism that emerged for some harkens back to what we know as the original expression of the genre. Genette himself allies new lyricism with old lyricism (59). If he is right, if language poetry, for example, exemplifies contemporary lyric, the polar pre/postmodern and modern sensibilities remain the irreconcilable centers of the genre. Despite flashes of descriptive brilliance, primarily on the parts of Northrop Frye, Paul de Man and Jonathan Culler, that are all the more luminous for their intuitive origins, inadequate theoretical work has been done on the lyric since these two defining modern movements, and the impasse has been in no way weakened. The recuperation of “old lyric” is, however, evidence of the genre’s enduring relevance.

The ambiguous status of lyric at the moment has been further hindered by the preoccupation with narrative during the structuralist and post-structuralist epochs and the consequent marginalization, almost antiquation, of poetry *qua* poetry (by which term I mean to invoke a sense beyond the aestheticist’s). Witness the slim corpus of writings on poetry compared with the tomes of narrative theory the twentieth century has seen fit to birth. Particularly, there is a conspicuous dearth of structuralist theories devoted to the lyric: the most highly formal--in the sense of unconventional--of forms did not, for some reason, invite formal analysis.⁴ The need to salvage narrative from its low esteem as a content-driven form, to revamp its prosaic image, coupled with the subsequent adoption of the term “narrative” as a comprehensive synonym for any form of fiction-making that is more or less sequential, has resulted in the subsuming of poetry into the class narrative. The habit, post-Foucault, of reducing the lyric and poetry in general to a mere collocation of fragments to be stitched together into a lineal⁵ if discontinuous narrative sequence, has

served to obscure rather than to elucidate the concept by driving it further into the recesses of neglect. Despite its avid champions in the academy as a whole, the lyric—and arguably poetry in general—has become a shadow genre as well as something of a whipping boy: quaint, useless, antedated, anti-theoretical, apolitical, irrelevant, socially irresponsible, and, if we are to side with Adorno, inhumane in the wake of the systematic, large-scale destruction that for him defined the twentieth century (“Cultural” 34).⁶

The common objections to defining lyric make up a diverse lot, and I will address a number of them quickly here.

Objection No. 1: Lyric features are merely conventional. Related to culturalist essentialism is the idea that lyric attributes (or, for that matter, those of any literature) are conventional practices carrying with them a set of expectations that tacitly direct reading strategies. This is not a sufficient answer for the anthropologist, and it shouldn’t be here. It is a misassignment of casual origin: conventions have functional bases, and the argument that they are themselves sources assumes they must be arbitrary or accidental and therefore significant only of themselves. One could, of course, go further and invest convention with cultural significance, but this move simply does not account for the vast similarities that subtend (rather than transcend) diverse lyric expressions. Convention bespeaks the consistency the argument to it pushes aside. It is my premise that the conventions of this genre are based in physical exigency and shared biological forms and that the aesthetic, as Friedrich Schiller articulated early in the game, is a “species-level” phenomenon (83).

This is perhaps an appropriate place to gather the features and conventions common to the lyric, to individual lyrics, that are empirically derived, that is, from the

observation of poems, to arrive at a body of traits one would have to remain accountable to in the development of any theory of lyric. It is meant to be a survey of minimal responsibility. The list includes well-known criteria, although some of the elements have not received the same degree of critical attention as have others. Certain features are observed to be unique to the lyric, while some are attributable to poetry at large and still others are common to other art forms.

1. Lyric assumes a performance that is embodied. A consciousness of bodily experience is reflected in its presentational situation: the poem's primary mode of delivery is oral, and it is conceived, in any event, as an utterance. The original lyricist sings and plays an instrument; the romantic lyricist is conceived to be an instrument or a resonant body. The salient rhythms of the form can be tied to the rhythms of the body--of the breath and of the beating heart. One also must account for the derivative trope of the engagement of the breath, which is manifest most prominently and most literally when lyrics are sung and the control and modulation of the breath is enacted in a manner that is exaggerated. The genre is also suspected to have roots in gesture and percussive accompaniment. The Pindaric Ode is verifiably rooted in dance. To enter into a lyric state as receiver involves an immediate physical attunement of the breath and to the pace and regulation of the poem.
2. Within lyric utterance, a quality of musicality is inevitably present, either literally or through an emphasis on prominent, patterned sound. The degree to which it is present may vary considerably.

3. Lyric is a linguistic form, an obvious fact that should not be overlooked because many qualities of language overlap with those of consciousness. Further, within lyric, the medium of language exists in tension with the medium of music both when the latter is a present accompaniment and when it is mediated linguistically.
4. Lyric is an economical and efficient means of the production of meaning. Its parsimonious quality is enabled by an intensity conceived as a depth, a density, or a polysemy. Its textured obscurity or semantic resistance sets up the expectation of a hermeneutic and/or an analytic “decoding” process. This demands of the reader a higher level of attentiveness and most often, re-reading.
5. The lyric is a private medium. From this characteristic arises the frustration of insurmountable subjectivity and with it the notion of the reader as eavesdropper (Mill 13). When an I is not articulated, a sense of privacy is often given by the poem’s difficulty or obscurity.
6. As lyric is a private or interior medium, a “poetic” logic of meaning-making prevails over, and is irreconcilable with, the logic of reference or representation the language of the poem, as language, also engages.
7. This interior logic is activated by the frequent, perhaps regular deployment of disjunction—the introduction of a signifying break or pause. The various forms of lyric discontinuity are often adduced as the prevailing “conventions” that distinguish it from other linguistic forms.
8. As a consequence of disjuncture across levels of scale, the lyric manifests a structural propensity to nest, to embed units within units, which creates further disjuncture.

9. The lyric tends to be repetitive. Its repetitions exist in relatively close proximity and across levels of scale with the awareness that exact repetition is impossible.
10. The interplay across nested levels and the proximity that, among other things, calls attention to repetition is enabled by the fact that, as Poe mandated, the lyric is a relatively brief form.
11. Despite its common themes and motifs, the lyric maintains an investment in fresh expression that is set against formal consistency.
12. As will be made clear at various junctures in this project, freshness in the lyric manifests as perceptual freshness, as first or naive sight.
13. The lyric is highly figurative. If a poem manages to eschew figuration altogether, the form of the poem nevertheless prompts the same interpretive dynamic triggered by figuration, to be explored in Chapter Five.
14. Thinking and mythologizing about the lyric betray an awareness of a sense of space that is cultivated by the poem as reflected in the terms “verse,” and “stanza,” and notions such as field poetics.
15. The lyric is to some degree an emotional expression and its articulation of emotion plays an integral function in the cognitive aspects of the poem.

Objection No. 2: It is invalid to consider forms belatedly. I recur to the argument of species consistency as well as my earlier point that we recognize ancient poetic artifacts and respond to them as lyrics. That we do not respond to them exactly as their originators may have is in part the point (and not a counterpoint). Environmental shift is presumed to have occurred, yet it takes place as against a biological consistency through the history in question. Each era (including our own) is constrained by its situatedness

which gives rise to its biases. Yet, there is a point posterior to the advent of writing when a body of work and criticism large enough to supply a sufficient number of puzzle pieces or, perhaps more accurately, a span long enough to permit the discernment of constancy through change, has accumulated.

Objection No. 3: Categories cannot contain diversity. The contention that the term lyric can be defined only locally and then only imperfectly is based as much on a misunderstanding of the nature of category formation as it is on a belief in the irreducibility of literature. To make such a negative claim (that is, again, totalizing in itself), even in the service of a relativism, is to perpetuate the fallacy that Aristotelean set theory, which places impermeable borders around categories in which each member is equally a member, has cognitive relevance. The work of Eleanor Rosch and the subsequent work of George Lakoff on prototype theory suggests that the human mind rather organizes categories around a perceived central member of the category or “prototype.” Other members radiate out from the best representative of the category and are members to a lesser degree, but members nevertheless. In other words, categories presume gradience or degrees of membership (*Women* 39-44).

Rosch’s work presumes, first of all, that categories are defined functionally. If categories were defined based on features, as if often presumed, rather than according to the function their members perform, they would cease to be serviceable, and the structure of language as we know it would partially collapse. A chair is a chair because it is something we sit upon. It need not have four legs, a vertical surface on which to rest the back, a designated height, the quality of softness, or even a horizontal surface on which to place the buttocks, to wit: the bean bag chair. A functional view of categories provides

for the expandability of the category and thus for innovation. Definition is not therefore pre-emptive of creativity. The definition of the category—the principle of its coherence—does not stabilize it or preclude the admittance of diverse new members. A prime example of this fact is language itself. Most words denote several things and some things more readily than others; often denotations give rise to one another metaphorically. Denotative meanings may be incongruous, antagonisms even, although a careful study of etymology usually renders them coherent and inter-related in some sense.

Objection No. 4. Blended forms destabilize the category. It is impossible to corral lyrics into a clearly demarcated territory, so the argument goes, because there will always be ambiguous forms. Therefore, the genre is indefinable. An awareness of category bleed, if you will, has led to the establishment by Hartmann, for instance, of hybrid, border forms such as the epical-lyrical and the dramatic-lyrical (697-738). Such overlap creates an effective continuum Goethe acknowledges in positioning the major genres on a circle that encloses the hypothetical space between them (378). That there are not clear lines between genres and that they perhaps form a continuum is granted. It is a mistake to perceive lyric to be fully discrete from narrative or storytelling. Modalities may be interlarded or even interfused, as they are in Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetic narratives of *Lyrical Ballads*, and the latter's lyrical epic, *The Prelude*. The lyric may manifest formally as something different from the traditional poem, as, for instance, the hybrid form of the prose poem, which makes the most of an unsuitable physique. It is the supposition of this dissertation that lyrical instances and archipelagos inhabit texts that might have another more striking generic identity. Yet it is also ludicrous to give up sovereignty based on border disputes. The form of a poem is simply more likely to be

efficacious as a lyric--to fit the bill as a central or protoypical member of the category in the way that a barcolounger is more chair-like, or at least more seat-like, than the tree stump on which I sit as I write. A stump is not primarily a chair, but it is a chair while it is functioning as a chair. It can, therefore, make a claim for dual citizenship in the way that a novel that is primarily a narrative is also of the category lyric when it is acting as one, at those moments it is lyric-like. As the lyric continuum is functionally-based, the applicable range of the adjectival and nominative forms of the category name merge into one another. I therefore use the nominative form "lyric" as an adjective with the standard "lyrical" because in their interchangeability, what is lyric might remain provisional at the same time it achieves the systemic coherence of the nominal. To emphasize diversity and levels of inclusiveness, I often omit the article "the."

My immediate goal is not to label individual poems in any respect, including by degree of lyricality, but rather to establish how lyric poems constitute a cohesive body that deserves the title "category." The categorization this project sets out to justify assumes that the individual poem is integrated within an arc or, more properly, a web of lyric experience. Each poem may amount to a slice out of that experience (as do most literary periods and movements whose corrections serve to re-emphasize a phase of the process that has fallen into neglect.) Most poetry dwells within a limited section; the most intensely lyrical will leave footprints through the full territorial range each example implies. Generic terms must be to some extent general, as they denote a genus.

Objection No. 5: Definition is prescriptive and a bar to innovation. The term "normative" is often used more or less interchangeably with "prescriptive." It is, first of all, common sense that the genre itself is not prescriptive. There is no template for lyric

as there are for the more rigorous *forms*, such as the sonnet, it subsumes that are based in part on pre-determined features. The use of definition in poetry must, of course, enrich the reading process by, as Perloff says, increasing the ways of reading a poem. The basis for her objection is the misconception that a genre definition must be prescriptive assumes that definition necessarily closes down ways of reading or interpretation and therefore both potential and actual meaning. What is going on here is that a theory of genre is being taken to mean a theory of local meaning, that is, a theory that prescribes meaning to the individual case. My response to this common misconception will become clear as the present theory is articulated. Suffice it to say for now that if the genre is defined by the way that it permits novel meaning to emerge, definition opens up the possibilities for meaning, and the objection is thereby countered.

Objection No. 6: Defining genre will demystify poetry. There is another, more widespread and insidious motive related to the previous one that needs to be teased out of the general reluctance to limn the contours of lyric and that is what might be interpreted to be the refusal to tolerate any approach that threatens to demystify literature. It is almost as if the lyric itself were a charm which, if explained, would lose its seductive power. The claim that genre studies in some way dilute originality carries with it the assumption that implies that as Vico, Herder, Rousseau, and Bovet suspected, the lyric is a highly original form of literature and therefore a literature of origins, further suggests that as an object of investigation, it is personal. Suffice it to say that we closely guard our most intimate object and keep our mythologies close to the vest. Also lurking behind this misconception is the instinct to self-preservation, the notion that we would be put out of

business as interpreters and analysts if we were to attempt to understand the genre comprehensively.

Yet, understanding a genre comprehensively is not the same thing as understanding a poem comprehensively. If the lyric is indeed an original utterance, it must be grasped in some sense prior to the advent of explicit critical concepts. One does not read lyric by applying a received concept, but by applying one's own mind and body as they typically function as part of a performance in which concepts are fluid and altered by perceptual action. Conceptual application from without is posterior to understanding, especially within a genre that is originally and, one can argue, continuously, performative. Thus, although I begin with a set of concepts about the brain and about the lyric, they are not metaphysical, but physical, structural principles that are engaged within the experience of lyric below the level of the will.

Still, one must avoid the pitfalls and the potholes of genre theory that lie in wait; there is no dearth of them as critic after critic reminds. The kingpin of anti-normative arguments is the one mounted by the early twentieth-century critic Benedetto Croce. Croce pulls a rug out from under the entire enterprise with the claim that in defining a genre concept we must rely on a "scientific" method to approach an utterance that is created and received intuitively (38). It is not possible, in the end, to "deduce the expression from the concept" (36). Croce's first assumption--that poetry is strictly an intuitive undertaking--is already a dubious surmise not unrelated to the equally reductive claim that lyric is merely an expressive medium, a cousin, as it were, of the sneeze. Because lyric experience does not proceed from a "concept" *per se*, does not mean that the poem is inconceivable. It is possible to conceptualize intuitive knowledge in

discerning the means by which it arises. In an age that has witnessed the arrival of empirical, biological, highly conceptual mechanisms for understanding the experience of emotion, for instance, the incommensurability of these two types of knowledge becomes an untenable objection. Intuitive responses can be explained rationally in the absence of a deductive process. Indeed, this is what most interpretation and analysis does. More importantly, the deductive derivation of a particular instance from a whole is a mathematical method that, as Whitehead argues persuasively, has dubious utility for the reality he saw as continuous because it presumes the existence of fully bounded constituent entities. The fact that poetry is among the more complex and astonishing achievements of the human mind simply makes that definition more multi-faceted and elusive—it doesn't preclude it. Croce sees the paradox he sets up as a deadlock, but the paradox is false to begin with. It is akin to the one that bristles at the idea of a theory of chaos, assuming that it would reduce chaos to order. Yet "chaos theory" is not reductive because it is a theory of the emergence of non-reductive behavior. Like its many successors and imitators, Croce's argument to make the application of a concept to a "non-conceptual" genre verboten presupposes a fully predictive, that is to say, linear science that has been progressively delimited throughout the twentieth-century.

Lyric is a medium that resists description because it is experiential in nature. As the most personal or private of literary forms, it is the one least likely to reveal its consistencies. As it is analogous to the qualitative experience of consciousness, what becomes impossible is the replication of the *exact* significance of that experience to the poet or to the poem itself in an ideal sense (depending on one's critical sensibility). The reader's experience with the poem must therefore be different and incommensurate with

the poet's because the reader is situated differently from the poet. This fundamental fact is the problem of other minds. But the dynamics giving rise to that ultimate, private experience are reduplicated. E.D. Hirsch's theory that genres are conventions that structure interpretation at every stage but the last, where they fall away like so much scaffolding is a remarkably insightful one (27).

In his book *The Discovery of the Mind*, Bruno Snell crafts a delicate and intriguing argument that the inception of lyric poetry in Hellenic society coincided with the aborning awareness of the mind's autonomy, of a personal agency apart from and sublunary to the supernatural will of the gods. Snell attempts to tease out the historical moment when, in contradistinction to the epic character, who believed himself to be a vehicle of a divine will, the lyric poet grew cognizant of her intrinsic self-motivation. Sufferance in love, the memory of the waxing and waning of affection, of being in a state that one had visited before and therefore must pass through again, and the awareness that the heart is fickle are the mental contents, he argues, that give rise to the earliest awareness of self-continuity in the face of the external changes the gods inflict. The mind is first "discovered," if you will, within the lyric poem.

There is, of course, a pervasive assumption that literature reveals the contents of the mind, that mind may be discerned within or inferred from the literary text. It is emphasized in, for example, stream of consciousness technique and psychologically-based criticism. In terms of its historical focus, Snell's is the earliest theory that conceives of poetry as a mental expression. Enfolded in and emergent with the manifestation of Sappho's mind is its self-discovery, an awareness that makes her poems recognizable to us as pre-romantic artifacts. (This statement assumes, of course, a vastly

simplified conception of both romanticism and Sappho's poetics.) I would like to propose that the lyric poem's engagement as a mind (or more properly, a brain) originates at a deeper and more deeply embedded level than the psychological and that self-awareness is the terminus of the process lyric engages. The prototypical lyric poem moves through layers of awareness and may evince a pre-awareness, an awareness that does not extend to the self, or a fully-developed self-awareness, so that within the genre and within certain poems, the determined self cohabitates with indeterminacy. The lyric, I will argue, always stops short of rendering a transcendent or stable self.

It was William Rogers who pointed out that the development of genre theory has been impeded by the perceived need to schematize lyric in relation to its classical sister genres and the ancillary need to subserve a pre-existing metaphysical whole (11-12). He labels this approach the "logical space" argument, one that assigns genres a fixed point within a continuous schema that allows for the insertion of generic blends. Lyric, or any particular genre or subgenre is then deduced from an ideal schema. The most famous rendition of logical space is Hegel's dialectic that makes lyric an antithetical subject in relation to a thesis object and the synthetic term the drama. The ill-fit of universalizing theory and the definitional particularity of original art is due in part to the attempt to deduce generic constraints from an ontology of genre bequeathed to us by the Western metaphysical tradition. Running through neoclassicism and Hegelian idealism, this time-honored approach continues unabated in modern thought until it is overcome only with postmodernism's noble resignation to the sheer impossibility of categorization.

Genette's gesture toward a theory of architexts sees genres rather as overarching empirical forms and stresses that all of our classes are empirically and existentially

constructed whether we recognize that fact or not (66, 67). In calling for an alternative principle of distinction, he makes room for the influences of both nature and culture in our categorical schemes: “for at whatever level of generality one places oneself, the phenomenon of genre inextricably merges the phenomena—among others—of nature and of culture” (69). With Genette, my approach is, first of all, empirical, although not any more empirical than most other literary criticism. I would like to emphasize that we are at core an empirical discipline in that we experience our objects of inquiry sensorially and that those objects, are most often held to be primary though stray from them we may. I am not advocating a strictly, scientific approach to literature, which would probably amount only to a quantitative demonstration of the obvious,⁷ but am rather offering a positive, inductive definition of lyric, not one devised in relation to whichever sorority of genres seem pertinent and exhaustive at a given historical moment.

The “generic” quality of lyric, I shall argue, consists in its structural and functional reduplication of an embedded and embodied mind engaged in making meaning in the confrontation with the novel. The lyric is, first of all, an action. It is an active presentation that releases language into interactions that generate meaning by utilizing the same structural and dynamic principles engaged by the brain. It is within the activity of the neural substrate that the basic dynamics of organismic functioning in relationship to an environment are best discernable. As an aesthetic expression, the lyric occasions first or naive sight, where sight is a synecdoche of perception in general. It differs from other literary forms in that, rather than representing the activity of the mind, it formally recreates its most basic meaning-making apparatuses in order to recapitulate the dynamic emergence of meaning. The lyric impulse is the impulse to draw upon the creative and

primary negotiations of perception, emotion, and action as they are rooted deeply in our animalistic brains and to disclose those negotiations—the means of meaning-making—in its product. The concepts and self-awareness that arise from these more basic functions are then built upon the structures they create.

By means of a complex of identifying features, lyric coherently reflects and effects the interrelations of emergent perception, so that its parts may be said to assume and mutually construct one another. The lyric's generic coherence derives from the fact that the parts or features of the poem presuppose one another. Its establishment allows the understanding of the genre to move beyond the descriptive and into the realm of the theoretical. The lyric becomes cohesive when seen to embrace a continuum of cognitive acts that express both the embeddedness of the organism within the whole it also constructs and its emergent consciousness of its separateness from that whole. The particular lyric utterance may confine itself to an arc of the cognitive cycle or express that cycle in its entirety. The result is a syncretic theory that contextualizes discrepant features and permits a transhistorical claim in the strict sense, that is, one that encompasses recorded history. As a pan-historical account of the lyric, this project is meant to encompass the types of poems Perloff and Patterson seem to feel have drained through the sieve of romantic lyricism, including the hymn, psalm, and prayer. This gesture toward inclusiveness is in no way meant to suggest an historical continuum analogous to a biological process conceived either ontogenetically or phylogenetically.

The lyric is an “individual” genre to the extent it renders the emergent processes of an enunciated mind (or those of a unified set of voices that function as a single mind). Attention to a single, isolated mind assumes that it is distanced to some extent from its

social situatedness. Following a symbolic removal from the social, a consequent engagement with novelty sets in motion a process that may lead to a fully articulated self-consciousness. The rupture folded into the process of recovery from it is the event that occasions poetic origination. Lyric is the literary form most attentive to preserving the brain's creative reaction and is the purest exponent of the structures of its response. Other literary forms, and perhaps other art forms, may exhibit certain of these features, but lyric differs from them in the extent to which they are present, exist in close proximity and therefore can be said mutually to assume and mutually to construct one another within the poem itself.

I draw upon an understanding of cognitive functioning that entails the following assumptions.

The brain has evolved. Again, I do not mean to suggest a diachronic progression of genres or to imply that the lyric evolved from, or is the source of, other generic forms. The instinct to make lyric the very earliest of genres, to locate it at the point of the emergence of language, is perhaps not so far off target not because it necessarily precedes the advent of other genres, but because it remains an enactment of emergence from origin and is, in a sense, an ontogenetic recapitulation of phylogenetic emergence. I do mean to evoke the developmental progression the genre embraces. This dissertation relies on a theory of cognitive functioning that assumes that most of the characteristics of the brain have adaptive value and that the structures of cognition developed based on Darwinian principles as they are augmented by the Neo-Darwinian synthesis.⁸ It might seem to follow, then, that the practice of lyric poetry has direct survival value, possibly as the honing of individual response to the anomalous. I have, however, no interest in making

this argument as it may be mounted only upon resort to the speculative genre of “just-so” stories. The establishment of a functional role for the poem itself is not the purport of this argument. Neither do I intend to refute MacLeish’s polemical statement that “A poem should not mean/But be” (1271). Anti-interpretive arguments such as his assume, in their intention to foil reductionism, that interpretation somehow exhausts the poem rather than serving as a pragmatic and fleeting response to it.

It is a short logical step, however, to the assumption that because a lyric poem operates according to the principles of an evolved cognitive system, it becomes a complex adaptive system, one that is both fossilized and living. Each lyric poem registers an adaptation of an organism to environmental flux and assumes the moment of differentiation that prompts the adaptation. The poem often imagines difference in terms of an environmental shift, a sudden confrontation with novelty. Gregory Bateson made the first step toward tracing the formal consistencies between “mind and nature” when he worked out an homologous relationship between the two complex adaptive systems. He defines mind as a stochastic system, one that meets the twin criteria of subjection to a mechanism generative of change and subjection to a subsequent selective principle (11). Within the poem as mind, the random action implicit in and enabled by the sheer diversity Darwin stresses will become the indetermination that is a poetic staple, while selection will appear as the formal generation of difference that precedes the generation of meaning.

The organism is embedded in an environment and the two construct one another.

The simple belief in a holism is often facile as it may be asserted in the absence of rigorous inquiry and remain a vague assumption. The implications of the concept of

embeddedness the Darwinian project implies have only recently been granted their full significance within the hard sciences. Our not-yet exhausted Cartesian inheritance continues to sustain us, and its use value is indisputable. However, its deeply ingrained suppositions have hindered both scientific investigation and humanistic study. Lyric poetry, I contend, must account for organismic embeddedness. The deep investment in the separation of the subject and object made by both empiricism and rationalism may explain why the lyric was a subordinate form throughout the Enlightenment.

My working definition of embeddedness assumes the following: (i) the decision to consider an organism separate from its environment subjects that organism to an act of extrication that is perforce artificial. The points of attachment to the ecological whole are never fully severed, even when they remain perceptually unavailable or otherwise remote. It is impossible to fully separate even a coherent, bordered unit from its constituting context while it is emergent. It is at all times attached to it and of it. (ii) Entities considered separate from the organism and therefore of its environment in fact constitute the organism that assimilates them and are active in shaping it both epistemologically and ontologically. (iii) The directionalities of emergence are bi- or multi-directional. The individual is constituted by its environment and vice versa in a continuous process of mutual co-generation. In the most stunning and well-argued critique of the recalcitrant assumption of separateness that finds its most popular expression in the nature/nurture dichotomy (the epistemological version of the organism/environment dichotomy), Susan Oyama logically critiques the assumptions that these terms are discrete. Pointing out that even the term of popular resort--“interaction”--assumes discrete units that *interact*, she lays bare the logical shortcomings of this

entrenched view, such as the problem of infinite regress. If the gene is the cause of the organism, what, then, causes the gene? (Or as Emily Dickinson phrases it, “Germ’s germ be where?”) Oyama argues that the gene must have a causal origin beyond the organism itself (12, 14, 17). Biology and environment are parameters shaping one another by informing one another in a sense that is quite literal. Organismic action is constructed of both the present environment and the present biology as it is shaped by individual’s constructed history in the manner that is biologically possible. The subordinate position taken here is that verbal acts, as natural acts, are formed of both nature and nurture which, as the constructed complements of one another, cannot exist independently. This assumption provides, among other things, a basis for the active construction of meaning on the part of the reader. (iv) Due to discrepancies of scale, the impact of the environment upon the bordered individual is far more noticeable than that of the individual upon the environment, especially the impact beyond the immediate or perceived environs.⁹ (v) Perception occurs at this formative point of contact and is a means of mutual co-constructiveness. Perception creates the knowledge of absolute distinction through the discernment of contrast and the creation of borders. Points of detachment tend to be perceptually available while points of attachment do not, which explains why poetic obscurity follows from a rendition of organismic embeddedness. (vi) The best explanation to date of the dynamic of co-construction is that provided by dynamic systems theory, which will be here argued to describe the constructive activity between mind and environment within perception and between the systems of emotion and cognition.

Conceptualizing the negotiations of mind and world in a manner that objectifies neither is a difficult task for those of us nursed on Western substantive certainty. Fransisco Varela's term "middle way" attempts to describe the nexus of negotiation that I argue characterizes lyric language. (The lyric theorist William Rogers offers "middle term" (270) to describe the border between mind and world, but his is not a constructivist ontology.) The notion of betweenness is, needless to say, problematic because it may be taken to instantiate absolute polarities between which a middle term is situated. This is not to say that lyric may not achieve a discursive flow or establish those very subject and object polarities (it is ironically most often defined in accordance with those terms), but it does so only in the co-presence of a rendered continuity from which they emerge.

As does lyric language itself, the notion of embeddedness disturbs the traditional understanding of representation. The alternative model of the brain, that espoused by the twentieth-century movement of cognitivism, perpetuates a longstanding philosophical tradition in construing it as a disembodied processor of symbols, a Turing machine running on wetware as it were. The notion of representation assumes the separateness of the object and the agent of representation, as the latter must accurately represent the former without altering himself. If the continuum between representer and thing represented is acknowledged, it must also be recognized that the act of representation transforms both elements: "representation" or "coding" happens as the referent is assimilated into the encoder and transformed as part of the act of assimilation. The hermeneutic is therefore always creative: this is the bane and the beauty of the multifarious industry of interpretation.

The extrication of the ideal pole of the individual from the ideal pole of the environment is then an event that follows from a precondition of continuity, and the extent to which a particular critical approach assigns causality to detached or alternative sources is artificial. Environment, for instance, subsumes the phenomenon that might be called cultural. To classify an approach as purely “cultural” ignores the fact that culture is created by individual biological organisms, and that it simultaneously creates them as it is disseminated. It is a mistake, therefore, to conceive of an artifact simply as a product of its culture and a further error to regard culture itself as an informing source, rather than a medium through which organism and environment create one another. Culture is both. As language is a coded medium subsuming both the biology and environment that constructs it, a purely linguistic methodology ignores the makeup of language at its own risk. For it belongs to the object as much as the subject and each of those terms is complexly constituted. As any action, it is of the subject as well as of the object: the irreducibility of literature is symptomatic of this fact. The complexity of linguistic expression is recalcitrant in this sense, and it is this complexity the lyric preserves in resisting the extrication of an environment from its speaker. Contingency is therefore admitted into this approach at the same time a scope that is as broad and as consistent as the existence of the species it is derived from is maintained.

Perception, action, and emotion are primary processes. I use Francisco Varela’s term enactionism in the strict sense that he delineates: first “perception consists in perceptually guided action,” and second, “cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action” (173). Action is both primary and prior; it is primary because perception enables it, and it is prior to perception in that it constructs it

as it is constructed by it (the latter directionality is the one that is usually taken for granted). It is, therefore, the motive force not only for the body, but for its mental activity as well. The prioritization of action is a corrective to the sequence propounded by cognitivism, which sees the organism as a passive receiver and recorder of stimuli from the outside world. Concepts, then, are grounded in the co-evolution of action and perception. Poems may concentrate themselves around the perception/action nexus (de Man “Modernity” 173-4), the perception/ conception nexus, or the conception/self-conception nexus, or orient themselves toward the pre-perceptual, but perception and action are necessarily implicated in cognitive activity. The abstraction of concepts from more basic cognitive activity is enabled in part by the form/content split that considers the concept a content and extricates the concept from its formal genesis. This traditional understanding of conception is an extra-lyrical phenomenon.

Systemic hierarchies. The systemic activity lyric stimulates is organized hierarchically. This is not to summon one of the legions of schematics that rank the respective genres on the basis of their humanistic value. It is rather to stipulate that a hierarchy of scale enables both the internal activity of the poem and the external interactions it invites. The poem is hierarchical in the way that brain processes are hierarchical, that is, they are progressively (again, in a non-evaluative sense) more integrative in the formation of actions that necessarily engage a more expansive “level” of the system. This allows for the implication of a larger environmental system within and without the poem and the integration of the reader into the system of the poem. As in any hierarchy, the germane activity of the lower levels is preserved as it is subsequently integrated.

The reader also constructs the lyric process. The upshot of inclusive hierarchies is that the poem becomes a potential object and an environment for the reader in which the composing organism and his environment are present. The closest we can come to empathy is through the assimilation of another's situatedness. It is not enough, therefore, to say that the reader enters the text (or that the text enters the reader); those metaphors apply equally to the reading of non-poetic texts—defined as those abstracted from their situation of origin--and are based on a qualitative evaluation of the experience of reading.¹⁰ The text the reader integrates exposes its means and method of assimilation for the subsequent act of assimilation on the part of the reader.

The mind is embodied. The assumption is made that the brain is embodied, both in the sense that its formal activity is a material activity and that its engagement is necessarily the engagement of the extended body. Causality, therefore, occurs at the level of the material substrate. The poem's embodiedness is reflected in the complicity of the autonomic processes evoked within lyric experience, such as breathing and the beating of the heart, which are among the means of maintaining the connectedness of the organism and environment. They therefore participate in effecting the emergence of the system and must modulate for homeostasis to occur. In lyric poetry, as in the Central Nervous System and in the mechanisms of consciousness, autonomic functions are parameters constraining more advanced neurological functions. The experience of the lyric poem evokes, activates, and depends upon these support systems.

Unconscious structures are potentially conscious. If an argument is to be made that physical, neurological structures of the brain are presented in a product of the mind, the objection that unconscious structures must by definition remain unavailable to

consciousness must be quelled, for the premise that they are realized in the literary work assumes their availability on a conscious level. The vastly complex neurological processes with their multitudinous components (necessary for a complex system) remain unconscious, it is thought, because awareness of or access to them would clutter the mind to such an extent as to preclude its functioning. This is a cogent rationale and probably a correct one, and I do not wish to refute it, only to point out that to deploy it as an objection to the possibility that poetry foregrounds unconscious dynamics is to misunderstand the location of conscious awareness within the creative process. The structures of the poem analogous to those discernible in the brain become available as such once the creative act has transpired and not because the poet is consciously aware of his own neurological dynamics. Further, they are not the poet's but belong to the poem that is also shaped by the environment. Likewise, the Freudian dynamic unconscious is unavailable to its correlative, consciousness, yet the organism's productions encode it and may be decoded to reveal it. (Freud's system of encoding is more strictly correspondent and does not imply a constructivism.) In any event, the neuroscientist Gerald Edelman assumes that the physical substrate must share the structural qualities of consciousness, including coherence and unity (*Universe* 146-152).¹¹ The philosopher John Searle maintains that the structures of the unconscious must be potentially conscious, for the notion of an unconscious exists only on a conscious level (*Rediscovery* 152).

Ontology is processive. Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of organism fully develops the implications of the rejection of a metaphysics of substance.¹² Given the same assumption, the attribution of substance is proposed to be analogous to the assumption of stable signification: each is a convenient attribution and not an accurate

view of the big picture. If we conceive of organisms as events as Whitehead does, the poem is an evolving entity. This continuity is recognized by Eliot on an “intertextual,” horizontal plane, if you will, at the scale of the body of literature in his idea that the whole corpus of poetry is altered but never disintegrated by the addition of each new poem (39). Perloff’s major insight is that lyric theory founders in its identification of lyric merely as a product (29). Her major error is the belief that this impasse cannot be outwitted by defining the genre in terms of its generative dynamic.

Particularity. The final assumption, that poetic utterance is engendered within a singular situation, from a particular vantage point and moment, is compatible with the ground level assumption of much recent criticism. This project then assumes that the poem proceeds from a particularity of stance that has arisen from a universal method. A universality of method, it should be noted, does not assume a universal technique. Creation, by its nature, precedes convention as being precedes description. As nature and nurture, organism and environment are mutually determined, cultural, historical, and biographical influences are enfolded in the poem, and are, I think, legitimately extricated, *given an awareness of how they are first implicated.* What is consistently lyrical about the poem, however, is precisely what transcends cultural expression, the species-level dynamic of emergence transpiring as between organism and environment.

In noting the misattribution of a theory of lyric to both Plato and Aristotle, Genette roots the genre’s problematic status in the mimetic view of art that governed the classical systems. His argument advocates the now common belief in the non-mimetic or non-representational quality of lyric poetry (9). The definition of art as an imitation of human actions by “rhythm, language, or harmony” (*Poetics* 1447a, 1448a) is the reason

the lyric is neglected by the classical critics: an understanding of art outside the rubric of mimesis was beyond the projects of both Plato and Aristotle. By the time Aristotle was writing, the form of the dithyramb was already antiquated, and the slot Plato left open for the lyric, *pure* narrative, was according to Genette, hypothetical: “If the dithyramb is a phantom genre, pure narrative is a fictitious mode, or at least a purely “theoretical” one, and Aristotle’s abandoning it is *also* a characteristic expression of empiricism” (Genette 22). Aristotle discards Plato’s third category because it is non-existent for him (23). The genre of lyric subsisted for a while with the purely technical definition, “poems played on a lyre,” that was bestowed upon it by the Alexandrine critics (24).

It is in the Renaissance that the erroneous assumption that lyric is the third of the classical genres begins to find expression.¹³ Genette argues that Plato’s discrimination of a purely enunciative form of literature may be interpreted (out of context as it were) to refer to either narration or self-expression (34). In an age anticipating an expressive theory of art, lyric slides into to occupy the slot reserved for pure diegesis, one that Aristotle’s poetics left vacant. Aristotle, it should be noted, evaluates genres, but what is ranked is the object imitated, not the genre itself (12). In order to justify the consistency of the system the lyric would infiltrate, it had to be granted an object of imitation, and that object was deemed to be internal. Anticipating this shift, in the year 1617, Francisco Cascales rather curiously labels thought (*concepto*) the medium of plot (30). One-hundred and fifty years later, Batteux makes the claim that what lyric poetry imitates is feeling (33). Yet in the same breath he allows that the feelings may be either genuine or feigned by the poet (33). As the problem of imitation was about to be solved within lyric, it was summarily complicated.

Romantic criticism, of course, proceeded as if this complication had not arisen, preferring its poetic feeling to be authentic, or at least based in authentic experience. Hölderlin was to write “the lyric . . . in appearance idealistic . . . is naive in its significance. It is a continuous metaphor of a feeling” (Genette 40-41). As part of the romantic revision, Friedrich Schlegel discards the modal basis of genre distinction and removes it to a psychological or existential plane, attributing subjectiveness to lyric, objectiveness to drama, and “subjective-objectiveness” to epic (37). This begins the diachronic succession of genres and their valuation as psychological phenomena. August Schlegel then formulates the dialectic of thesis, antithesis, synthesis (305-06) that Hegel was to perfect.

How we should understand the lyric after exposing its fraudulent pedigree is not Genette’s concern. Far from being resolved in the turn to expressionism, the mimetic problem remains with us. In recent decades, Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s theory that lyric is a fictionalized utterance is in many ways the foil to Käte Hamburger’s slightly earlier insistence that the genre is defined as against fictionality. Herrnstein Smith’s contribution to genre theory is to substitute discourse as the object of poetic imitation (25) in order to argue that lyric is mimetic of “natural” utterances, that is, verbal responses that are unique, historically-determined events (15). Poetry is particularly mimetic of spoken discourse and most often private or personal utterances (the ode, however, represents public speech) (30). Poetry is then representative of a linguistic form that is already representative, a “fabrication of fictive objects” (25). She takes to task the accepted model of a mimetic dynamic:

The corollary formula—X (artwork) represents Y (object of imitation) in Z (medium)—has created more problems than it has illuminated, most conspicuously perhaps, in regard to music, where art theorists, under the presumed obligation to locate the object that music imitates, have come up with an amazing assortment of chimeras, from shapes of feeling to states of being. (26)

In the case of poetry, then, language, “the whole dynamic complex of verbal behavior and verbal experience,” functions as both the medium and object of representation (26). As tragedy for Aristotle, lyric is a fictive creation in that it does not imitate specific objects or events, but the abstract behavior Aristotle qualifies as probable, and Herrnstein Smith locates at the level of the class (27). Fictionality becomes equivalent to the imposition of design on a previously organized medium (27).

Herrnstein Smith’s theory is compatible with mine for several reasons—the first is its assumption of the situatedness of the particular text and the potential for the inference of the supporting context. Meaning is its context, “that is, the set of conditions that occasioned its occurrence and determined its form” (21). The meaning of the poem is understood as its “*causes or determinants*” (21). Her understanding of context is also that it is all-inclusive—consisting of verbal and non-verbal determinants. As the poem determines what was never historically determined in the first place, as it is not representative of particularity, it in essence creates, but does not reflect, its context (33, 36). Further, the poem consists of “formal specifications for the physical production of certain events” (31) that is, the verbal performances (whether silent or enunciated) of the poem that then represent the original verbal act imitated (31). The act of representation is performed.

I am uncomfortable with Herrnstein Smith's notion that the poem is unnatural, that its determining context is purely linguistic and not at all "historical," and, further, what might be interpreted (but, within her theory, would not necessarily have to be) as the converse, that "natural utterances" are not highly indebted to the non-historically bounded, romantic functions of the imagination and memory. I do, however, concede that fictionality may be fairly construed to be, among other things, the quality of language as it stands in for a more diverse physical context. Poetic or indeterminate language is not representative locally, but presents or participates in the fact of embeddedness. I doubt, however, that this is, strictly speaking, a form of mimesis.

Responding to Wellek and Warren's designation of the lyric I as fictive (273), Käte Hamburger divests lyric writing of its imposed imitative mission and grants it a status as "real" she simultaneously denies to narrative writing. In *The Logic of Literature*, she argues that the lyric does not concern itself with objective reality and therefore does not engage the notion of fictionality. Genre is determined not by its form, she argues, but within the statement-system of language (242). Adopting Hegel's criterion of a statement-subject, she writes, "The lyrical genre becomes constituted through the so to speak 'announced' intention of the statement-subject to posit itself as a lyric I . . ." (241). In an understanding of subject/object interplay that is quasi-constructivist if unidirectionally so, the object materializes in lyric as the "object-nexus" constructed by the subject with which it enjoys a "mutually interlocking" relationship, one of contiguity. Lyric language is therefore not referential of the objective world, but forms its own internal "sense-nexus" or system of meaning-making that revolves solely around the "subject pole." Form and meaning then become collapsed within the poem

because it is impossible to locate meaning outside of the form the poem constructs (248-49). What words denote is an idea of object that belongs to the subject (261). “[O]bjects disappear beneath the words, which become independent” (259). Objective access is not the goal of the lyric process, but its impetus (266). “Otherwise expressed, *the lyric statement does not aim at having any function in an object- or reality-nexus*. We do not experience a poem’s statements as semblance, as fiction or illusion” (271). Hamburger’s argument is interesting for its removal of the burden of imitation from the shoulders of the lyric project and further for its identification of a proto-constructivist dynamic that accomplishes the same. Hamburger allows for the object-nexus to be *inspired* by the object and thus hints at, but does not develop, the means by which the object pole might construct the subject pole.

Each of these theories is useful, Hamburger’s for its focus on the emergence of the subject and object (or at least the latter) within the poem, and Herrnstein Smith’s for its focus on the informing context the poem gestures out toward. In suggesting a theory of architexts, Genette recurs to the Platonic basis of genre distinction within modes of delivery “the most undeniably universal category inasmuch as it is based on the *transhistorical* and *translinguistic* fact of pragmatic situations” (emphasis added) (74). Herrnstein Smith’s division is also based on modes of utterance, and her attempt to deduce from it a situation of imitation seems to me to be a little strained. There is a good reason Plato and Aristotle did not choose to consider the lyric within their systems. For lyric language compromises referentiality, and, if it is imitative of anything, it is imitative of the situation of embeddedness and the negotiation of it that makes representation an artificial concept. Despite the discomfort this statement may cause, the lyric is

biologically responsive in recapitulating the principally cognitive means of negotiation that bring the organism/environment border into relief. One might argue that it is imitative of a dynamic (a more rarefied object than even discourse), but as that dynamic is constructivist, it can't be imitative of anything that is substantive and specific enough to be useful, that is, it is not imitative in the classical sense. An understanding of lyric activity as the recapitulation of a structure which exists in a relationship of homology to its creator and receiver is a less neat, but an eminently more feasible basis for the genre than a distortion of the representational concept of imitation.

Chapter Schematic

Chapter 2. "The Cry of Its Occasion" Prelude to Lyric. Lyric, it is argued, is instigated within the fiction of exile, or the social alienation exile figures. The threat posed by the necessarily subversive poet-singer to his society and the inevitable betrayal of the poet figure by that society are enlightened by Platonic doctrine, culturally diverse myths of poetic origin, and philosophical theories of the individual. Social dislocation motivates a complex of symptoms that sustains lyric expression, including the distillation of being to an affective ontology encompassing the extremes of lament and celebration and the attenuation of subjectivity. The introduction of musicality through the outlet of singing is demonstrated to effect consolation, dislevel referentiality, and gesture toward a new, curative order. The displacement of the poet effects a thematic of loss and forces attention to the workings of the individual mind as it negotiates anomaly.

Chapter 3. "To Dwell in Possibility": Presence, Pain, and Prophecy, Part I. As it is displaced and disintegrated, poetic consciousness is primed to encounter a novel environment and to forge an action into it by means of a constructivist dynamic. The

semantic resistance or obscurity that characterizes lyric poetry is shown to be a reification of perception's holistic origins. What Stevens calls "decreation" expresses the extensive interconnectedness that is chiefly realized below the level of consciousness. As foreseen by C.S. Peirce's prescient framing of what is arguably an ecological philosophy, it is also the state of potential from which meaning is generated. His category "firstness," the virtual presence of variety, corresponds to the shrouded, extensive system in which the organism is embedded, which holism is also lexical within Emerson's semiotics. From an organism-centered perspective, the potential of "firstness" registers somatically as emotion, understood to play an evaluative role in cognition. As William James proposed, it is realized in action, an understanding that is refined within the contemporary "somatic marker hypothesis," which projects the potentiality of firstness forward. That the most obscure poetry tends to be the least overtly emotional is taken as evidence of the distinct yet functionally homologous states of being those qualities express.

Chapter 4. "This is Where the Serpent Lives": Presence, Pain, an Prophecy, Part II. As evidenced by recent neuroscientific revisions of the empiricist understanding of perception as the integration of discrete sense data, perception is initially an articulating mechanism whose function is to select input from the embedding environment and to differentiate it into features by means of neuronal contrast mechanisms. Lyric poetry exploits and realizes this directionality through its deployment of Peircean "secondness." Its musicality functions diversely by rendering difference abstractly and thereby prophesying an "exit strategy" from the incomprehensibility of the whole it simultaneously implements. With the blurry phenomenon of deixis, formal discontinuity, particularly the line and stanza break, is seen to be a differentiating function by means of

which features are resolved and mediation enabled. The ode and the elegy, apostrophe and prosopopoeia are argued to be large-scale elaborations of the articulating, objectifying processes of perception embodied formally in the oscillating motion of progressively larger neuronal networks.

Chapter 5. The Perception of Metaphor and the Metaphor of Perception. Long held to be a vehicle and a measure of poetic creativity, the ubiquitous figure of metaphor is located within the amalgamating activity of perception. Wordsworth's boat-stealing episode is read as an archaeology of the pathetic fallacy that understands the trope to arise within a breach of intentionality the metaphoric activity of poetry seeks to remedy. The notorious scene is argued to be an inceptive episode in a poetic life because the sensory disconnect at its center precludes the perceptual success that is metaphor-making and inspires its pursuit. Neurodynamic theories of perception (those involving the application of deterministic chaos theory to neural activity) are adduced in order to argue for the dynamic identity of poetic metaphor and perception as boundary functions that reconcile the incommensurate realms of the ontological and the epistemological. Perception is confirmed to be an essentially creative, mediating function that, like metaphor, involves a selective interaction between an ideal context (organismic history) and a textual context (environment) that never fully transcends the distance it creates. Interactionist theories of metaphor are recouped and expanded. Synaesthesia is theorized to be a necessary, pre-perceptual phase and therefore a precursor to metaphor as a token of the potential variety embeddedness implies. Metonymy is seen to correspond to perceptual functioning at the purely physical and purely mental ends of the spectrum where the relationship of the terms is seen to be one of derivation rather than of

constructed similarity. The interdependence of the opposed canonical notions of inspiration (the vatic and the poetic or “crafted”) is elucidated by locating their constructivist dynamic within perceptual processes and prioritizing action with respect to perception, which priority is instantiated in the act of invocation.

The development of this project will entail an exploration of the spatial aspects of the lyric that follow from its evocation of the action that co-evolves with perception. I will argue that its generation of conceptual categories is effected through the genre’s clustering tendencies. Finally, the complex nature of the emergent lyric subject will become a future topic of investigation.

¹ The interpretation of the dithyramb as non-lyric, it seems to me, may be disputed, for the genre, barely extant, is barely exposed to our gaze. Genette relies on Plato's term *diegesis* to contend that the latter categorized it as a narrative. However, there is an argument to be made that choral hymns to Dionysus must have possessed a lyrical quality.

² Genette notes that Irene Behrens earlier refuted Bovey's misattribution of a lyric discussion to Aristotle. See *Die Lehre von der Einteilung der Dichtkunst, vornehmlich vom 16. bis 19. Jahrhundert: Studien zur Geschichte der poetischen Gattungen*.

³ This last fact is exemplified in the attribution of a mythical originality to the genre. See the theories of Vico, Rousseau, Herder, and Bovey.

⁴ One could argue that the plethora of classical, neoclassical, and romantic schematizations of drama are structural in their approach; however, they attempt to structure systems of genre and not the internal workings of the lyric.

⁵ In accordance with the distinction made within the discipline of complexity theory, the insights of which are pertinent here, the term *lineal* is used to represent an overriding sense of the sequential, or a strict division between before and after in order to distinguish the term *linear*, for which a mathematical definition is reserved. *Linear* will refer to phenomena in which effects are proportionate to their causes.

⁶ In defense of Perloff's championship of poetry, at the 2000 MLA convention in Washington D.C., she commented that the marginalization of poetry in the academy was evidenced by the woefully small room allocated to her panel that was nevertheless overflowing with bodies.

⁷ This expression comes to me by way of Donald C. Freeman.

⁸ This statement is qualified based on the fairly recent recognition of the contribution of "neutral" or chance evolution.

⁹ This fact will become relevant as the debate over metaphor is entertained in Chapter Five.

¹⁰ It is noteworthy that, when text is conceived to be the middle way that then becomes environmental for the reader, the text truly, for reasons other than those argued by Derrida, ends nowhere.

¹¹ Coherence refers to the state of consciousness at a given moment, the sense that it is singular and precludes another state. Unity refers to the integration of a conscious state, the sense that it cannot be decomposed into constituent entities.

¹² See *Process and Reality*.

¹³ No lesser figures than Cervantes and Milton make similar assumptions. See *Don Quixote* and *Of Education*.

Chapter Two

“The Cry of its Occasion”: Prelude to Lyric

Plato's expulsion of the poet and his artist brethren from the Republic submits as grounds for banishment the unfit status of a deriving mind, one whose product is sotted with truth-fogging impurities. Unlike mere enthusiasts of poetry, who are to be loved and saluted if condescendingly, the poet is a subversive, a *provocateur* whose seductive ways must be steadfastly opposed (10.606e-607a). As the polemic establishing artisanal and artistic inferiority by virtue of their second and third-degree remove from the truth is mounted, a certain tonal urgency arises whenever poetry is the subject of analysis. Book X's trajectory at length betrays Platonic anxiety as that which frets over the vulnerability of truth under emotional siege. Remembrance of the glimpse at truth (*anamnesis*) that is a precondition of human birth¹ is a rare and tenuous occurrence that follows upon mastery over emotion as much as the renunciation of all trafficking in semblance. In fact, the former achievement follows logically from the latter, and Plato's argument pivots at the site of their linkage. Imitative practice causes identification with the imitated, which then arouses in the spectator the emotion portrayed. The ability to discriminate that brings one nearer to the recognition of perfection is thereby compromised (603c). "The imitative poet implants an evil constitution, for he indulges the irrational nature which has no discernment of greater or less" (605b). Left to his devices, such a poet panders to the ignorant, perpetuating their delusional mind states. As Plato's tack evolves, it becomes clear that affective possession poses the more virulent threat to his utopia. He who grieves, Plato tells Glaucon, best moderates his grief and maintains, at all cost, an

equanimity fit for public display. Immoderate emotional response, if indulged at all, is to be confined to private quarters where it may be quarantined.² The dialectic method, whose end is to steer acolytes toward *anamnesis*, tacitly concedes the dependence of doctrine on *decorum*. The hope of restoring the inviolate fortress of ideal forms to consciousness is socially-preserved because the conditions fostering its realization are socially facilitated. *Logos* is a civic virtue. That platonic practice hinges on the maintenance of what is, in sum and substance, a value system is to be expected. Its metaphysics subsumes its ethics: truth, beauty, and goodness merge in the divine and stand in for one another in their earthly manifestations. As is true of any value system, its preservation rests on consensus, here the consensus to resist the erosive influence of a decadent art.³ Plato's need to maintain social order is underscored by his resort to the forcible expatriation of the poet. His fiat to exile is, as exile often was, the removal of an unruly element, one with the perceived capacity to infect that which is organically ordered. "Few persons ever reflect, as I should imagine, that the contagion *must* pass from others to themselves," (606b) (emphasis added) he writes of the object of empathic connection. His choice of the metaphor of disease makes it impossible to regard the poet as quaint or spectacular, as merely a *divertissement*.

Plato's brief mention of the dithyramb in Book X of the *Republic* is by way of rounding out the categories he establishes in Book III. In the earlier passages, he takes pains to distinguish two diegetic or narrative modes. The first--the more problematic of the two--employs a purely imitative technique. The poet speaks as if he were another, that is, he imitates him. In the alternative mode, the poet dispenses with imitation to speak directly, on his own behalf. Drama is the most menacing of genres because it is

wholly imitative; as its imitative vehicle is character, it runs the greatest risk of exemplifying behavior that might be deemed disruptive. Would-be citizens must beware "lest from the imitation they imbibe the reality" (3.395c).⁴ As epic blends mimesis with direct narrative, that is, the recital of the poet himself, it is qualified on this basis to be less pernicious (3.394-b-c, 397d). Plato's attitude toward the lyric, which would seem to avoid the trap of imitation altogether, is less clearly formulated. The dithyramb, a barely extant form comprised of both Dionysian hymns and heroic narratives, exemplifies the direct report of the poet, and it is not clear whether Plato intends to invoke the lyric at all by its mention. He dispenses of this category as well, but not before salvaging encomium, sung praise for the just, and according it the full privileges of citizenship (607a). Comprising a subgenre that is pure in its unalloyed presentation of good, songs extolling the virtues of gods and heroes are deemed worthy because they are thought to inculcate the goodness they report upon. The unidentified remaining forms of direct narrative, though the least imitative of the three types, are at last glance no less threatening, due, presumably, to their emotional influence. Plato makes no mention of the poetic forms that today strike us as quintessentially lyrical (such as Pindar's odes and Sappho's love poetry), although he undoubtedly would have been familiar with them. Yet, although he does not account for them under the rubric of imitation—a fact that is significant in itself—it is hard to imagine that he would approve of their emotional power. It is safe to say that the lyric genre is more or less intact upon its banishment in spite of the fact that it is not delineated by Plato as such, and that Plato considers it to be, with epic, the instrument of the honeyed Muse, purveyor of pain and pleasure, threat to law and reason (10.607a).

Despite drama's low ranking on his scale of admissibility, it is also the epic, and Homer's rendering of it in particular, that is Plato's target. Eric Havelock justifies an attack that seems at best heavy-handed and at worst misconceived to modern sensibilities for whom an aesthetic medium is hardly to be judged by the same criteria as carpentry (25-27). Plato's attack, Havelock argues, has no such aesthetic component; it is rather directed at a prevailing educational system (12-13, 23-24). Epic, he demonstrates, was the primary means of enculturation by which social mores, customs, and ethics were imparted to Hellenic youth. Replete with detailed descriptions of behavior to be emulated or avoided, it functioned as what he calls a "tribal encyclopedia" (31, 42-44, 66). Instructional passages interpolated into the narrative model are paradigmatic of desirable behavior (Chapter 3). As a form that was transmitted orally, and well into Plato's time (which was at best semi-literate despite a three-centuries-old written tradition), poetry was constructed for mnemonic efficacy, in order to insure that its lessons would be remembered (39-41, 96). The mnemonic devices employed, the body of techniques including rhythmic lyre strumming and dancing, as well as the verbal devices of echo, refrain, and parallelism that the Greeks called *mousike*, combined to enrapture audiences. One was inhabited by the part sung; one rhythmically embodied, empathized with, *possessed* the characters (45, 140, Chapter 9, 145-160). "The whole memory of a people was poeticised . . ." (134). As knowledge was drunk in, "part of the *res* itself and not about it," true knowledge, attainable only by a mind undulled by this reason-drowning liqueur, was impossible. The absorption of knowledge precludes the indifference and the distance the dialectic method demands.

Havelock goes so far as to argue that Plato equates imitation and emotional engagement. By the latter half of Book X, mimesis, in his view, comes to refer to the emotionally-driven act of identification rather than giving rise to it (26). His hypothesis serves to account for lyric's exclusion from the Platonic system. What is more salient is that the famous dictum is emblematic in placing the poet in a comfort zone acoustically well beyond social perimeters. Like Milton's Satan, the outcast is deemed to be viral, dependent on the parasitic ravaging of others to manifest its own vitality, imperiling the aspirant to intellectual purity, the *philosophe*, as Lucifer might doom his morally righteous if hapless hosts, those seeking to purify the heart. Satan's evil-doing is likewise derivative: evil is mediated, that is, realized through another medium--the earthly creature. Like the poet, Satan "implants an evil constitution." He chooses "Fit vessel, fittest imp of fraud, in whom/To enter, and his dark suggestions hide" (*PL* 1.88-89) in order to compromise purity. Tending to self-propagate at the expense of others, Satan and the poet are cast down and cast out from their respective idealities. Their effects are irreversible, and they must, perforce, be exorcised.

Neither is the banishment of the poet a remedy peculiar to Platonism, or even to the West. For lyric to occur, "individual" and "society" must be disentangled as terms. Exile, as concept, is seminal for lyric. Its poetic significance is deeply seeded in a response to the danger of Orphic absorption, of Orphic sway. In articulating a prevailing official attitude toward the lyricist-poet among conservationists of the *status quo*, one which will continue to inspire the reactive forms of *apologia* and defense, Plato in essence assumes that dedication to the poetic entails turning on the expectations of birth circumstance. The ridding of a dangerous element logically must be preceded by the

decision on the part of that element to embrace a degree of nonconformity. Yet, within poetic lore, this "decision" is most often portrayed to be the outcome of the exile itself.⁵ An understanding of the way lyric's paradoxical beginning is inscribed within lyrical utterance may be cultivated, appropriately, within the adumbrations of myth.

To account for the genesis of poetic language and song, the Kaluli islanders of Papua, New Guinea tell the story of a fateful fishing expedition undertaken by a young boy and his older sister. On this particular occasion, the girl nets several crayfish while her brother catches none. Complaining of his hunger, the boy begs his sister in turn for each of her fish. She allocates them instead to other family members: the children's mother, their father, their older brother and so on. As the boy's pleas grow more plaintive, his sister persists in her unwillingness to share her bounty. At length, the boy catches a single shrimp. He places its shell on his nose which shades to the distinct, reddish-purple hue of the beak of a breed of fruit dove the Kaluli call "muni." His hands sprout feathers, at length mutate into wings, and when at last his metamorphosis into a bird is complete, he takes to the air. Struck by the gravity of her refusals, his sister grows inconsolable. She tearfully begs her brother to return, offering all of her fish, but her pleas go unheeded. In his new bird voice, the boy intones a sorrowful, half-sung oration:

Your crayfish
 you didn't give it to me
 I have no *ade*
 I'm hungry (Feld 20-21).

Anthropologist and jazz musician Steven Feld's ethnographic study of Kaluli bird-inspired poetics uncovers the symbolic order that structures the myth. The tonality of the

muni bird's cry is said to verge on weeping: its melodic contours descend in mournful cadence. It is the source of the Kaluli's lone original song form, the *gisalo*, a ritualistic mode in attendance at their funerals and seances (36-37). In the elaborate semantic system they derive from the tones of rain forest birds, the muni's song signifies the pain born of the denial of nourishment and of the loss of communal sustenance that is entailed by such a denial. The relationship of an older sister to her younger brother is one of protector and primary caregiver once the boy is no longer an infant, presumably, once he speaks. A brother and sister so related call one another "*ade*" (*ah-day*), a term of endearment that both betokens and mediates their mutual fondness. In the story of "the boy who became a muni bird," the sister's refusal to share her food, and especially her expressed intention to serve other family members when confronted with her younger brother's hunger, is a negation of the sharing and caretaking that constructs an *ade* relationship (24-27). It is conventional in songs of the dead to express sadness for the loss of an *ade* only after mother, father, sister, and brother have been lamented. That this sequence is inviolable attests to the Kaluli's ultimate regard for the *ade* relationship (158-159).

For the Kaluli, food is both symbol and currency of social connection. Sharing food is a sign of intimacy and a ritualistic initiation: once bread has been broken, the partakers refer to one another by the name of the food they have consumed (27-28). "Hunger and loss are thus at the center of a basic Kaluli symbolic equation; they stand for isolation and abandonment" (Feld 24-28). To begrudge an *ade* food is perhaps the ultimate transgression against custom, and the young girl's actions effectively undo the most basic of familial bonds. The boy's complaint that he has no *ade* is then a symbolic

charge. The betrayal he suffers is sufficiently egregious to compel his permanent withdrawal from native circumstance and the crossing over into a fundamentally different realm. To the Kaluli, birds signify the spirits of the dead (30). A transformation into a muni bird is an irremediable exile, one inextricably bound up with the birth of another expressive order, that of song.

The poet Nathaniel Mackey elucidates the Kaluli myth's insight into the link between the loss of the communal and the recovery of the musical. He contends that the boy's plight is tantamount to an orphaning. "Song is both a complaint and a consolation dialectically tied to that ordeal, where in the back of 'orphan' one hears echoes of 'orphic,' a music which turns on abandonment, absence, loss" (88). His gesture to the Orpheus myth is pregnant, for it too imagines the supremely moving quality of poetic song to be inspired by unnatural severance, by the open wounds of overwhelming grief. The two myths suggest that the intrinsic musicality of words is liberated within the lament for lost community. Lyric is conceived in what Wallace Stevens calls "the cry of its occasion."

Holding Orpheus and his fate in abeyance for the moment, the Kaluli myth bears a more sustained similarity to the Greek tale of Philomela. Raped while under the protection of her brother-in-law Tereus, the maiden Philomela is further violated in order that the illicit knowledge of his crime, and the "knowing" that is his crime, remain privileged. Her mutilation at his hands is a muting: her tongue severed, she is rendered speechless, ignorable as the Kaluli boy is perfunctorily ignored. The injustice inflicted on Philomela is both familial and civil: her rapist brother-in-law Tereus is the state personified--he is the king. Her subjection to a political will, one thereby empowered (Tereus has assistance at his disposal to carry out his crime) is the betrayal of a *parent* in

both the French and political senses. Like the Kaluli boy who is abandoned by closest kin and caretaker, by all rights she should have been afforded his protection. This is not an insignificant fact nor is it one simply attributable to the blurry line between extended family and political unit that is obsolete because more sharply drawn in the here and now. It bespeaks a necessary *genetic* resemblance between transgressor and transgressed, that is, a resemblance of type. The poet figure is tainted by a sibling or sibling-figure, by one most near in blood or in law. It bears repeating at this point that law and fact, or law and truth are conflated by Plato, as is evidenced by the very establishment of the Republic as the City of the Soul. The origin of lyric, then, presumes the defiling of the innately pure by one most alike typologically (a sibling) in what is essentially an exercise of self-assertion, or self-preservation. In withholding food, the Kaluli girl nurtures everyone but her *ade*. In this manner, lesser reproductions are degraded: they are decreed to be impure and therefore unworthy in relation to the ideal forms they reflect. The betrayal of those fated to sing is at the hands of a protector, a nurturer, he or she to whom one's existence is owed and through whose existence identity is constructed. The boy is made *ade* by virtue of his sister's care and her pre-existence. Philomela's central social identity, the basis of all identity, is that of sister to the wife of the monarch who wields the power of life and death. Each is in this sense, a copy spawned from an original. Each violator is then also a parental figure, a patriarch and a maternal surrogate, respectively. The abdication or abuse of parental responsibility is the cause of what are, in essence, orphanings. This is the plight of the poet of the Republic who is decreed to be polluted and is cast out rather than "reformed" within society. In what seems to be an unfair twist, the violated, now bearing a derivative relationship to its former self, the self whose

potential to mature into a functional citizen has been thwarted, becomes a source of danger.

Philomela is able to aestheticize her experience through the resort to a utilitarian medium, a practical skill, one associated with frivolous embellishment, fine detail, occupation for idle hands, and the feminine--as is poetry. She weaves or embroiders, in different versions of the tale, a message to her sister Procne. The locus of her stitchery is the refusal of her silence and is a forerunner of, even as it stands in for poetic speech. It has in common with poetry its tactility, a two-dimensional, warp-and-weft texture, and the fashioning of discrete units into a meaningful whole. By virtue of the facticity of the message--its actualization of emotion--Procne is, so to speak, infected. Her receipt of Philomela's message precipitates a grisly retaliation--the killing of Tereus's son and the serving of Itys to him at dinner. Her plot to take revenge, that mighty Hellenic fixation, reclaims agency for the victim as infection renders the passive active, the destination source. The fatal cascade of events sparked may be said to validate the Platonic fear that the momentum of corruption is unstoppable. All taboos violated: adultery, rape, incest, mutilation, cannibalism, and the murder of a son at the hands of a mother, vengeance rends the "natural" laws of human congress. The drive toward ruin is self-propelled, and it is ineluctable. Idealism, in essence, breeds this, for the motion it is vulnerable to is unidirectional. It is not possible to grow more ideal. The corruption of purity can only beget further, more egregious corruption by means of a positive feedback cycle at odds with the negative, self-correcting system that is the dialectic process. The oral Socratic method strives to maintain equilibrium, to nudge, to rein in that which goes astray. Reason inoculates to the extent that it forestalls aberrant motion, whose thrust is at odds not so

much with the stasis upon which Platonic forms depend, but rather with the self-determined motion that defines the soul.

All soul is immortal, for that which is ever in motion is immortal. But that which while imparting motion is itself moved by something else can cease to be in motion, and therefore can cease to live; it is only that which moves itself that never intermits its motion, inasmuch as it cannot abandon its own nature; moreover this self-mover is the source and first principle of motion for all other things that are moved. Now a first principle cannot come into being, for while anything that comes to be must come to be first a first principle, the latter itself cannot come to be from anything whatsoever; if it did, it would cease any longer to be a first principle. Furthermore, since it does not come into being, it must be imperishable, for assuredly if a first principle were to be destroyed, nothing could come to be out of it, nor could anything bring the principle itself back into existence, seeing that a first principle is needed for anything to come into being.

(Phaedrus 245c-d)

The unremitting motion of the soul is the basis of its immortality. As *primum mobile*, its unbegotten and therefore eternal existence is compromised the moment it becomes object to another force. Poetry is dangerous because it disturbs the self-motivated continuance that is the soul's ontological repose. Analogous to a virus, it redirects the course of the already-in-motion, and, in manipulating DNA, alters being's organic development, however subtly. Emotion, as is neurologically evident, but has long been intuitively realized, is motion's prod and precedent (an argument that will be developed in Chapter Three). Those subjected to affect are said to be *moved*.

The poet is an inadmissible figure because she alters the natural course of things, spreading imperfection through her communicable emotional reaction in the form of melodic outburst. Within the parent-child relationship, the infecting offspring becomes a usurper who must be disowned. As children are parented, they are in their essence threats to the ultimate source, the unparented soul-ideal-God, reminders that one is oneself mortal and flawed. The twist is that the disavowal is pre-emptive. One is reminded of Cronus devouring his children. The multiple levels at which the idea of the paternal source may be interpreted extend its significance beyond the family drama to the opera of the polity. This, then, is the source of Plato's dis-ease. It stems from the vulnerability of self that is implied by the contamination of *those most like one*, one's political and genetic brethren. It is no mere contradiction, then, that Homer's verse was beloved of Plato; Plato's susceptibility to the bard is evidenced by the fact that his admitted awe of him is physically possessing (*Republic*). That Plato, as Shelley proclaims, "was essentially a poet--the truth and splendour of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive" (314) is an historically tested determination with solid empirical basis and not merely the upshot of Shelley's desire to pre-empt reason with the imagination as the faculty by means of which his own idealist version of universal harmony may be perceived.

In systematic thinking within and beyond the Western tradition, poetry is dangerous because it wields the power of emotional dominance over the will. As a destroyer of self-initiation, it is an agent of death itself. In Kaluli society, poetic praxis meets with no overt censure: it is neither ostracized nor devalued. In fact, its mastery is often sought as the means to woo and to secure a wife (Feld 38). Yet the poetic

wellspring is safely secreted in the afterlife and is accessed only under the protection afforded by ritual. Poetic talk emanates from the symbolic complex of soul of dead kin-bird-poet, and is channeled by a spirit medium during a *séance* ceremony. Kaluli thought posits a parallel invisible world beyond the physical one (66). It is the bird population inhabiting the fringes of the village--the accessible beyond--that is believed to embody the spirit correlatives of the dead (61). In the *séance* ceremony in which *gisalo* is performed, the verbal content escorted by the melody of the muni bird's cry tends to take the form of a call for "help, attention, or recognition" (143-4). Philomela, the boy, and Orpheus each deliver a monologue that partakes of this rhetorical form. The intent of *gisalo* is to evoke sadness or nostalgia, and to inspire grief and anger that is then vented in the ritualistic act of burning a ceremonial dancer's back. Feld interprets this as an act of retribution for pain inflicted (139, 215). The Kaluli have institutionalized a means of accessing poetry while counteracting its infectious effects and insuring its containment by banning the poet-maker himself à la Plato.

The dancer, whose skin is singed in the symbolic act of retribution, dances to set the pace of the song, and assumes, through costuming and the quality of his movement, the form of a bird (170). As Feld explains, "What appears in myth as the scenario of mediation, 'becoming a bird,' reappears in expression as a pervasive metaphor for form and performance" (220). This "metaphor" permeates the Western tradition in which birds flock to lyric poetry: the Seafarer's mournful cuckoo, Poe's cryptic raven, the Boy of Winander's screaming owls, Keats's achingly poignant nightingale, Stevens's blackbird in its thirteen aspects are, like Philomela, the "lover of song," figures for, and reflections of, the poet-performer. The attribution of bird form is comparatively egalitarian within the

Kaluli ethos--all souls come to inhabit bird bodies, every death is a poetic fountainhead, whereas, in the West, the poet-sufferer is singled out. In either view, transmogrification is both retributive and palliative, a relief and a release. The mysterious agency that transforms the Kaluli boy is, for Philomela, a force of mercy that can be no less than divine, a balm for her pain and the occasion to assuage it through new embodiment, through the aborning form of the lyric which restores to her, and restores her to, the twin poetic accoutrements of voice and the night.⁶ Philomela Nightingale, newly stigmatized, is, as Orpheus's head and the immortal muni, condemned and freed to mourn "in full-throated ease."⁷

Embedded in the myth of Orpheus is the central Western account of poetic song. The collection of versions inflecting the core story constitutes a nucleus of Western sentiment toward the poet and his craft that tends to resist unified interpretation. The relationships that structure the story are more complex and detailed than those of the preceding narratives: Orpheus both negotiates and moves beyond the terrain they cover. In Ovid's rendering of the myth in his *Metamorphoses*, the injury that befalls Orpheus is seemingly motivated by fate. The sputtering of the flame on Hymen's nuptial torch portends the disastrous outcome of his wedding day. Bereaved of his bride, Eurydice, on the day they are to be wed, Orpheus mourns her loss with a passionate fervor. He loves her with the intensity that one loves possibility. As his bride, she is his immediate as well as the source of his future family, and her taking is catastrophic, in terms of its effect upon his social embeddedness. As the goddesses who determine lifespan, it is within the power of the Fates to sustain Eurydice by extending hers. They function, then, as would-be protectors, as parents to the extent that they determine life. They are also in a sense

Orpheus's kin, for he is, in many versions of the myth, semi-divine.⁸ The story loosely follows the model in combining the roles of relative and protector to create an unlikely agent of betrayal. In Virgil's earlier retelling in his *Georgics*, Aristaeus, who causes Eurydice's death by his predatory pursuit of her, is Orpheus's fellow poet figure, arguably, his alter ego, symbolically his close kin.⁹ His indecorous aggression toward a bride on her wedding day is a social breach as sinister as the smiting of Eurydice by a lowly serpent in the grass.

Orpheus's story is similar to Philomela's in that the first significant expression of the bereft is an attempt to gain reparation: it is a cry for help rather than attention or recognition. Philomela's embroidery reappears here as Orpheus's plea in Hades. His deft diplomacy and her handiwork are vain artistic efforts to undo the undoable. Their failure to restore the natural order of things is in each case a form of proof of the irrevocability of acts situated on an irreversible arrow of time. A plot of recourse or revenge stipulates a linear cause and effect structure. The Kaluli boy's accusation, his half-human lament, announces a *fait accompli* and admits the possibility of appeal only to the sympathies of others. What is perhaps most salient about each utterance is its sheer rhetorical force. To revivify Eurydice, Orpheus braves Hades, descends into death's landscape, and in one of the most vivid renderings of the power of artistic reception, provides momentary reprieve from hell's cyclic punishments for the condemned: "*inque tuo sedisti, Sisyphoe, saxo*," Ovid writes, "And you, Sisyphus, sat idle on your rock" (*Metamorphoses* 10.44). Eternity pauses. The shades weep, the king and queen consent, but in no case can the breach be mended. The chain of events, as is evidenced by Orpheus's turn, is fated.

Unlike the other poet figures, Orpheus is seemingly born a poet, and it is his consummate poeticizing that precipitates his exile. There is no need to banish or exclude him, for he takes this task upon himself. In the *Georgics*, he embarks upon a self-imposed exile to the barren North country for a time. Although he departs to High Rhodope and wind-swept Haemus in Ovid's later version, his wandering is more aimless and esoteric, "a withdrawal . . . from the empirical realm and a desire or need to live predominantly in [an] inner world (Knapp 1-2), as evidenced by his rejection of all intercourse with women and thus the social unit that was originally violated. It will become the premise of this chapter that the effects of exile are necessarily esoteric whether or not the fiction of an exoteric exile is maintained.¹⁰ The sensibility of this myth is in some senses more modern than its counterparts: the poet never stands accused, and his exile is ultimately self-imposed. On the other hand, his story shares with those of Philomela and the Kaluli boy the superseding of human contact by interaction with the non-human. The communicative barriers imposed by speciation are once again crossed. Although Orpheus does not become a bird, there is something regressive in an evolutionary sense about the form his expression assumes, something out of, or before time. Orpheus summons beasts and trees, and stones hurled in his direction give up their flight in mid-course under the sway of his spellbinding lyrics. Even the inanimate are moved. *Poesis* entails a turning back, a beginning at the beginning, a rooting of utterance in the primal efficacy of quasi-linguistic expression, in the gesture, dance, and percussive instrumentation that are posited to have been the genre's original media¹¹ (*PEP* 715).

The ancient practice of exile was a tool of Draconian politics, and the plight of the exiled a dire one; the severity of the condition of the exile is for the most part unmatched in modern experience. In the absence of the protection of a host community, removal beyond municipal walls was often a guarantee of death by exposure to the elements or at the hands of one's enemies. Though the same severity and the same sense of dread do not attend the modern event, it is nevertheless a profound experience, both symbolically and actually. Edward Said has described exile as an "unhealable rift whose essential sadness can never be surmounted" (173). Orpheus, as figure of the poet, is the figure of unrelieved mourning. Music, writes Mackey, is "wounded kinship's last resort" (88). It is the necessary deliverance of those engrossed in their wounds, an utterance deformed in the cries of pain. The intrinsic musicality of words is released in the rending of the individual from the society and language that pre-exist and form him and from which he is, if not expelled, compelled to go forth. Lamentation is then lyric's first mood. In myth, wound precedes song--it is accorded a needful primacy, but it is not transcended. Singing, though consolatory, is not finally restorative, and wound remains open to fester. Song-response is inextinguishable, and therefore banished to the perimeter, the treetops, the mouths of the transmogrified, the respeciated, the symbolically or literally dead. But singing is also a freedom. One thinks of the spirituals that guided Afro-American slaves from captivity, and of the consolatory virtues of the Greek *paregoria* and the Spanish *consuelo*. In the wake of rupture, there is a sense in which lament becomes at once consolation. The evacuation of pain, the "expression" of it, as we say readily but understand imperfectly, is always already itself a source of pleasure, not merely the pleasure of release, of pain bound for the destination of its absence, but that given by the

physicality of vocalization. Infants, those without words, including deaf infants who are presumably not privy even to the affective qualities of voice babble, an activity prior to mimicry that is reinforced by virtue of the fact that it is orally gratifying.¹² There is pleasure in the touch of speech and its expressive antecedents, in sounds caressing throat in the process of their utterance, or outing. It is at the site of pleasure attending in spite of the horrific that consolation shades over to celebration, and it is for this reason that lyric can encompass the odic extreme of a Whitman as well as the opposite polarity of elegy, complaint, lament, and *planctus*. The body electric is sung and, in singing, it is electrified. Whitman's odic object and instrument is played, as it is in Pindar's exemplary use of the form, in which body literally vibrates as it dances, is danced. Celebration attempts to repair what lurks at the back of it. It is an affirmation of life, of triumph in and through life, because death exists. This emotional complex or ambivalence, if you will, finds an apt, if not a full expression in the too-sentimental term "bittersweet," a mood which lingers in lyric as the emotional residue of the rift, as undertow. It is the paradoxical affective stance that sees death in beauty, the eternal in the ephemeral, and suffering in desire that prompts Plato to utter "pleasure and pain will be enthroned in your city" (*Republic* 10.607A), one of his most potent rhetorical warnings.

The paradox of co-extensive currents of lament and consolation is distilled in the centrifugal Greek work *pharmakos*, a term that is commonly applied to poetry. *Pharmakos* means at once poison (a cause for suffering and a source of lament) and remedy (a source of relief and a prompt to celebration). In classical poetry, *pharmakon* is used to denote a "'drug' that can both alleviate and cause the pain of love" (Segal 11).¹³ Derrida famously exploits this nexus of reference in his deconstruction of the *Phaedrus*

in "Plato's Pharmacy." Derrida wishes to reclaim writing from its abject status within Socratic thought (and thereby overturn the foundation of Western philosophy) by interrogating the forms of *pharmakos* that permeate the dialogue in spirit or in fact. In exposing the "structural necessity" underlying the concept's semantic range (71, 80), he lays bare the set of assumptions that undergird the Platonic marginalization of the poet.

Socrates first uses the word *pharmakon* in the dialogue (translated in context as "poison, drug or allurements") to refer to the concealed speech Phaedrus has brought with him on their walk, what the urban denizen Socrates accuses Phaedrus of using to lure him out of the sweltering city. "Operating through seduction, the *pharmakon* makes one stray from one's general, natural, habitual paths and laws" (70). The word resurfaces when Socrates retells the myth of Theuth to demonstrate that mythos and writing inspire *hypomnesis*, i.e., "merely repeating without knowing" and not *anamnesis*, the living memory that reveals knowledge, the natural destination of the soul. *Hypomnesis* can only remind one of what has already been remembered and is thus a semblance of *anamnesis* (134). Theuth invents writing and presents it to the god of gods, Thamus, calling it a *pharmakon*, a cure for defective memories (97). Thamus refuses to sanction Theuth's invention, declaring it to be a danger that will ultimately weaken memory, and a semblance that can lead only to delusory knowledge (105). Unlike the father of *logos*, the embodiment of reason in speech, the progenitor of writing is displaced by the text. The *pharmakon* substitutes breathless sign (the dead word) for the living voice (92). Writing is therefore "denounced as a desire for orphanhood and patricidal subversion" (77). As Nathaniel Mackey recognizes, poetry also registers and proceeds from the distress of the orphan, the place of displaced reference. In his reading of the Kaluli myth,

he reminds us that the orphan finds himself severed from the unity of which he was a member, the presence to which he innately refers (89).

What Theuth does, in effect, is to induce *différance*. Although his inventions include the world's many languages, he rarely originates language (88). "[Theuth] can become the god of the creative word only by metonymic substitution, by historical displacement, and sometimes by violent subversion" (89). In fact, he frequently involves himself in conspiracies to usurp kingships (89). The son (writing) who replaces the father then embodies the Derridean notions of substitution and trace. Writing, the irrepressible dissemination of meaning, agent of *différance* and death, then becomes a *pharmakos* or scapegoat. Derrida's unraveling of the *Phaedrus* culminates with the story of civil ritual in which a deformed citizen, deemed impure by his community, is led out of the city to a brutal death by flogging in order to rid it of plague and pestilence. Homogeneity is restored to the polity through the removal of difference (131-133).

Writing and poetry are linked syllogistically. In the *Republic*, Plato affiliates poetry and painting; Socrates equates painting and writing in the *Phaedrus* (275d). One can deduce that poetry and writing are allied as marginal, absented media. But while each is a third-level representation, it would be no revelation to state that in poetry the play of *différance* is extreme. But the dynamic of presence/absence is not simply textual: in lyric it is first engaged at an emotional level. Emotion itself is a "moving out" of stasis by virtue of its ability to penetrate. It thus induces ontological difference, altering being not in the play of concept/non-concept, not as concept, but by altering mood in the Heideggerean sense, that is, being defined as mood. One is moved out of oneself: metamorphosis is the sign of *différance*. This notion of ontological shift will be recast

within critical thought in the twentieth century when poetic being evanesces into voice, whose medium is also air.

Lyric emotion is thus involved in the referential web of the term *pharmakos*; each embodies the oppositions of curative and inducer of pain. To partake of lyric, then, presumes an immeasurable trust in the lyricist, the trust one must accord any purveyor of pharmaceuticals. It demands the assumption of risk. The chance that the infiltrating agent will co-opt, that one will fall victim to the Pied Piper, is ever-present, but particularly so when poetry is performed. Charles Segal notes that in portrayals of Orpheus in classical art, his listeners appear to be enraptured. "This compulsive, incantatory power of oral song, the rhythmic swaying that it produces in its human or nonhuman audience, the animal magnetism with which it holds its hearers spellbound all find mythical embodiment in Orpheus" (15). The myth of Orpheus demonstrates that when lyric piques desire but defers its quelling, it becomes dangerous. The intensity of Orpheus's grief prompts the benign but fatal act of spurning the overtures of the Thracian women to found the tradition of sleeping with boys. Having fallen under Orpheus's spell, the frenzied Maenads retaliate for their unrequited lust. The first spear they hurl is aimed at the poet's mouth in order to silence him. But the spear, enchanted by his song, falls prematurely to the ground. Orpheus's voice is drowned out only once the women's cacophonous cries overwhelm his melodies and break his spell. The poet and his entourage are violently torn apart at the hands of the Maenad mothers. Their first victims are the birds. Like the burning of the Kaluli dancer, Orpheus's murder is not only an act of retribution, it is a subdual, a cry of "enough" that reclaims self-guidance for the profoundly affected or infected.

The primary vehicle of transportation of *poesis* into the inner sanctum of being is that other *pharmakos*, *mousike*. If the lyric genre truly originated in dance and percussive sound, musicality must be the earliest and most long-lived of lyric features. With the dominance of the printed page, musical accompaniment was abstracted and diluted, and the argument that lyric's musicality was rendered either insignificant or non-existent has been made again and again. It is a fact that we are distanced from its human source, the presence of the original performative scenario that writing (privileged rather than marginalized in modern poetry) has usurped. But it is possible, nevertheless, to recognize a commonality of purpose between literal musical accompaniment and its residual forms of assonance, echo, rhythm, rhyme, and refrain. Their shared end is not only mnemonic-- it is to hint at relation. Lyric poetry is not necessarily recited to full-fledged melodic accompaniment (as in pure song); it is sometimes attended solely by rhythm. The footfalls of the Kaluli dancer or the strumming of the Anglo-Saxon *skop's* harp to the stressed syllables of Old English verse are literal instantiations of the percussive stress afforded by verbal devices such as alliteration or rhyme, which, like external rhythms and melodic repetition, serve to suggest significance by marking similarity and difference. They are signposts indicating a centripetal direction. The musical form of lyric is, like birdsong, self-contained yet strongly evocative, even to the uninitiated; it is capable of estranging all the while it remains vaguely familiar. It imparts the sense that it encodes a meaningful, semantic order that one has not yet mastered, but still might. In birdsong, formal coherence exists as promise, as potential. As music resists semantic reduction, it becomes a signal that new meaning must be sought and an intuitive guide to usher one along toward it. It hints at intimate relation; pattern is felt, but its significance is held in

suspense. In presuming to reveal enough to entice, yet withhold enough to intrigue, music is an exemplary seductive art. Its embodiment sets poetry apart from other forms of writing, which are not as deeply invested in the abstract patterns of sound. Jonathan Culler, following Wallace Stevens, describes the lyric's bent toward opacity as a "resistance of patterns and forms whose semantic relevance is not immediately obvious" (179).¹⁴ Feld repeatedly emphasizes that Kaluli bird-inspired poetry reaches an artistic pinnacle in maintaining a tension between the opposing motions of obfuscation and clarification (139). Like Janus, the abstract patterning given by the lyric's rich sonic aspects gestures in two directions: toward coherence and away from it as fresh possibility intrudes on the almost inexhaustible potential for pattern-making. Opacity, or what Stevens called "surface seeming" is a second feature where lyric begins to differentiate in degree from other poetic forms. The feature Derrida would locate within the nature of language (as he notes, "bewitchment is always the effect of representation" (140), that is, of partially obscuring essence, is here ascribed to the goad of experience lived outside the parameters of stable signification. Obscurity, the pre-conceptual, the pre-human, is the Orphic; it is a poetry that reaches back into time. The language of another species represents an extreme form of *différance* in both senses: difference and the deferral of the satisfaction of meaning.

This, then, is finally the significance of Philomela's weaving: her message inhabits decorative pattern: the pattern, the abstractly harmonious, *is* the message telling that diremption has occurred. Her *j'accuse*, like the oratorio voiced by the Kaluli boy, makes the case for the particular crime by virtue of its tangible coherence. To put it another way, the musical, because it points toward new order, is a palpable sign that an

old order has been abandoned, that social upheaval has come to pass. This precise complex of betrayal, lament, accusation, message, and pattern as guide to freedom coheres in the singing of spirituals by African American slaves to relay plans of escape. The trope of parental rejection and severed reference common to the myths is reiterated in the predicament of the exile (a double predicament for the escaped African American slave), a figure who no longer refers unequivocally. Mackey reminds us that the condition of compromised referentiality is the condition of music. He amplifies this statement in noting that there is an order of experience that may be expressed or evoked, but not referenced:

. . . music bears witness to what's left out of our concept of reality, or, if not exactly what, to the fact that something *is* left out. The world, music reminds us, inhabits while extending beyond what meets the eye, resides in but rises above what's apprehensible to the senses. (Mackey 88)

Musicality is two-faced in another sense: it looks back toward the social and forward toward a new life. What is missing from our concept of reality is that body of experience, as yet unbroached, that the exile sings. What is transcended, then, through compelled submersion into the foreign is the ordinary. The exile travels somewhere never traveled. Thrust into a state of bewilderment before the strange, he is forced to live a life that is creaturely different. Like the song of the canopy birds of Papua, New Guinea, his song serves to orient. Mackey continues:

This coinherence of immanence and transcendence the Kaluli attribute to and symbolize through birds, which for them are both the spirits of the dead and the

major source of the everyday sounds they listen to as indicators of time, location and distance in their physical environment. (88)

In poetry, one takes note of temporal and spatial lapses, of the difference between recurrences in order to relate aspects of experience. In its indication of new relation, of relative location, the poem is the precursor of a map.

Orientation becomes an exigency in the no-man's land between municipal walls where language's referential range does not extend. The removal from the familiar (the familial) not only opens up the possibility for original meaning, it forces it. There is an imperfect correspondence between the native language the poet has at his disposal and the novel environment he encounters, so that his language must be tortured to begin to account for the strangeness of the experience the exile motivates. The full extent of language's plasticity and versatility must be called into service. There is a sense in which poetry is, then, quintessentially mediate, and not only because it is a linguistic medium for thought and feeling. The poetic, the lyrical, mediates old language and new environment, old self and new environment, new self and old society, old language and new language, new environment and new self, new language and new self. It is a primary fact for the lyricist that by default he speaks the language of the tribe, is born into the social institution of a language. A secondary fact is that that language must undergo revision in the face of the fresh scenario the singer must brave. There is a given a mismatch between the words of the tribe and the categorical needs of experience beyond the tribe. It is precisely because conceptual categories must be altered, denotative ranges shifted and connotative fields enlarged, to name a few of the consequences of lyric use, that lyric language is reified and becomes opaque. The objectivity of the word in poetry

is a consequence of the multiple pathways it must mediate, of its location at a busy crossroads. If language cannot refer unequivocally, as was philosophy's dream, it especially cannot in light of the use to which lyric puts it. The opacity of lyric language is generated significantly within its music, for through its architectonics a formal awareness, emergent in the face of the strange, begins the work of forging new meaning. The reason *les mots de la tribu* must be given *un plus pur sens*, as Mallarmé urged, is not to make poetry novel, but because lyric poetry, by default, contends with the novel. Music, the symbolic and actual condition from which lyric arises and to which it inevitably hearkens back, is the second generic consequence of exile.

The irreconcilable breach between Platonic forms and the poem is based in the necessity that the latter engage in its namesake "making" (*poesis*). It is constitutive rather than revelatory in order to come to terms with and to tame its new milieu. Platonism is perforce a foil to creativity as all of its central virtues--truth, beauty and goodness--are pre-existent. Their stabilization acts as a social preservative and in so doing, inevitably fixes a basis for the determination of privilege. Societies cannot contend with moment-to-moment newness *en masse*. It is up to the individual thinker to bend, to integrate and to reconstitute. This is the work that is usually ascribed to genius.¹⁵ In a sense, the romantic elevation of the poet that is foreshadowed by Sidney has a qualified merit, for at least with regard to the creation, the creator stands apart. This venturing before the ordinary recurs in the idea of the *avant garde*, another metaphor in which a lone figure precedes his fellows in order to survey a hostile unknown. The privileged status of the poet will come to be viewed from a more egalitarian standpoint by the latter half of the twentieth century when it is realized implicitly that the cognitive

abilities at play in the creation of the poem are potentially available to all. It is because poetry is democratic, if you will, that it is seen to threaten an existing order, endangering an established regime by virtue of its ability to infiltrate the solidity of its concepts and weaken them with its unauthorized particularity.

When the Platonic recourse of exile is examined within the myths of Philomela and the Kaluli boy, one arrives at a temporal impasse, a causal conundrum in which the poetic is both provocation to exile and its high consequence. *Logos* depends on civil order, which in turn depends upon the rooting out of the disorderly creative principle, which is born only by virtue of its extirpation. There is a complex etiology at play in the birth of song that speaks to the irresolvable priority of the individual and its society. The poetic warrants the measure of exile only for Plato--in the myths, it is a response to the breach itself. These incompatible action/reaction sequences may be explained away as a variance in perspective. Yet, the marginality of the poetic enterprise is a condition transcending the exigencies of Platonic philosophy. It has as its basis the perceived radical gap between the philosophical, or scientific, and the poetic. Havelock's observation that Plato is rejecting a pre-analytic epistemology, one in which knower and known become fused in the act of knowing is a key piece of the puzzle. By removing the source of a knowledge inflected to penetrate the knower and placing it in a remote beyond, Socratic thought makes analysis, the method of its own justification, possible. One is thereby enabled to perform the logical manipulations that would otherwise lead to the dissolution of the self as the site of knowledge: the process of breaking down concepts would entail the disintegration of their host. The ironic outcome of Plato's cure

is that analysis is thwarted by the analytic and analytically justified action of removing the individual from social context: the poetic seeps back in *because* it is without.

Derrida resolves this problem at the site of memory, "that which is always springing up from outside" (102).

The outside is already *within* the work of memory. The evil slips in within the relation of memory to itself, in the general organization of the mnesic activity. Memory is finite by nature. Plato recognizes this in attributing life to it. As in the case of all living organisms, he assigns it, as we have seen, certain limits. A limitless memory would in any event be not memory but infinite self-presence. Memory always therefore already needs signs in order to recall the non-present, with which it is necessarily in relation. The movement of dialectics bears witness to this. Memory is thus contaminated by its first substitute: *hypomnesis*. But what Plato *dreams* of is a memory with no sign. That is, with no supplement.

(109)

He goes on:

Though writing is external to internal memory, it affects memory and hypnotizes it in its very inside. That is the effect of this *pharmakon*. If it were purely external, writing would leave the intimacy or integrity of psychic memory untouched. . . yet without discovering *other* relations between the intimate and the alien, Plato maintains *both* the exteriority of writing *and* its power of maleficent penetration, its ability to affect or infect what lies deepest inside.

(110)

That which must be ousted is by definition within. Though Derrida is in a deep sense a philosopher of the poetic, the present argument takes issue with his philosophy at the point where the physicality of poetic experience prevents its resolution in textuality.

One can account for the causal paradox by resorting to the dynamic involved in Hegel's monistic idealism. In setting out his highly influential formulation of the relationship of the individual to the state or any larger social unit, Hegel writes:

. . . personal individuality and its particular interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right (as they do in the sphere of the family and civil society) but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal and, for another thing, they know and will the universal; they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit. The result is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the co-operation of particular knowing and willing; and individuals likewise do not live as private persons for their own ends alone, but in the very act of willing these they will the universal in the light of the universal, and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end. (*Right* 160-61)

Society is a category that is conflated with the universal at the same time each of its manifestations is a phase of the universal. It is not only, as is obvious, composed of individuals; rather, it moves toward its own self-realization with and through the dynamic of individual self-realization, for it is only through human consciousness that the Absolute Hegel posits, the spiritual "inner depth of the world," may be realized (*Phenomenology* 81). Conversely, society pervades, courses through the individual

whose consciousness develops because he thinks on behalf of, *is* the Absolute thinking. It is not possible, then, to distinguish between individual thought processes and the "fulfillment of the whole" (*Science* 174). Wholeness is effected through Hegel's dialectic, a totalizing dynamic through which history preserves the ideas or stages that it has subsumed as part of its development. The individual is expressed through its sublation (*Aufhebung*), Hegel's term for the contradictory motions of overcoming and preserving, into the whole (*Phenomenology* 62).

When the medium of interaction between the individual and society is considered as language, the use to which language is put individually is sublated into the totality of the linguistic system so that the individual speaks the universal. Adorno builds on Hegel to make just this case for a lyric poetry. Lyric substance, according to Adorno, becomes objective, that is, of the spirit of society, "by virtue of its own subjectivity":

For language is something double. Through its configurations it assimilates itself completely into subjective impulses; one would almost think it had produced them. But at the same time language remains the medium of concepts, remains that which establishes an inescapable relationship to the universal and to society. Hence the highest lyric works are those in which the subject, with no remaining trace of mere matter, sounds forth in language until language itself acquires a voice. The unself-consciousness of the subject submitting itself to language as to something objective, and the immediacy and spontaneity of that subject's expression are one and the same: thus language mediates lyric poetry and society in their innermost core. (43)

For lyric to possess universality,

. . . the infinite within the poem's finitude . . . the historical relationship of the subject to objectivity, of the individual to society, must have found its precipitate in the medium of a subject spirit thrown back upon itself. The less the work thematizes the relationship of 'I' and society, the more spontaneously it crystallizes of its own accord in the poem, the more complete this process of precipitation will be. (42)

Art, for Hegel, is a phase of developing consciousness that expresses the absolute as the synthesis of spiritual and objective forces (*Aesthetics*). The distinction Adorno doesn't draw in this passage is that between the conceptual content of language, which is convention-dependent and socially-informed, and the form the lyric takes, which is itself infused with the very rupture that creates the individual.¹⁶

Mythic time is cyclical and lineal, both generically and within each of the specific myths treated here.¹⁷ Each myth is able then, to posit two points of poetic origination, one unprecedented in fact or quality and a second signifying the continuity of the first: Orpheus's song in Hades precedes the supernatural dimension his minstrelsy takes on; Philomela's weaving is reiterated through self-regenerating song (she is a representative of a species, *the*, and not a particular nightingale); the Kaluli boy's farewell lament recurs in song resurrected within the structures of the séance. As each story's narrative unfolds into the eternal, the song recapitulated is transformed, what is overcome is preserved. The social breach is absorbed into subsequent song where it can be re-enacted.

Hegelianism would appear to render the traumatic nature of the break from society inconceivable, impossible even. The rupture itself should effectively nullify the dynamic of sublation. It is true that the extrication cannot occur by means of a clean

break, a simple loosening of a warp and weft into constitute threads. Hegel defines a dynamic fundamental to the interplay of individual and society. Poetic expression as mythologized preserves their progressive interaction, but it does this only upon the simultaneous suspension of the Hegelian dialectic. One could argue that Hegel's historical sensibility would allow for the absorption and overcoming of Plato's exile as a phase or "moment." Society would continue to effectuate according to the dynamic: it would remain a whole society retaining the creative impact of the individual, including its death and its song. But then it must paradoxically preserve the disintegration. It would come to be internally split at the same time it is whole. Hegelianism cannot fully account for organismic death, the first suggestion and ultimate incidence of the analytic. From the individual's perspective, it is impossible to undergo the pain of social break-up without the awareness of hunger and pain and the memory of their absence. Pain is an indicator of loss not only because it signifies it, but because the experience of pain defines the boundaries of the individual; the most engrossing of afflictions, it both delimits the individual and swells it to the perimeter of the whole world.

As Feuerbach's challenge to Hegel first suggested, Hegel's absolutism, and particularly his Christian rendition of it, is in fact incidental to the dynamic of totality. In his *Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach replaces Hegel's Absolute Spirit with a secular interpretation of the human, one that is both natural and concretely social in its basis. Troubled by the irreconcilability of the idea and nature in Hegel, he re-establishes nature as primary and immanent rather than transcendent ("Critique"). He imagines an existential version of the system in which "The spirit follows upon the senses, not the senses upon the spirit; the spirit is the end and not the beginning of things" (67).

Sensation is indispensably primary because it brings objects into consciousness and thus constitutes being. What he called "species-being" is recognizable by its conscious objects. The object of consciousness is the ego objectified; being is therefore an objectified being. He accepts Hegel's concept of the "identity of identity and non-identity" and extends it to recover the spatial dimension Hegel had altogether neglected. "[Hegel's] system knows only *subordination* and *succession*; co-ordination and coexistence are unknown to it . . . Naturally, the flower cancels the leaf, but would the flower be perfect if the flower only sat brightly on a leafless stem?" ("Critique" 54). In spatializing and naturalizing Hegel's dynamic, Feuerbach's question initiates a germinal line of thinking and foreruns the modern ecological model which had only to await the displacement of consciousness--which may but does not necessarily mediate environmental wholeness--from its central position.

Within Feuerbach's theory, objects (including other people) constitute and define subjects as objects; object-being (social being) is maintained through thought. Within an ecological framework, identity exists on the physical (non-conscious) plain that replaces Absolute Spirit. All physicality is preserved but overcome within the whole. (Matter cannot be created or destroyed.) The appearance of non-identity arises only with consciousness. Within lyric, there exists a further non-identity is as between sensory presence and sensory absence, that is of the object. The sensorial absence generated by lyric severance *is* present to memory. Being and society are dead to the senses yet alive to the memory, and each still constitutes the other as memory, in the full sense of what has been learned and not only incidents recalled. This notion of memory is Derrida's trace, the father memorialized in the being of the son who has replaced him. When he

arrives at memory as the ultimate site of vulnerability to the *pharmakos*, he both extends Plato's significance and transcends it. Memory is ultimately the sign of absence. The lyric schism, born out of consciousness and exacerbated by memory, inevitably widens to become a schism between self and other. Thus, Adorno's urge to minimize the self-conscious dimension of the form is a reaction to the truth that self-awareness cannot but render society other. His motivation is not so far removed from Plato's.

As lyric is a form exposed inordinately to the pain of loss, it demands of its practitioners an unflinching attention to the consciousness it articulates. Notorious for her reclusive habits, Emily Dickinson is a most appropriate figure to write of social dislocation: her being was one that was by nature exilic. By deploying a version of the trope that conceives of social loss as death, she configures the isolation in mind in an altogether original way. What Dickinson does again and again is to seize upon the notion of the transition to afterlife and allow it to percolate into sensory presence. Exemplary of this class of poems is [I felt a Funeral, in my Brain] (280), presenting the ironic situation in which the mourners at a funeral are the efficient cause of pain for the deceased and not vice versa. A fixation with animate death in particular runs through her corpus, but death is here portrayed as a profoundly painful experience for her oxymoronic invention, the dead speaker. The poem opens with the tactile registration of the footsteps of the mourners in attendance at her own funeral.

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
 And Mourners to and fro
 Kept treading--treading--till it seemed

That Sense was breaking through— (128)

Mourners comprise an immediate social network, a retinue for whom the consequences of a death reverberate. In a reversal of the cause and effect sequence, they here embody and enact a social presence in death that intrudes rhythmically in this poem, *re-percussing* within the brain of the deceased until "Sense"—or the illusion of sense--arises. As “sense” can mean either sensation or the ordered meaning the poem qualifies as emergent, the word imparts an ambiguity that is both eloquent and apt. Its two facets are linked causally, for sensation is successful once it yields itself fully to meaning, that is, at the point it is perceived. Paradoxically, the insistent, pounding footfalls of the bereaved inflict a cosmic headache of sorts, which then renders the mind of the speaker insensate, which condition would seem to preclude meaning from congealing:

And when they all were seated,
 A Service, like a Drum--
 Kept beating--beating--till I thought
 My Mind was going numb— (128)

In the percussive beating, explicitly felt but only implicitly heard, one senses the heart pulsate as the rhythms of the Service--its ritual repetitions—are embodied. The pain of death inflicted posthumously by a society of familiars reduces being to an ontology of sensory awareness whose waxing and waning is the sole content of consciousness.

And then I heard them lift a Box
 And creak across my Soul
 With those same Boots of Lead, again,
 Then Space--began to toll,

And all the Heavens were a Bell,
 And Being, but an Ear,
 And I, and Silence, some strange Race
 Wrecked, solitary, here— (128-29)

As the impact of the remorseless tramping becomes more immediate and more intimate, a gesture of lyric recuperation is forced with the tolling not of the voice of the poet, but of “Space” as instrument, of Heaven as bell. With this development, other musical elements, for example tonality, melody, and pitch, are superadded to the aboriginal rhythm. Although Dickinson’s paratactic repetitions tend to disorder the linear progression of the poem as much as they cobble together a sequence, the progression from pain to the aural ontology of the poet is duly rendered. Being is embodied, yet it is distilled to the organ of audition. Death is, for starters, Dickinson’s version of a regressive ontological shift into a purely perceptual form of existence where Being as ear implies its counterpart voice, while the “I”—socially constructed identity—is shipwrecked with silence. The play on “audition” as a rite of initiation which, if performed successfully, leads to the enactment of a more fully-realized imaginative product is significant. In qualifying sense as apparent, as seeming, the poem portrays the passage from actual to imagined sense perception by portraying the shutting down of actual sensation as the entry into death and thereby performing a ritual that is the quintessence of lyric incipience.

It is only by this, the poem's third stanza, that it becomes clear that the poem's words issue from beyond life in society. With this divulgence, it is possible to project a darkness back onto the poem's beginning and thereby intensify both the internal quality

of its rhythms and the sense that being is out of place. As hearing supersedes the initial sensory modality of feeling, which evokes both pain and emotion, as being swells to become a single organ of hearing, location becomes indistinguishable because its discernment is dependent on the duality and relative location of the *ears*. The sense of space rendered is therefore inscrutably vague: it is the ubiquitous, boundless beyond of what is perhaps a resonant Christian heaven. As a "strange Race" the "I" and "silence" represent the tribe of those shipwrecked, exiled, perhaps but in any event expurgated from the being that can perceive the unearthly tones of heaven's music: the being of the poet.

Relief from pain is typically sought through its expression—and Dickinson's death poems accomplish that—but in the case of Poem 280, animal regression has gone so far as to flirt with the silence of irrationality, what defies articulation because it is alogical (*alogos*).

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
 And I dropped down, and down--
 And hit a World, at every plunge,
 And Finished knowing--then— (129)

Given the recovery of the sensory imagination, reason's floor, reason as foundation, collapses and with it, the "I." The final displacement in the poem is the leap from reason and the conceptual structures it governs. Reason's "stories," its systemic wholes or narratives in the broad sense are smashed through one by one. In the poem's last line, Dickinson's habit of capitalizing nouns, which has the effect of rendering them abstract, is broken by the capitalized verb "Finished," adding stasis to this expression of

finality while the participial form "knowing" is left in lower case, a gesture that enervates past knowing and points to a new form that will follow the end. The extended motion of the dropping of the "I," whose medium is air, lends the further sense of that it is out of its element.

Sharon Cameron points to the unemotional tone of this poem to interpret it as an act of repression culminating in a symbolic lapse of consciousness (96). According to Cameron, the pain from which the speaker is disassociated is not expressible because it is repressed. Rather than begin the lyric journey toward new meaning by trusting in the vehicle of song to oust, or utter, pain and to thereby make new meaning from it, it makes that pain inaccessible, thereby silencing the poem. Dickinson represents intimate violation with mourners walking across the Soul in "Boots of Lead." Villon renders the trauma of imminent death in a less extreme manner in his poem *Le Lais*, a "legacy" or last will and testament executed as a reaction to his disgrace at the behest his own cruel beauty. Prior to his self-inflicted exile, Villon bequeaths his earthly possessions to an array of acquaintances hailing from every social station, leaving material reminders of himself behind. To the beloved, "*Je lesse mon cueur enchasse,/ Palle, piteux, mort et transy*" (22). His enchased heart is contained and at a distance from, yet on display within sight of her beauty. Though Villon also enacts his death, there is no doubt, in his case, that the heart will continue beating, that it will flutter up to compose the remainder of its opus. Dickinson's poem is willing to face the risk that the ultimate silencing of the social context from which one is disassociated entails the death of oneself as well. If social pain is superseded utterly, song cannot continue. The goal of lyric may be its own demise: the demise of the linguistic in the purely sensory. The irony, of course, is that

her poem manages to express itself and to realize the lyric entrée into naive perception before executing its silent glide “downward to darkness on extended wing” (*CP* 70).

From the point of view of society, an ontic shift occurs whenever a member is deprived of the self-will that shapes the society. The societal value that excludes, for better or for worse, an element through which it is realized commits the ultimate version of betrayal, the decisive breaking of faith. The divestiture is effectively an amputation, the effects of which will reverberate within the body politic. One might argue that the extrication is so radically implausible that the fiction of respectation is necessary to make "dismemberment" bearable and even conceivable. Regardless, society continues to feel the presence of what behaves as if it were a phantom limb. The pain of the individual member, particularly its expression, must reverberate within the higher unity, and the effects of song felt and re-absorbed into the society. As the exile's song is never free of its spawning social context, despite the fiction of physical removal, as society resonates within the song, the song resonates within the acoustic range of society. It is therefore always *recallable*. Dickinson knows this, as do the Kaluli--it is the purpose of their séance ceremony. Because the lyric repercusses through society, *is* society's song (the song of its own mourning), it has to be ousted, insuring that the cycle continues, that wound is unalleviated in perpetuity. The song ousted is always already in society and the need for exile goes on. The fallacy of banishment as *fait accompli* is revealed in the dynamic of holism formulated by Hegel that structures our understanding of the ecological.

The tension of irresolvable priority is then always extant within lyric poetry. Cameron claims that the submersion at the heart of Dickinson's poem “lacks an etiology”

(97). In an ultimate sense, and without intending to court the tautological, the etiology is the funeral itself, is the removal from a grounded social realm that is simultaneously the entry into the imagination. Dickinson's poem maintains the fundamental tension between integration and disintegration at several levels: between tenuous, aborning sensation and the conceptual acuity that informs the poem; between externally generated rhythms and their internal impact; and between conceptual certainty conferred by her fluid syntax and conceptual parsing effected by her interruptive punctuation and paratactic constructions. The most profound tension generated within this poem is that between silence and the voice's defiance of silence: it drives a motion in the direction of dissolution and a simultaneous countermotion toward reformation.

In his attempt to discover lyric's essential social nature, Adorno, like so many others, finds that the dynamic describing the poet's disengagement, his individuation, and ". . . even the solitariness of lyrical language itself is prescribed by an individualistic and ultimately atomistic society . . ." (38). Social embeddedness mandates a stance of rebellion as part of individuation, he presumes, only in societies that harbor a concept of the individual (42-3). This classification of lyric within modernity, the argument that it is the poetry of a finite historical phase with occasional anomalous precursors (Adorno cites Sappho as an example) bears refuting. In spite of recent conceptions of the text as *sui generis*, individuals compose individually. Collaboration in any form is but the additive sum of the output of single minds, and a notion of individuality as a political value need not obtain for the individual to express himself or for a form of expression that is individual, that is rooted in sensory perception, to exist within a given society. The trope of exile is primary for lyric because the availability of the action of compelled removal

which permeates lyric in literal and derivative forms is proof that a concept of an individual exists, a concept of solitariness exists, in societies that are not in the least bourgeois or atomistic by modern standards. Exile is an act by means of which individuality is implicitly recognized. The stumbling block to generic cohesion, the division of musicality and subjectivity into quasi-centralized, but irreconcilable generic criteria may be averted with this recognition. What is here formulated as an exile, an act in which the one is wrenched out of social context and delivered into an alien environment, is a motif subsumed by the nature of modern subjectivity. With time, the dominance of the trope softens; it is re-cast as the notion of the individual rises and as the situation of exile becomes less dire. The emotional pitch of the cry of the poetic occasion will modulate. Social death will recede into the background; it will be assumed and figured, but the idea of a bar to the social never fully disappears, nor does poetry's role as anti-philosophy. What the recurring theme of exile does for pre-modern societies is to force a state of affairs in which an isolated individual develops self-reliance by virtue of the physical necessity of making a new personal plan. The idea of exile presumes a psychic distance from the group that permits fresh perspective, originality, and the attention to thought as the thought of oneself. It allows lyric to exist beyond "an individualized and atomistic society."¹⁸

Before the modern descendants of the exile are visited, it may be useful to look at a dramatization of exile within a poem that has a curious historical basis. Anglo-Saxon lyrics often feel like stories with missing pieces or arcane tales whose full understanding eludes us by virtue of our cultural distance from them. It is possible that their obscurity might not be altogether resolvable by the recovery of inferred "whole texts" or the

recreation of a fuller cultural context: it may instead be a feature of their prototypical lyricality. In the Old English poem “The Seafarer”—which is, as far as is known, intact—the speaker undertakes what is widely interpreted to be a voluntary exile that courts the perils of forced exile. The poem portrays a self-imposed banishment onto an inhospitable winter sea. Its end is divine communion to be accomplished through the rejection of earthly comforts, but its undertaking is lamented nevertheless. The Seafarer is inarguably beyond social support. He is *winemaegum bidroren* (deprived of kin), without *medodrince* (mead - nurturance), and *earmcearig* (wretchedly sorrowful). In the poem's first section, the Seafarer reveals that, like the Kaluli boy, he is estranged from the physical comforts of food, from the warmth of the mead-hall (the social womb), from the material sustenance provided by the secular lord, and from simple companionship. The hall, whose absence hovers over the poem, has been read as the metaphorical embodiment of the social order that constructed it (Irving 161); it is the place where benefits are meted out and alliances cemented through the authority which ceremony both invests and displays. That the Seafarer considers himself to be a stranger is implicit in lines 36-38:

mona modes lust mæla gehwylce
fer to feran, paet ic feor heonan
elpeodigra eard gesece. (332)

[And constantly the heartfelt wishes urge
the Spirit to venture, that I should go forth
To see the lands of strangers far away (10).]

As evidenced by a substantial body of pilgrimage literature, the condition of the stranger came to symbolize the transient condition of the earthbound within Anglo-Saxon society once Christian thinking had influenced the secular literature. When read as self-inflicted, the exile portrayed in the poem is deemed to be a means of transcending what is mutable and earthly by its rejection in this realm. The Christian trope of the stranger or pilgrim on earth, which structures this poem as it does “The Wanderer,” has been traced to the doctrines of St. Paul and St. Augustine. Its ultimate source is perhaps found in the contrast between the erring builder of cities, Cain, who is bound to land and to wealth, and the nomadic, ultimately righteous Abel (Bradley 329-30). This notion of pilgrimage is curiously distinct from the later form it will assume in the hands of Chaucer and in general usage. Rather than sojourning to a site endowed with communal meaning, and therefore a place of congregation, a Canterbury or a Lourdes, the speaker intentionally travels away from all social contact.

“The Seafarer” is an elegiac poem, a central form within the genre. Stanley Greenfield describes elegy as a “contrasting pattern of loss and consolation,” (“Old” 143) and Lois Bragg extends his statement to apply it to most Old English poetry (20). Rosemary Woolf has made an argument that this poem may also be classed with “The Wanderer” in the genre *planctus*, a medieval form of complaint which responds to intense loss of any kind thereby broadening the elegy's traditional affiliation with death. “The Seafarer's” well-documented theme of mutability responds to the perception that loss is inflicted by the passage of earthly time. Its format exemplifies the *ubi sunt* motif that will re-emerge in the Middle Ages. However such lines are drawn, what is meaningful here is that most forms of loss imply social deprivation: death renders it, the loss of

youth sees societal separation as impending, the loss of love construes society on a small scale, and the loss of position involves a social dislocation.

The lament for the loss of communal sustenance in “The Seafarer” is voiced once again by birds. The mournful tenor of the cuckoo bespeaks the distress of alienation in a kind of presaging lament for summer's imminent close. The songs of the other birds populating the poem, the swan, the gannet, the curlew, and the sea-mew, take on another function, that of substitute sources for the joys of conviviality, entertainment, human laughter, and mead-drinking. The Seafarer finds solace in his fellows in exile, in their songs that reflect his own expression of lament. This poem pushes on where Dickinson's ostensibly leaves off. Both acknowledge social absence and admit the pain of social loss. The Seafarer's utterance launches, rather than curtails the journey; his point of embarkation is the "then--".

The famous debate between Stanley Greenfield and John Pope concerning the number of speakers in “The Seafarer” came to center on the best interpretation of the word *sylf* (35b) once Pope retracted his two-speaker theory in favor of Greenfield's single speaker hypothesis. Pope refused Greenfield's translation of *sylf* as "of my own accord" in order to argue for the meaning "alone" to support his newly adopted theory of a solitary Seafarer. Greenfield's contention that *sylf* suggests "independent action" (as he points out, *ana* is the common Old English word meaning "alone" or "unaccompanied") buttresses the Christian content of the poem (“Sylf” 235). It has the effect, he argues, of underscoring the necessity that the individual perceive or recognize for himself the transitory state of earth and the unknowability of divine judgment. “. . . this is a voyage he must *by his own cognition* take to save his soul, to attain the heavenly joys (whether we

take the voyage to be literal, symbolic or allegorical)" (emphasis added). He points to the presence of words of perception or cognition that tend to be found in tandem with *sylf* (237-39). In the passage spanning lines 33b-35 of "The Seafarer," *ge ohtas*, "thought," is attributed to *sylf*:

*For thon cynssadh nu
heortan gethohtas thaet ic hean streamas,
sealtytha gelac sylf cunnige: (332)*

[And yet the heart's desires

Incite me now that I myself should go

On towering seas, among the salt waves' play; (10)]

The ambiguity of reference proves fruitful. Whether his solitary state takes literal form throughout the poem is ambiguous at best and not at issue. If the speaker is a sailor who has at one time drawn the night watch, as has been widely posited, there would be other souls aboard ship and presumably asleep. He would nevertheless be alone at the watch, and the poem is imbued with all of the symbolic significance such a post confers. Whether or not he engages in a dialogue, as Pope first suggested, the solitariness that is the poem's subject matter is not precluded. What is significant is that the comforts of society, those advantages living in its midst affords for survival, are attenuated and at a remove, and an alternative environment, one which is by default natural, is reclaimed. Absent the distraction of social converse, deprived of audience, the mind's perceptual isolation is foregrounded exacerbating the seminal rift. The lyric then reaches toward a full expression of the exilic mind's activity within the new environment it enters. In other

words, it manifests the mind's solitary performance, that which it must do "of its own accord," at its most solitary station.

The frequently referenced lines 58-64a:

*For thon nu min hyge hweorfedh ofer hretherlocan,
min modsefa mid mereflode
ofer hwæles ethel hweorfedh wide,
eorthhan sceatas, cymedh eft to me
gifre ond grædig, gielledh anfloga
hwetedh on wælweg hrether unwearnum
ofer homa gelagu. (334)*

[Even now my heart

Journeys beyond its confines, and my thoughts

Over the sea, across the whale's domain,

Travel afar the regions of the earth,

And then come back to me with greed and longing. (16)]

have been repeatedly interpreted as the equation of thought or soul with an *anfloga* (lone flyer). In other words, the mind of the Seafarer takes wing, ranges expansively over the sea terrain and comes to desire it. Expatiation is the bird's prerogative. The voyage undertaken by the mind is the unfettered navigation of a precipitous and unfamiliar new world. It is, so to speak, at sea where it must function independently (*sylf*) because it is alone (*sylf*).

It is in the transition from intramural to intermural otherness within the lyrical borderland of exile that poetry finds its cross-cultural generative trope. Later lyrics are

not always so explicit in their portrayal of loss, but if it is not the ostensible subject of the poem, loss on some level permeates it. It is possible to specify the nature of the loss as one that continues to be cast in societal terms, for it is only at that level that rupture can occur. Exile, symbolic or literal, pervades the history of lyric poetry. Portrayed, enacted, figured or assumed, it becomes in all events a master trope for the initiating rift to which the poem is indebted. Examples abound. Although they tend to break down categorically, it is common for poems to straddle categories. The brief taxonomy that follows is meant to be neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

Physical Exile. Of the Old English vernacular elegiac poems, the bulk of the period's surviving lyrics, fully half—"The Seafarer," "The Wanderer," "The Wife's Lament," and "Wulf and Eadwacer"--deal explicitly with physical exile. "The Wife's Lament" and "Wulf and Eadwacer" couple this with the form of disunion that will come to dominate many later lyrics, that of separated lovers. Literal exile is also the subject of many Old Irish poems. The lyrical moments in ancient epic poetry tend to be prompted by the protracted absence from home that is often a condition of war. One thinks of Hector parting from his family in Book 6 of *The Iliad*. Many Early American poets, such as Anne Bradstreet, were *de facto* expatriates, if not exiles. However, the American colonial experience tended to foster an exilic temperament, a stance beyond society through the combination of the value of self-reliance and the necessary confrontation with the wilderness. Emerson prized his solitude in Nature. Dickinson's Soul shut the door on its own society in choosing the society of the self.

Religious or Lapsarian Exile. The fall from Grace is the Christian version of the sentence to disunity, the removal from seamless unity and the consequent emergence of

self-awareness. The lyricity of Milton's subject in *Paradise Lost* is induced by the twin exiles that replay this motif: the first from heaven and the second from Eden. As intimated earlier, Satan is a prototypical lyric type. Lucifer is cast out of the angelic order and rebounds to form an order of his own. An interlude inhabited by lyrical possibility follows Satan's fall and his silent, stunned survey of Chaos (*PL* I.84-124). It is not a stretch to inscribe abandonment by God under the rubric of the social, given the Judeo-Christian conception of an anthropomorphic God who created man in his image. "The Seafarer" and "The Wanderer" take the distance from God as starting points. Herbert, Donne, and Blake produced exemplary poems of this type, as did Hopkins to name a few of the poets drawn to conventionally religious poetry. Divine exile is often experienced in concert with the deliberate renunciation of society. The lyric subsumes the virginal and the cloistered as eschewals of society which facilitate the aspiration toward divine communion. The impossibility of actual fulfillment during the term of earthly life functions as a natural, insurmountable barrier, mystical union notwithstanding. Arnold's "Dover Beach" falls into this category in entertaining the possibility of permanent abandonment. The very notion of faith assumes that the possibility of reunion will at times be doubted, and thus most religious poetry is to some degree a diluted form of the crisis of faith poem. Poems of praise and celebration (hymns, odes, encomia) anticipate the possibility of divine disinterest in their attempt to forestall it.

The Courtly Prototype: Exile and Romantic Love. Courtly love poetry, with its long, influential reach forward, distills society into a unit of three, a reduction which poses a lover and a beloved who are *pro forma* and institutionally separated. The

adulterous nature of the would-be alliances pined for in Provencal lyrics is a crucial detail. The figure of the knight errant, already peripheral to court life at the same time he is a sporadic member of it, is situated outside of legitimate society by virtue of the married status of the object of his affection and his anguish. The legality of marriage renders him an extra-social figure in relation to her society.¹⁹ The exile, perforce bereaved, is perhaps most commonly figured as one bereft of romantic love. Wooing is pre-social; it seeks intercourse of one sort or another. The conventions of this subgenre allow for the perpetuation of courtship and desire into an inconclusive state of affairs, creating a bar to the lover's society. They survive in diminished form: unrequited feeling, the prohibitions of families, and the sheer cruelty of mistresses are ostensible reasons for the separation that is implied by the very necessity of wooing. The *carpe diem* poem is lyrical because the day is never seized. Sappho's poems are perhaps the earliest pure incarnation of the lyric of unfulfilled love, and variations upon them abound. Rossetti places the Blessed Damozel in heaven while her lover mourns on earth. Donne represents love religiously; he and his lover distance themselves from the laity and thereby ordain their love. Stevens's *inamorata* is the unknowable earth itself.

Romanticism and Exile from Nature. The lake country romantics left London behind to rusticate as strangers among peasants. This literal exodus from society is undertaken with the simple, exaggerated anticipation of a child on an outing.

O welcome messenger, O welcome friend!
 A captive greets thee, coming from a house
 Of bondage, from yon city's walls set free,
 A prison where he hath been long immured.

Now I am free, enfranchised and at large, (*Prelude* 1805 I.5-9)

Homecoming is unabashedly celebrated, yet it does not repair the central separation the poetry negotiates but is rather a logical detail. One foregoes community to commune with nature in an attempt to repair the breach from the society of Nature that is incurred with age. Nature herself effects the disjunction as subjects age into awareness of their separateness. The originary moment within Wordsworth's poetry in particular, the source of his wistful lament, occurs at the point of exile from childhood, a period he explicitly characterizes as a natural society. The Boy of Winander's mimicry of owl calls evokes a response from the birds that evolves into a scene of gay camaraderie that is a naturalized version of an Orphic performance:

There was a boy--ye knew him well, ye cliffs
 And islands of Winander--many a time
 At evening, when the stars had just begun
 To move along the edges of the hills,
 Rising or settling, would he stand alone
 Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
 And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
 Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
 Uplifted, he as through an instrument
 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
 That they might answer him. And they would shout
 Across the wat'ry vale, and shout again,
 Response to his call, with quivering peals

And long hallows, and screams, and echoes loud,
 Redoubled and redoubled--concourse wild
 Of mirth and jocund din. (*Prelude* 1805 5.364-379)

Moore and Bishop's animal poems also portray the familiar creature from whom one is estranged. Childbirth and breastfeeding are activities in which nature and society blend most seamlessly. The society so-construed is fated to be disjoined. Sylvia Plath's poems "Nick and the Candlestick," "By Candlelight," and "Event" plumb this underexplored territory.

Exile in Mortality. This is the domain of the elegy. The dead or dying figure may be subject or object within the poem. Keats's poems pose both imminent and accomplished exile as his speakers isolate themselves to face premature death. Chidiok Tichborne's "On the Eve of His Execution" and Raleigh's "The Lie" each respond to a social betrayal. War poems comprise a substantial subdivision.

Exile as Alienation. "We have become accustomed to thinking of the modern period itself as spiritually orphaned and alienated, the age of anxiety and estrangement." (Said 173). As was perhaps first expressed in French *symboliste* poetry, societal fragmentation becomes an alienating force that is widely internalized. In a sense, the poetry of alienation is the most unadulterated type of lyric because it has shed its scaffolding of physical circumstance to imagine exile as a constant state of being. Yeats's "The Second Coming" attempts to systematize cultural disintegration. As their common theme of alienation attests, the American modernists, in particular, expatriated *en masse*.

Exile of the Colonized. The colonizing phase is a fertile juncture for lyric because the culture of the colonized is infiltrated by the culture of the colonizers and thereby

made strange. The fall of invaded civilizations is poignantly mourned and memorialized in the Arabic tradition of the “lament for lost cities.”

A rhetorical consequence of the result of the separation imposed by exile is the absencing of an audience from the dramatic situation of the poem or, at the very least, the minimizing of its importance. Northrup Frye pithily defined lyric as "an utterance that is overheard" implying that audience is unintended in the performance scenario. He defines genre in terms of the "radical of [its] presentation" (*Anatomy* 246-47) which for lyric is "the concealment of the poet's audience from the poet" (249). While it is true that the primary method of dissemination of early lyric poetry was oral and was directed at an audience, to argue that the bard's listeners were the intended recipients of the words of the speaker (the hearers rather than the overhearers of the poem) is to confuse the poem's external presentation with its internal dramatic situation. Poems addressed to a "you" reduce audience to one intended listener, but most read as soliloquies rather than communiqués, strictly speaking. Frye's definition fully accords with the placing by many theorists of the figures of apostrophe (the pretense of address to the unhearing, the inanimate, the absent or the dead) and its complementary term, prosopopoeia (the giving of face to the faceless) at the center of the genre (de Man “Voice” 61-62). The lyric's shyness before audience lends it a heightened, even overdeveloped sense of privacy, an idea bound etymologically to privation, specifically the privation of society. From the French *symboliste* movement onward, the lyric set out to rid itself of the symbolic ear of the beloved, and the Lucys, Amaranthas and Annabel Lees became patently superfluous. As the concept of a speaker yields to the notion of a phenomenized voice, the "ear" of the listener is consequently abstracted.

But there is a further, more unsettling consequence of exile that the lyric absorbs. There is an obsolete sense of the word in English which persisted into the late eighteenth century and is a form of the word "exility": "the condition of being insubstantial, thin, fine, or tenuous" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The lyric constructs a subjectivity which may be seen to be exilic in this sense, that is, tenuous in relationship to other textual manifestations of subjectivity. This assertion flatly contradicts the widely held notion attributed to romanticism that subjective presence is the defining characteristic of the genre. In order to stand as a genre, the lyric must distinguish itself from other genres: these may be said to reduce to drama and narrative, which subsumes the epic form. If subjectivity is defined in the usual ways, as consciousness of the self or as the unity and continuity of individual experience, a stronger case for subjective presence may be made for those genres that aspire to full-fledged characterization and/or to the representation of bourgeois consciousness: namely narrative and dramatic poems, plays, and novels. From this perspective, the simple equation of lyric with the subjective is revealed to be facile ("Approaching" 31). The obverse of the notion that individuals are constructed within societies is that the tenability of subjects must loosen outside the boundaries that define them. By this standard, even the height of romantic expression must be seen to construct a lesser kind of subjectivity than, say, a contemporaneous Jane Austen novel which painstakingly renders social context rather than responding to its absence. If the contention that exile is the inspiration to lyric utterance is accepted, any subject it presents is bound to be abstracted into a state of relative exility.

Dickinson's dissolution or "dropping" of the "I" into silence is a perfect example of such exility. Its most interesting implication--and the promise of lyric--is that through

the loosening of social identity it might precipitate a journey to a self-recovery that begins in pure perception. An embryological state is recovered in the transition to the acute focus on hearing, the sense whose development begins *in utero*. An aural being "sounds" for meaning in order to reconstitute the wreckage of the "I" in a new, as-yet unspeakable milieu. Rebirth, of course, assumes prior dissolution or death, and the fragmentary nature of Dickinson's poetry always renders this. Her particular "I" has been abandoned by reason and must pursue a new way of knowing that emerges from pain and silence. The "then" gestures toward the concept of the *formation* of new life, an afterlife, that will emerge from direct sensory experience. Dickinson's poem is a birth, and it is replete with the pain of birth trauma. It charts the process of leaving the concrete world for the abstract realm of composition. As she writes elsewhere, "After great pain, a formal feeling comes" (Poem 341).

The "unself-consciousness" Adorno posits to be a prerequisite to lyric creation is the state of consciousness at its perceptual foundation. It is necessitated by the fact that lyric is a survival mode, the voice of the individual in the wild, the cognitively untamed, "the mind in the act of finding/What will suffice"²⁰ and in so doing forging a self-consciousness in synthesis with and within new environment. Lyric is never simply assertive of a subjectivity, that is, in the absence of a need to engage in the processes that result in its assertion.

What remains to be accounted for in this story of lyric commencement is why an already tenuous presentation of subjectivity has become increasingly rarefied, as reflected in the devolution of the conception of subjective presence from that of poet to that of the speaker to that of a voice speaking to voice figured, to voice shattered. The most glaring

manifestation of the troubling of subjectivity in the lyric has been the gradual disappearance, or the failed reconstitution, of the first person pronoun. As W.R. Johnson put it perhaps a bit too dramatically, ". . . the lyric 'I' first grew ashamed and bewildered, then terrified, by the idea of saying I . . ." (15). Experimental American poetry of the late twentieth-century finds itself mired in a self-described crisis in which the pronoun "I" has all but vanished from the landscape.

The lineage of the downfall of the grammatical subject is by now well-documented. Its demise is routinely attributed to the provocation of the grand theories of Marx and Darwin and their subordination of individual agency to the dynamics of the group. It is customary to attribute its disappearance in poetry to the rejection by Mallarmé and the French symbolists of the "unity between the work and the empirical person" creating it (Friedrich 172). Their influence enables T.S. Eliot's doctrine of impersonality to understand affect originating within the poet's personal experience to be completely "transmuted" into a "new compound" that is the poem (41). Rejecting the notion of intentionality, New Criticism fictionalized the author into a speaker in order to treat the poem as an objective artifact. In his 1950 manifesto, "Projective Verse," Charles Olson celebrated the end of what he called "subjectism": "It has excellently done itself to death," he writes, adding, "even though we are all caught in its dying" (24). The alternative, "objectism"

is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the 'subject' and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to

carry out) and those other creations of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects (24-25).

Olson was responding to the romantic notion that the goal of poetry is to realize the poet as an ontological presence in the poem. Ego rebuilding, whether conceived as a biographical or a fictional process, is the goal of all lyric poetry as well as the point where it exhausts itself. When consciousness has negotiated obscurity, perceived its environment, and determined the concepts music alludes to, it has determined itself in the processes of its interactions. The lyric arrives at this end of its spectrum when the "I" is no longer troubled by its existence, no longer strives to speak. This is the point when poetry must be renovated and the circumstances which cause the "I" to flounder recast. Lyric always shatters or assumes, as background, the prior shattering of the "I" that was Olson's goal. By putting man back into nature, he cleared the way for the complete immersion of subjectivity into the text. The pendulum swung back to the instant following Dickinson's "then--".

The extent of the impact of the exile of the "I" has been vast. It has missed a good half of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first. The bifurcation in contemporary American poetry that is the result of this trend must be acknowledged, as well as the insularity of its two strands that rarely brush up against one another. The body of work variously called experimental, avant-garde or postmodern poetry, is to be distinguished from the neo-formal, confessional, and more conventional school that strives to maintain, among other traditions, a relatively cohesive subject emerging from a defining displacement. The bias of experimental poetry, on the other hand, is that the personal and the autobiographical are sentimental and finally narcissistic. When an "I"

appears it is not so much to signify a particular self, real or imaginary, but to call attention to the condition of subjectivity, primarily its exility, which is connected to the notion of exile for reasons based in, but transcending, an accident of etymology.

Frederic Jameson's taxonomy of the depersonalizing effects of late capitalism has its end in what he calls the "deconstruction of expression" (58). That the twentieth-century environment is, in the broadest sense, unprecedentedly complex is by now a truism; the forms of complexity characterizing it do not bear repeating here. The phenomenon of globalization is driven for Jameson by a network of multi-national capitalism whose sheer complexity exceeds "the capacity of the normal reading mind" to comprehend it. In the face of the incomprehensibility of the referent, *i.e.*, the world at large, any attempt at representation is doomed to fail, including, presumably, the attempt to represent a subject situated in that world (79-80). But there is a more direct relationship between a culture de-centered by its own complex underbelly and the conception of individuality such a culture can sustain. The interactions characterizing globalization have served to blur the lines that previously demarcated societal units. As culture at large has been, in a sense, infiltrated, the very notion of a border is superseded by that of an horizon, an illusory limit signifying illimitability. Poetry, in reaction, expands to gather in the heterogeneity of the whole world made local. The periphrastic and eclectic but fluid poetry of John Ashbery perhaps most brilliantly exemplifies the vast circumference of its embrace. The paradoxical will to contain sprawl, to depict what cannot be represented, is connected to the revival of lyric musicality, not merely the emphasis on sound, which becomes particularly important in movements such as language and performance poetry, but because it produces an intensified version of lyric

obscurity which, like music, can only conjure what it cannot reference. One is drawn to it as to an evocative foreign language, or to birdsong, as if one might intuit its meanings before or even instead of decoding them.

In its more traditional form, exile preserves the possibility of recurring to a native social unit and reconstituting a subjecthood, at least hypothetically. Exile assumes boundaries between within and without; here and there, the spatial schematic on which the very idea of self-expression, the outward projection of that which is internal, depends. When these geographic distinctions are confused, Feuerbach's formulation of the subject must expand under pressure. It itself becomes global, fragmented, multiple, flustered, speechless. The stress to the self registered by the postmodern is that experienced by a subject thrust into a diluted cultural milieu, as if into an exile. Foreignness is the incomprehensibility of the new world. It becomes impossible to assert a self against the shifting ground of a culture whose technology and whose aspirations drive it to be all-inclusive, a world bent on transcending cultural borders. The greatly tempered emotional pitch of this poetry is an indication that the exile is both constant and irremediable. One becomes inured to its effects. At its extreme, the mournful tenor of poetry flattens into apathy.

Heidegger's extension and development of Feuerbach's germinal ideas can help to account for the compass of the lyric's emotional core. The particularity the former claims for being is reflected in the vague adverbial quality of the term Dasein, "being there in the world," where fallen. For Heidegger, being is always in the world and of the world. Conversely, the world within being is part and parcel of its constitution (6, 12-13). Being is rendered alien when Dasein is thrust into a state in which the "there" is also "theirs"

and the tyranny of others threatens the self. Anxiety, for Heidegger, is the fundamental human mood, one revelatory and constitutive of the self. It is rooted in, has its past in, one's "abandonment to the values of others." Accepting anxiety, accepting one's mortality, enables one to make of one's life a project and thereby imbue it with meaning. The liberation of the self from the "they" through the pursuit of a life project calls forth authenticity. For Heidegger, the source of anxiety is bi-directional: it arises as "they" trespass onto oneself, and yet it is also an anxiety before death, anxiety caused by the separation from the "they." In the majority of lyric poetry, the exile is self-imposed in recognition of the fact that the lyric must negotiate the anxiety originating from each source. To make one's life as authentic and self-realizing a project as possible, one places oneself alone in a life or death situation--whether one is at sea or dying of desire--and thereby liberates oneself from the "they" at the same time one acknowledges mortality and confronts the anxiety to which it gives rise. Retrospectively, it is possible to resolve the basic etiological problem of lyric: lament is the result of the rupture of the self from society which is simultaneously the survival and re-construction of the self within a new set of circumstances (foreign place, self-authored project). It is also the reaction to the presence of the "they" in the first place, the expression of which prompts expulsion. Anxiety and lament are two side of a coin, death's before and after. Consolation becomes celebration when the "I" rejoices at its freedom from the "they." As mentioned, Whitman is the poet who renders the celebratory side of lyric most expansively. The original solace given by "their" presence, which is finally undivestible, may modulate to celebration when the self-liberating project closes in on success. Lyric poetry exists within this ever-double emotional nexus.

It is, of course, both risky and valid to project twentieth-century existential anxiety backward. The Seafarer and Catullus both exhibit forms of it. No matter how securely nestled within a society one might be, no matter how unified that society, it remains at best an assumption and at worst a romantic fallacy that one is so securely embedded that anxiety before death is non-existent. And it is enough to note that such anxiety is assuagable, but not eradicable within a religious belief system. Looking forward, it bears noting that current political conditions point to exile's waning significance as a figure for geographic displacement. As Said stresses, the twentieth-century version of the exile is the refugee (177-181).²¹ However it is conceived, the rift between the individual and its gestating society produces a being adrift. The outcast, by definition, subsists in a state of inter-cultural suspense, where he must create a niche between the civic walls. His status will expire only at the moment of definitive repatriation or assimilation, an ideal that, in poetry, must by definition go unrealized.

The fiction of exile is not merely a device to isolate an individual and foreground a subject so that individual thinking may proceed undistracted. It is the means by which societal connection is attenuated to force attention to the formal means by which meaning is made. It gives rise to a complex dynamic in which several major generic characteristics are revealed to be embroiled, the expressive modes of lament and consolation, the compromised referentiality of the musical, and the dissolution and provisional recuperation of the subject. How the exilic figure, the castaway, the victim of existentialist angst changes himself to assimilate to his new environment becomes the stuff of the lyric poem. The self that is expressed, however inchoately, through a cognitive interaction with the environment is one that depends on the adaptability of the

mind, a mind neuroscience can help to detect within the undulations of language. Lyric poetry resists coherence to the extent that the environment it negotiates is incompatible with linguistic convention. The poet is " . . . he who has to remake his poems out of the dead language of his contemporary society and, as part of that society, to mediate the new imaginative vision to his readers . . ." (Forrest-Thomson 110). In making experience coherent for himself, in making himself coherent, he makes his experience coherent for his readers. The lyric poem is a postcard sent home.

¹ See “Phaedrus,” 249e-250a

² The irony of this proscription is that Plato seems, in contradiction of his own tenets, to advocate semblance, which is implicated in the tempering of a public countenance. It is likely that Plato's thinking would instead consider such temperance to be the temporary subdual of emotion by reason.

³ The elevation of prevailing social values to the status of wisdom is a fundamental tenet Plato absorbs from Socrates, who in turn quotes Diotima as she prescribes a content for poetry. “Now, by far the most important kind of wisdom, she went on, is that which governs the ordering of society, and which goes by the name of justice and moderation” (“Symposium” 209b).

⁴ It is perhaps worth noting that this argument is extant in contemporary popular culture with respect to visual media, although it is unsupported philosophically. Although seemingly an over-reaction, it speaks to the power of the artifact to influence behavior to which Plato responds.

⁵ This would seem to support the truism that an artistic vocation is somehow destined.

⁶ See Chapters 1 and 6 of Susan Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, which treat darkness and nocturne respectively.

⁷ It should be noted that in Ovid's later rendering of the myth Procne is turned into a nightingale and Philomela a swallow. Ovid reverses the earlier version, which is treated here.

⁸ Orpheus is Apollo's son in Simonides; the muse Calliope is his mother. In other versions, he descends from Oeurgus and Clio or Polyhymnia. In still others, Aphrodite is his mother.

⁹ See Segal, pp. 66-68 for this interpretation.

¹⁰ Knapp opposes esoteric exile to exoteric exile, which she describes as a physical banishment beyond a periphery.

¹¹ The connectedness of words, music, and movement is demonstrated by modern Appalachian fiddlers who sing and dance while they play. When asked to perform one element in isolation, they are unable to do so.

¹² This assertion is not meant to contradict, but rather to supplement the interpretation of babbling as a developmental stage in which muscle tone is developed to enable speech.

¹³ See, for example, Theocritus's *Idyll* 11.1.

¹⁴ Culler makes this one of four fundamental criteria for lyric. The others are deixis, resistance and recuperation, and theme and epiphany. Obfuscation is widely held to be a central characteristic of the genre. The reference to Stevens is "Poetry must resist the intelligence almost successfully" (*OP* 197).

¹⁵ Aristotle's attribution of genius to the creator of metaphor is also based on the ability to detect similarity.

¹⁶ This claim will be supported throughout the remainder of this book.

¹⁷ The three major approaches within myth criticism, the structural, the psychological, and the cognitive, each acknowledge universal, cyclic recurrence.

¹⁸ For Northrop Frye, the impulse to lyric expression, the occasion of Stevens's cry, is genericized as a "block" by which he means an interruption of ordinary experience compelling the production of the poem ("Approaching" 32). He refers to the processes of the poet, and assumes that the compositional situation is carried over into the poetry. The sense that something routine has been left behind, of an ineffably present absence that continues to haunt the lyrical poem, is common to our theories.

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis discusses the requirement that the beloved be of superior class status, and thus of a society from which is he strictly speaking barred. See *The Allegory of Love*.

²⁰ See Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems*, p. 239.

²¹ He writes, "On the twentieth-century scale, exile is neither aesthetically nor humanistically comprehensible: at most the literature about exile objectifies an anguish and an predicament most people rarely experience first hand; but to think of the exile informing this literature as beneficially humanistic is to banalize its mutilations, the losses it inflicts on those who suffer them, the muteness with which it responds to any attempt to understand it as 'good for us.'" (174)

Chapter Three

“To Dwell in Possibility”: Presence, Pain, and Prophecy, Part I

*The poem of the mind in the act of finding
What will suffice. It has not always had
To find: the scene was set; it repeated what
Was in the script.*

*Then the theatre was changed
To something else.*

Wallace Stevens
“Of Modern Poetry”

The opening of Wallace Stevens’s most candid *ars poetia*, “Of Modern Poetry,” presents its ostensible subject, “the poem of the mind,” as it is engaged “in the act of finding/What will suffice” (CP 239). Rehearsing his custom of entering a poem *in medias res*, Stevens sets his archetypal mind-poem whirling without recourse to grammatical predication: the opening “sentence” renders present tense action despite the fact that it lacks a verb. With a conspicuous absence of fanfare, the passive voice construction that sets in motion the poem’s second stanza subjects its central player to a change of view and venue, to unceremonious immersion in an alternate theatricality replete, presumably, with the trappings of cast, properties, and scene. The signal on which the inception of the mind-poem hinges is the abruptly intrusive adverb *then*—the pre-emptive temporal marker designating episodic shift. With this indication of divide, a mode of search is induced whose end is the seemingly minimal requirement of sufficiency and the complex of ideas it entails. The poem continues from the epigraph:

Its past was a souvenir.

It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.

It has to face the men of the time and to meet

The women of the time. It has to think about war

And it has to find what will suffice. It has
 To construct a new stage. It has to be on that stage
 And, like an insatiable actor, slowly and
 With meditation, speak words that in the ear,
 In the delicatest ear of the mind, repeat,
 Exactly, that which it wants to hear, at the sound
 Of which, an invisible audience listens,
 Not to the play, but to itself, expressed
 In an emotion as of two people, as of two
 Emotions becoming one. The actor is
 A metaphysician in the dark, twanging
 An instrument, twanging a wiry string that gives
 Sounds passing through sudden rightnesses, wholly
 Containing the mind, below which it cannot descend,
 Beyond which it has no will to rise.

It must

Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may
 Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman
 Combing. The poem of the act of the mind. (*CP* 239-40)

Curiously, the future tense of the verb phrase “will suffice” serves to defer the attainment of satisfaction indefinitely, extending what might be considered a performative mode of improvisation, indeed spontaneity, occasioned by the change of theatre. With this gesture of intervention, the poem is opened to the full potential the adjective “else” affords, and it

concludes with a sampling of quotidian possibility. At the same time, the anaphoric echoes of the imperative forms “has to” and “must” running through the remainder of the poem instill a certain urgency as they enumerate the parameters shaping the drama on the new stage. This mandate to performative mentality in a play of one’s making on a foreign platform is, then, according to Stevens, the precondition of and the impetus to modern poetry, the situation in which it is composed in both the adjectival and verbal forms of that word. Restless yet compelled, the actor-poet seeks the “satisfaction” of what Stevens pinpoints as “sudden rightnesses” of sound “wholly/Containing the mind, below which it cannot descend,/ Beyond which it has no will to rise” (*CP* 240).

“The poem of the mind” (the poem *as* mind and the mind *as* poem) is, in Stevens’s theory, activated by an open-ended scenic shift inflicted upon it, and thus a version of exilic action inheres in this piece in the form of irresistible dislocation upon the incurrance of loss or, more simply, upon the state of being lost. But what, then, is sufficiency in terms of the mind’s animadversions in the obsolete sense of that word? Stevens’s choice of the metaphor of the theatre, as etymologically rich as it is, is not, I believe, an attempt to relate modern poetry to the *genre* of drama. It is tempting and perhaps facile (if not without a degree of value) to read the trope as a modernist version of the one governing Macbeth’s quasi-absurdist “Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player” speech¹ and to ascribe chronic dissatisfaction to the angst, alienation, and ennui widely thought to color historical modernism.² There is no doubt that the poem articulates a theory of immediacy that can be taken to be a theory of its own moment, for it self-mandates:

It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.

It has to face the men of the time and to meet

The women of the time. (*CP* 240)

Stevens's is foremost a poetry of *gaudeum*, of relishing the qualities of "surface seeming" and "right sound." It revels in the sensorial and rarely, if ever, indulges an existentialist tonality. A poetry of the present, it skirts the chasm between being and nothingness by remaining happily attentive to the moment of seeking. "Modern," for Stevens, is a term best construed to refer to the ongoing present tense: a consistently singular moment and place whose particularity remains relative because it is undesignated. Stevens may have discovered something about lyric poetry through the emphatic practices of his own historical instance, but it is something far more deeply interfused within the ethos of lyric.

The relationship of the lyric to the modern is the subject of the inchoate argument mounted by Paul de Man in his piece "Lyric and Modernity." He finds in lyric (paradoxically, he notes, in light of its aboriginal qualities³) something quintessentially modern. Interpreting modernity as a descriptive rather than a categorical term, de Man rejects the criteria for the onset of poetic modernity proffered in sequence by the critics Benjamin, Freidrich, Jauss, and Stierle.⁴ The pivotal shift from a representative to what he calls an "allegorical" use of language is incorrectly credited by each of these theorists to the French *symbolistes* because both modes, he claims, enjoy an ambivalent presence in all lyric poetry. Poetic language is representational in that it refers externally and allegorical, or figural, in that it generates meaning within its intrinsic, self-generated structures. Through inquiries into the phenomenon of historical modernity, we find that the dual, enigmatic nature of language has been the stuff of lyric poetry all along (185).

Indeed, Stevens's motif of mental displacement and concomitant restless quest is a version of one that runs through the lyrics of other epochs. The realization that a displaced mind must endure the chronic dissatisfaction of homelessness--the itinerancy of the minstrel--is the point of frustration, for example, within Marvell's lyric "The Mower to the Glowworms" which concludes with the following lines addressed to the phosphorescent insects of its title:

Your courteous lights in vain you waste,
 Since Juliana here is come,
 For she my mind hath so displaced
 That I shall never find my home. (442)

The despair expressed by Marvell's arrant mower is occasioned and exacerbated by ill-spent courtesy, the failure of hospitality or welcome in the daily sense of the gracious reception of the guest, or tenant, into the home. Juliana's rejection of Damon, which plays out principally in the companion piece "Damon the Mower," effects an estrangement of mind Marvell opposes explicitly to homecoming. As is well-established in the anthropological literature, the ceremony of welcome is a cornerstone of social maintenance and continuity.⁵ Lovestruck, Damon can no longer walk the well-trod, perceptible path that leads to his now erstwhile home, for he has been made homeless by disposition. For him, theater and scene have shifted irrevocably: routine has been flummoxed and, if he is to "find himself" in the darkness, he must chart a new course. To woo Juliana and to win her, Damon must forge a path that is as yet unlit by exercising his perceptual faculties through poetic expression. Courtly love, including the late form practiced by Marvell, translates the highly formalized threshold ritual of reception into

the codes of sexual practice. According to the courtly motif, the beloved estranges the lover (makes him stranger) by refusing him admittance. Courtship and wooing are highly charged versions of the act of finding what will suffice. They imply a dissatisfaction that prompts a modality of search intended to produce the desired result of satisfaction.

There is clearly something within the poetic dynamic (at least its courtly variety, which Stevens arguably extends) about foiled access to the customary that Marvell and Stevens understand to trigger and implicate the activity of the questing mind, one which finds no succor in maps and guide lights, in the wholesale harnessing of the past experience Stevens reduces to the token index of a “souvenir.” (*Souvenir* in French, the designated integral half of Stevens’s *langue*, may also refer to the memories themselves.) For both poets, the satisfaction the mind seeks is in lieu of the refuge of home, the site where basic needs, such as rest, fellowship, nourishment, and safe harbor, are tended within the ethos of hospitality and the practice of homemaking. Home is a concept that is synonymous with sufficiency. Perpetually ultimate in that it is a place of *retrier*, or return, it is the destination of all questing. Even in Frost’s cynical definition, “Home is the place where, when you have to go there,/They have to take you in,” (38) grudging acceptance restores one to the bosom nevertheless. The loss of the integrity of the home evokes a pathos second only to the loss inflicted by death. It is no surprise then that disinheritings are often ritualized as deaths. Denied the aid of the familial, the cognate of “familiar,” the subject is forced to construct his own provisional dwelling, to homestead to thereby improvise, to engage in a process of making do that is the hallmark of extra-social survival and inspires the figures of the spurned lover, the itinerant thespian, the forsaken citizen, the nomad, the pilgrim, and the pioneer, to proffer a scant catalogue of

versions. In poetry, home and hearth, the *vesta*, is vestigial or *vestigium*, merely trace, the index of the past that is memento as is the virginal once it gives way to experience.

It is this realization that allows George Steiner to write:

It is poetics in the full sense, which informs us of the visitor's visa in a place and in a time which refines our status as transients in a house of being whose foundations, whose future history, whose rationale—if any—lie wholly outside our will and comprehension. (140)

It is the insight of Steiner's theorization of artistic reception in the terms of *cortesia* that poetics is the revealer and active structurer of the incomprehensible condition of homelessness. The modernist Stevens deromanticizes courtly fanfare and ritual by abstracting courtship's symbolic interchanges into a venture that is exclusively mental. Marked by neutrality and little overt identifying information, his mind is portrayed abstractly, almost clinically. It becomes the non-specific "it"—the pronoun, abstract by definition, of the proviso "It must be abstract." The *inamorata*, the mind's would-be mate, swells to the green fullness of the world-environment Stevens names his "fluent mundo." His change of theatre, then, is a version of setting out from home that emphasizes the facticity of the figure and exposes the breadth of its referent.

The implications of "being" thrust onto an altogether different stage, a milieu in which one must learn the topography to survive, is the upshot of the catastrophic loss that is the lot of the exile. The desperation entailed by the ancient practice of exile reappears as the sufficiency that insures the physical survival of the mind-poem within a different locale: contracting for a home is an activity of survival. The thematic of beginning within a radically new environs is traceable in the recurrence in myth of the evolutionary

regression of the poet-figure to bird form and his verse to bird song. The sudden removal of the Kaluli boy into *afterlife*, and Philomela Nightingale's sentence to a treetop niche are linear sequences bisected and punctuated by the interruptive force of the *then*. All lyric poetry is, in this sense, "occasional," referable to a specific prompting occasion of ecstasis, or a moving out of from one's status. Northrop Frye captures the indigenous role of barred access to the ordinary in his mandate that lyric composition proceed from a compulsion to abandon the ordinary and to "revolve around" that precipitating occasion ("Approaching" 32). Frye provides a structuring dynamic for lyric that ensures the occasion will be preserved within the poem unlike events within a narrative progression that transpire and are exhausted. Lyric, in contradistinction to other art forms, consistently dramatizes and preserves the displacement that initiates it; often, it airs the radical discontinuity thematically.

That the lyric poem imagines a radical and unceremonious thrust into the strange presumes that it confronts utter novelty. On the far side, *before* one, is a foreign vista, the experientially unprecedented. Two noteworthy poems, Keats's "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" and Stevens's "The Doctor of Geneva" dramatize poetry's origins thematically and thereby establish themselves as preliminary to the experience of lyric at the level of content. Significantly, "Chapman" is only the second of Keats's surviving poems and is itself initiatory with respect to a poetic enterprise. Likewise, "Geneva" occupies an early position in Stevens's first book, *Harmonium*, which was a volume designed to be preliminary to the *Collected Poems (Letters 834)*.⁶ Each is a story-poem seminal for its poet in functioning as an annunciation of a lyric undertaking it simultaneously enacts. Sharing a Pacific vista as their "new world," the transplanted

“Cortez”⁷ and Calvin, the Doctor of Geneva,⁸ can muster no more than a look of “wild surmise” and a stifled sob respectively in response to the overwhelming grandeur before them. Keats represents the wondrous view as a “wide expanse,” a vast oceanic offering surveyed from atop a mountain that resists, or at least forestalls, linguistic categorization. In a sense, Keats’s scenario prefigures Whitman, who responds to the ineffably vast American landscape by making category all-inclusive. In Whitman’s wake, Stevens exploits the American frontier motif by placing the Doctor at the continent’s geographical limit where he appears involuntarily passive and, in a stove-pipe hat and shawl, pathetically “incongruous” on a Pacific beach. Newly “assailed/By such long-rolling opulent cataracts” he is clearly oppressed by the

“visible, voluble delugings,

Which yet found means to set his simmering mind

Spinning and hissing with oracular

Notations of the wild, the ruinous waste,

Until the steeples of his city clanked and sprang

In an unburgherly apocalypse.

The doctor used his handkerchief and sighed. (*CP* 24)

The Doctor is agitated into a prophetic mode via which he must concoct his response. His mind “spins” and “hisses,” producing the sound of one of the English pronunciations of the letter “C,” whose motions will come to pervade the Grand Poem. Yet, he cannot prevail over uncomfortable speculation and bring his indicia to verbal fruition. The Doctor’s ultimately feckless, ultimately obscured revelation is so great a breach of decorum that he is reduced to inarticulate weeping.⁹ Keats’s wonderful experience is

perhaps less humbling than Stevens's, but it is silencing nevertheless. This small community of lyrics has in common a rendition of "initial" verbal impotence, or pregnant pause, before novelty that is nevertheless initiatory to poetic praxis; we can enlarge it by revisiting the significance of Dickinson's stranded, terminal "then—" of Poem 280. Like its companions, it effects, and in the lyric tradition fictionalizes, discontinuity and shift of scene, but, unlike the bulk of lyric poetry, engages so vividly and so perfectly with death, liberating its metaphoricity into the real and into the poem in a display of imaginative virtuoso, that it cannot muster the agency to transcend the silence that is verbal death and therefore the simultaneous death of the socially-constructed identity and the Being of the poet. The reaction of inaction portrayed in Dickinson's poem is extreme. As in "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer" and "The Doctor of Geneva," the poem becomes preliminary, herald and proem, in whole a synecdoche of itself and of poem-making at large.

It would seem that this self-negating dynamic in which the pressures that expel the voice are countervailed by those compelling it to silence is fundamental to a poetic enterprise that "must" simultaneously preserve the death scene and effect the rebirth. The "death" at hand occurs by the entropic action of disintegration that would seem to be irrevocable as indicated by Poem 280's point of arrival. The transitional mode of "dying," the gradient phase that only qualitatively alters the life side of the divide, must culminate in the demise of the "I." The exilic, in the sense of attenuated, or disintegrated, subject (and Orpheus's bodily dismemberment is emblematic here) is deprived of a vocal agency that is simultaneously recoupable. Although each of these poems pushes the initiatory transition into lyric toward a logical extreme, it has yet been uttered: it has

engaged with new terrain and exists as a lyric at the same time it dramatizes a lyric-precluding and lyric-conditioning silence. Orphic melodies are reprised; Kaluli songs are recalled from the dead. The narrative device that precipitates lyric creation--and the framework of lyric is narrative in this sense--is embedded in the act of lyric recovery which supersedes it, demonstrating the complex overlay of temporal dimensions that distinguish lyric sharply from narrative.¹⁰ The coincidence of a smashed, or as we say as colloquially, a “totaled” “I” and an articulate “being” whose voicing evinces a will to survive points back to a complex and elusive lyric subjectivity.

The paradox of co-extensive self-assertion and self-disintegration allies this set of poems in a fundamental way with the prototypical genre of the riddle. In his piece “Lyric Substance: On Riddles, Materialism, and Poetic Obscurity,” Daniel Tiffany recurs to the early Anglo-Saxon form in order to expand Frye’s identification of the lyric with the “radical” or root of its presentation (*Anatomy* 246-47). Following Frye, Tiffany argues that the riddle is in fact the principal forebear of the English language lyric. (His case is buttressed by the lucky survival of the transitional poem “The Dream of the Rood,” a full-fledged lyric whose objectified speaker preserves the riddle’s presentational mode.) In meeting the challenge posed by the form’s often explicit (and always implicit) challenge “say who I am,” the goal is to transition from the silence of a “wild surmise” to a single, certain response, the distilled new name that Hart Crane will much later declare to be the inexpressible heart and residue of the poem (Crane 221). In presenting a speaking object, the riddle claims subjective agency for “it,” yet the “being” in question is inert and thus rendered grammatically in the accusative case. The manufacture or acquisition of objects—their coming into being and/or into possession and thus object

status--was often, in fact, the occasion for the production of the poem (Tiffany 73-74). Riddles operate in this grey area, simultaneously evolving an ontology by means of the attribution of feature and function, and undermining it by making the attribution equivocal (75). Riddlic identity straddles the border not only between the subject and the object, but between the human and the non-human, making them substantively co-extensive. Paul de Man frames this opposition in terms of a literal/figurative duality that “. . . reveals the paradoxical nature of a structure that makes lyric poetry into an enigma which never stops asking for the unreachable answer to its own riddle” (186). Reference is objectifying in striving to stabilize features, making them commonly apprehensible, while figuration tends to obscure the object as such (185). Each diametrically opposed trajectory is a necessary constituent of the lyric’s modernity. The subject-rendering tendencies of the lyric are clichéd and hardly worth mentioning; that its subject must face effacement is a rather less thoroughly hashed-out aspect of the genre picked up, for example, in the conceit that the courtly subject “pines or wastes away” for an unrequited love. The conception of exilic dislocation as a shift of dramatic scene in which the difference effected alters the nature of the subject almost catastrophically by subjecting him symbolically to a strange new world with which he is forced to contend must be reconciled with romantic idealist theories, which if they do not identify lyric with a solid subjectivity, classify it according to this feature. For the well-known philosophical company led by Hegel, the defining “subjective” nature of the lyric implies a well-defined subject.¹¹

Tiffany analogizes this core poetic tension to the conundrum faced by philosophical materialism: the dilemma that the essential, quantum level of the physical

world is imponderable except through representational methods or “stories,” in Dickinson’s rendition, that obscure direct perception. The substantive essence of the material is therefore invisible. Likewise, “poetry . . . excels at producing images in which the invisible foundation of matter rises to the surface of things and the mutable forms of intuition dissolve into the hidden ground of their abstraction” (93). Tiffany proposes a bi-directional analogy:

Thus, a riddle is essentially an allegory, though, unlike conventional allegory, the phenomenon veiled by the dark or enigmatical description is not a metaphysical entity (an abstract concept or a divinity), but a physical object or being. A riddle, because it is obscure, is a *materialist* allegory (as well as an allegory of materialism). (79)

Drawing on Blanchot who himself tows Heidegger, Tiffany goes on to claim that lyric substance is situated between the idea of the thing and the thing itself (83-84).

Blanchot’s suggestion that poetry is the medium of the *post mortem*, a body as decomposing corpse, is yet another version of the lyric mythology of disintegrating subjectivity that parallels the coming into “being,” or the emergence of the poem.

“Hence, the radiant cadaver, as Blanchot conceives it, is an emblem of the lyric substance of a poem—its obscurity—but also of the kind of body consistently produced by the apparatus of a poem” (85). For Tiffany, this paradox demonstrates the possibility of substance, but an understanding of substance as that which “mirrors the darkness of things” (81). Lyric ambiguity is akin to the imponderable basis of what intuitively should be eminently ponderable (94).¹²

Materialist notions of language in particular tend to produce obscure or opaque

sets the heart to shaking inside my breast, since
 once I look at you for a moment, I can't
 speak any longer,
 but my tongue breaks down, and then all at once a
 subtle fire races inside my skin, my
 eyes can't see a thing and a whirring whistle
 thrums at my hearing,
 cold sweat covers me and a trembling takes
 ahold of me all over: I'm greener than the
 grass is and appear to myself to be little
 short of dying.

But all must be endured, since even a poor . . . (Powell 23-24)

It is not in any event controversial that lyric skews toward the non-discursive, the non-expository and does not, as a rule, stoop to explain itself. Mill's caricature of lyric as an "utterance that is overheard" (46) implies that the genre encompasses even inarticulate mumblings to invoke the ideological extreme that is the expressionist reduction. Criticism has evolved several terms denoting perceptual occlusion, among them "obscurity" (implying darkness) and the contemporary favorite "opacity" (not transmitting light). We can supplement the store with those designating the logical effect of perceptual occlusion--disorientation. Empson's "ambiguity," Bernadette Mayer's "bewilderment," de Man's "undecidability," the linger modernist "indeterminacy," and

the general “equivocation” further embroil perception because they imply a hesitation to act and thereby reach what is widely considered to be the end of the perceptual process.¹⁴

It would seem to follow from the background situation of social estrangement that lyric obscurity simply reflects the initial unfamiliarity of the metaphorical environs the singer is plunged into within the encounter “come upon” but not yet grasped.

Conversely, the poem’s fuzziness could represent a bewildered subject, one whose ability to express himself is temporarily confused as a result of the shift of ground. Either explanation amounts to stopping at a representative or a mimetic view of poetic language and an inappropriately stable concept of subjectivity and objectivity. To glean why poetic subjectivity is complex, it is necessary to delve further into the myths of the previous chapter and to limn the *poesis* of myth in the mythos of *poesis*.

Each of the myths treated lays inordinate stress on the evolutionary regression of the singer, on the conceit of re-speciation in an alternative environment following the expulsion of the self from a native and often a familial context. The myths portray, and to an extent analogize (in the case of Orpheus) a re-embodiment in which each poet-figure decomposes into poetic essence to become simply a singing being in relinquishing and superseding a former self. Given an ecologically accurate understanding of material processes, the fiction of phylogenetic interruption serves the purpose of forcing a beginning within experience in which all discontinuity, and all analysis is artificial. Artifice is in fact the basis of this art form in which a beginning is forced where there is only continuity. Origins are by longstanding custom and indeed by definition inaccessible because they are themselves specious: to access them is to reconstrue them fictively as part of the generation of novelty. The dramatic shift into an alternative mode of being--

another role as it were--entrains a more fundamental level of perception following from the complementary events of abrupt metamorphosis and utter change of environs and positing a hypothetical moment of original perception in which being is "but an ear" and the "I" "wrecked" and separate from it. Respeciation confers primordial being on the victim through the conceit of the eradication of even the possibility of a facilitating biographical and cultural past. That this erasure is practically impossible is beside the point. The casting out, the disorientation, and Calvinist vertigo that follow from finding oneself "in the wrong play," so to speak, give rise to the necessity of "sense-making"; they stress post-lapsarian first sight, the inevitable and primary means of negotiating the new milieu, making sense of it by "theorizing" it sensorially. Particularly in the context of a mandatory scene shift, "theatre's" cognancy with "theory" is evoked. In admitting the etymological splendor of the Greek-derived "theatre," Stevens sought to recover perceptual origin. Its root *thea* denotes a view, a sight, a new sight, an original sight, the place at which idea is based in sight, and eventually, the idea itself. The myths invert the truism: in them, phylogeny serves to recapitulate, or minimally stand in for a developmental process that is best understood in ontogenetic terms.¹⁵ Unlike birds, babies do not sing and so make inadequate mythic symbols; however, their debut before the metaphorical footlights is less remote. The onset of sensory awareness is now theorized to begin *in utero*, during the developmental stage in which perceptual pathways are initially laid through the interaction of the ongoing random (and therefore obscure) firing of neurons with the motivated neuronal activity supporting internal bodily processes such as autonomic responses (that is, of the involuntary motor system), and proprioception (the felt sense of one's own bodily position as it moves) (Edelman *Sky*

128-129) (Gopnik et al. 184). Sensory input from abroad is also thought to be perceived *in utero* and if not, immediately after birth. Perceptual experience is organized in accordance with the foundation laid by the early forging of pathways that become tamped down, if you will, with re-use, suggesting an alternative interpretation of the pounding in Dickinson's speaker's brain.¹⁶ This basic fact of neurological functioning was later formalized by Donald Hebb and popularized in the saying "neurons that fire together wire together." Each of these retrospective gestures, ranging from the metaphorically phylogenetic to the developmental, from symbolic re-embodiment to John Cage's composition of silence intended to give latitude and air to the workings of the nervous system are attempts to recover first order or original perception. All exile and all lyric is, in this sense, Edenic, that is, pervasively originary to human conduct and, as it were, continuance. The endeavor each initiates is the closest it is possible to come within the literary to the recovery of Adamic experience.

In a rare structuralist account devoted wholly to lyric, Jonathan Culler adopts the term "resistance" to describe the quality of poetic obscurity:

The poem must resist the intelligence/Almost successfully," says Wallace Stevens; and its distinctiveness lies in that resistance: not necessarily the resistance of obscurity, but at least the resistance of patterns and forms whose semantic relevance is not immediately obvious. (178-79)

In other words, obscurity must lead to some degree of semantic resolution or what Stevens would call a "satisfaction" and not the "unsatisfying" end of obscurantism. With its complement "recuperation," "resistance" is one of four defining lyric criteria within Culler's schematic. Together the two form a concept of lyric becoming: the making up of

a semantic deficit through a reorganization accomplished within the structures of the poem.

The necessity that meaning be recuperated within an evolving system is penetrated by Emerson who, in his late essay "Experience," captures the sense that entrapment in blind interstice is an endemic yet surmountable condition. The experience of occlusion within the crisis of loss has, so transcendentalist semiotics tells us, its spiritual counterpart.

Where do we find ourselves? In a series of which we do not know the extremes, and believe that it has none. We wake and find ourselves on a stair; there are stairs below us, which we seem to have ascended, there are stairs above us, many a one which, which go upward and out of sight. (471)

As he commences the essay whose sentences will transport him upward and out of the two-years' grief that followed upon the loss of his young son, Emerson characterizes aboriginal, postnatal displacement: we are, he suggests, natively mesmerized. "All things swim and glitter," he writes with inimitable aphoristic aplomb (471). A phantasmagoria flits, indistinct, before our half-opened eyes. The curious, interloping statement that follows after a few lines: "our life is not so much threatened as our perception," resonates with a direct sagacity that obtrudes upon the flow of lyrical tropes. The latter resume immediately. "Ghostlike we glide through nature and should not know our place again" (471). Insubstantial, though we live, we barely *perceive* our surroundings in the extended sense of the word.

Emerson evolves his version of social dislocation in an apt context. The loss of a child, especially, disrupts the integrity and natural order of the home, depriving one of

sustenance. It inflicts the loss of both past and future, of treasured memory and the hopeful continuance legacy affords, of a clear view out over the receding steps in his spatialized metaphor of time. Lost, like Dickinson, in a timeless moment, in the dislocation that results when the expectation of the continuance of one's effect is foiled, and one's tools for predicting sequence are shown to be irremediably dull, we believe, as Emerson observes, that in the intensity of our suffering we are most alive. "There are moods in which we court suffering, in the hope that here at least we shall find reality, sharp peaks and edges of truth" (472). Yet, the ruse of life-giving tribulation is revealed to be illusory. It does not lift us from our quotidian course of "getting and spending" but rather dooms us to a condition of "almost all custom and gross sense" (a phrase Emerson uses to mean something like habituation) in which we bend before the flux that outmatches us and wear blinders during all the phases of our ascent (472). Curtailed vision follows from the initial, curtaining effect of pain: it is the plight of those--the plurality--excessively vested in habit, a mode of being Dickinson elevates to social ritual. The alliance of custom and gross sense points to the existence of a finer tone in which the habitual and the native are infeasible, a realm in which pain is superseded.

Emerson, whose prose is quintessentially lyrical, recognizes both the initiatory and transitive purposes of pain within creativity as well as its ultimate inadequacy. Pain, and especially the ur-pain of social death, is perhaps the ultimate elongation of the past, which lingers as source of the pain and prevents a forward movement toward rebirth. In conflict with transcendentalist doctrine, it confines one within the borders of the wounded self. Yet, pain ideally becomes an impetus, the spur to its own elimination, a signal to rectify imbalance or "dis-ease." For Emerson, its transcendence is achieved through

anchorage in the vitality of the present: “. . .the only ballast I know is a respect to the present hour,” he writes, describing what today we might call the “coping strategy” of living in the moment (479). The dislocation that is the experience of grief must give way to relocation, to rooting oneself in “the strong present tense” if one is to transcend grief’s shallow streambed. It is in the re-embedding within his version of nature concomitant with our discovery that our sense that we are strangers is mere fancy, that we find relief.

But every insight from this realm [of thought] is felt as initial, and promises a sequel. I do not make it; I arrive there, and behold what was there already. I make! O no! I clap my hands in infantine joy and amazement before the first opening to me of this august magnificence, old with the love and homage of innumerable ages, young with the life of life, the sunbright Mecca of the desert. And what a future it opens! I feel a new heart beating with the love of the new beauty. I am ready to die out of nature and be born again in this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West. (485)

It is through careful attentiveness to sensation that glad forgetfulness is achieved in lyrical outburst. Emerson’s robust style of writing overflows with the language of the senses: “felt,” “behold,” “clap,” “sunbright,” “feel a heart beating.” Yet, his sensory experience is present obscurely. Emerson’s response consists in “infantine” amazement, the befuddled state of initial awareness that follows from waking fully to one’s surroundings. Infantine literally means “without words,” and Emerson thus unwittingly explicates the stunned silences of Calvin and Cortez’s men as symptomatic of their relinquishment to their new environs. Yielding to the source of sensation is recognized as an essential gesture in the pursuit of what will be revealed to be an emergence. It is

analogous to the moments after birth in which inchoate sensation corresponds to the assumption of one's inextricable place in the whole of the new environment upon the transit in and through pain. Emerson invokes a project that is fundamentally poetic with his turn of phrase "I make," a declaration he immediately recalls and revises to the more instinctual, more *infantine* response "Oh no! I clap . . ." Dickinson's abrupt fall into silence at the conclusion of "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain," while the legitimate effect of death, is in a far-reaching sense the logical outcome of the self-dissolving acquiescence to another realm, a submission to a level of being below the reason that is symptomatic of lyric.

Though less given to celebration than Emerson, Dickinson too has her version of the all-inclusive present, the expanded nonce of lyric time (to borrow Sharon Cameron's phrase). She renders her own version of the present by curtailing poetic action within the fiction of its beginning, by arresting the poem in mid-course. For a being composed of words, any perception and any action, including verbal action, recuperates temporal flow and progression and would seem to transport one out of the "vital present tense." The indeterminate, terminal "then," which may either indicate action in a past as retold in the present or gesture toward a future time from a narrative present, layers an indeterminate temporality onto indeterminate space to supersede the spatio-temporal limits of reason. The word is a plank over an abyss, and its deployment is the unadulterated act of submission creativity entails. In ending the poem as she does, Dickinson acknowledges that in lyric poetry contradictory forms of time are active simultaneously. Her death poems are multi-faceted lyrics that accomplish the impossible: they go to the paradoxical core of lyric experience and unabashedly probe it.

A transcendentalist belief system can tolerate occluded perspective and celebrate the reunion of the first person singular with nature as a religious ideal. Death into nature experienced as the fullness of the present is a self-enhancing spiritual proposition. Fulfilling the terms of nature is the route to the transcendence of the predicament of limited acuity and view, if one is to live successfully, divinely, if one is to divine the natural symbols that correspond to the spiritual within Emerson's semiotics ("Nature 1836" 20). But Emerson is not here writing a poem, and pain is perhaps not so easily transcended in the absence of a firmly rooted system of belief. It can be argued that Dickinson's struggle with matters of faith did not allow her to emulate Emerson's celebratory response to submission. Yet, as stated previously, she nevertheless responds to pain and defies death in writing the poem.

The concept Stevens labels "presence" comprises one half of the dyadic content of his conversation poem "St. John and the Back-Ache," an appropriately obscure piece somewhat neglected as an *ars poetica*. The other half of its subject matter is mind. In this late work from *The Auroras of Autumn*, pain, archly personified as a Back-Ache, articulates the conundrum of mind as it engages the Saint of Revelation, John the Divine, in dialogue:

The Back-Ache

The mind is the terriblest force in the world, father
 Because in chief, it, only, can defend
 Against itself. At its mercy, we depend
 Upon it.

St. John

The world is presence and not force.

Presence is not mind.

The Back-Ache

Presence is *Kinder-Scenen*. (CP 436)

Stevens again observes his custom of commencement, in this case of a tutorial, in mid-course, a practice attributable to the reenactment of origin in the sudden imposition of contextual shift leaving one initially devoid of the ballast of reference. The character encountered first in this pseudo-drama is Pain, or affliction, metaphorically humanized and, in a significant reversal and doubling of the directionality of the metaphor, a synecdoche and symbol of post-lapsarian suffering (Bloom *Climate* 204). The Back-Ache verbalizes the dilemma of the self-aware mind, one that, as champion and challenger both, must defend against its stubbornly dualistic self. Within a highly self-conscious dialogic format, we encounter the conceit of pain expressing itself in contemplation of presence. The Back-Ache instantiates ontology as physical pain, but one necessarily self-aware, self-involved, and capable of knowing an other—the world as presence—only as against its own limits. Unlike Stevens's developmental version of engrossment, *kinder-scenen*, about which it can only wonder, the Back-Ache is engaged intellectually. It attempts to know presence discursively, to define and thereby confine it, and its method precludes a co-extensiveness with presence that lies far too deep for intellectual access. As Emerson tells us, pain is a shallow stream, all the more so as it is prologue to the ultimate, all-inclusive, inaccessible realm of biological death. Pain cognized, perhaps more so than other conditions, points forward toward the hope of relief and back toward

the memory of its infliction. Like the figure of the orphan, it inevitably refers to its absent cause: *the fall*. As the view from Emerson's riser, past and future are hopelessly impenetrable from the perspective of acute pain.

Positioned as the Back-Ache's spiritual mentor, John the Divine, the prophet of apocalypse announces the capacity of presence to fill the being, slaking pain as Emersonian antidote. The resulting sense of satiety prompts the reeling out of a suite of metaphors that might in some circles be called the lyric proper.¹⁷ The poem, at this point, abandons the discourse of initiation, and, significantly, within a performance format, evolves to become a lyrical soliloquy enacting the mind in the act of finding its particular sufficiency. As rhapsodic as Emerson's revelation in the West, the monologue adopts the ritualistic pacing and bravado tone that characterize vatic delivery, accelerating the poem toward its climax.

St. John

It fills the being before the mind can think.

The effect of the object is beyond the mind's

Extremest pinch and, easily, as in

A sudden color on the sea. But it is not

That big-brushed green. Or in a tragic mode,

As at the moment of the year when, tick,

Autumn howls upon half-naked summer. But

It is not the unravelling of her yellow shift.

Presence is not the woman, come upon,

Not yet accustomed, yet, at sight, humane

To most incredible depths. I speak below
 The tension of the lyre. My point is that
 These illustrations are neither angels, no,
 Nor brilliant blows thereof, ti-rill-a-roo,
 Nor all one's luck at once in a play of strings.
 They help us face the dumbfounding abyss
 Between us and the object, external cause,
 The little ignorance that is everything,
 The possible nest in the invisible tree,
 Which in a composite season, now unknown,
 Denied, dismissed, may hold a serpent, loud
 In our captious hymns, erect and sinuous,
 Whose venom and whose wisdom will be one.
 Then the stale turtle will grow limp from age.

We shall be heavy with the knowledge of that day. (*CP* 436-37)

In the saint's convoluted utterance, presence is the necessary impossible, the possible "nest" or birth-crib whose name puns on the French *n'est*. Presence, strictly speaking, is not sustainable or presentable with linguistic precision: it cannot bear the falsification of descriptive "re"-presentation. It can only be approached by means of counterspin, by negative reference and by figuration--what it is not: Stevens's blanketing, metaphoric leaves. It is not possible, in other words, to predicate presence in the affirmative. In an analysis of the dynamic of apocalypse, J. Hillis-Miller reveals the vatic mode to be one of deferral, of revelation that does not ultimately reveal (43), precisely the dynamic enacted

by the unquenchable troping of the saint who presumably has access to all tendency and the prophet Calvin who presumably has access to some. To the extent that troping deposits layer upon opaque layer, the stability of the single trope and the process of inference by which metaphors are read is undercut, infusing the poem with an ultimate obscurity.¹⁸ The physical, continental limit faced by Calvin is the spatial analogue of temporal destination: neither “end” reveals itself upon arrival but rather further estranges. As the poem winds down, the logically affiliated “world,” “non-force,” and “kinder-scenen” remain veiled:

The Back-Ache

It may be, may be. It is possible.

Presence lies far too deep, for me to know

Its irrational reaction, as from pain.

What then is the “irrational reaction” of presence conceded, in the humble musings of denouement, to out-distance the reach of self-conscious pain? A symptom of the loss of unity, or the dis-ease of homeostatic imbalance, pain cannot articulate presence because it is itself a symptom of disintegration, of the separation rational relationships of cause and effect demand. The knowledge of the reactive capacity of presence the Back-Ache seeks is available only upon the “rational” reinscription of duality in the form of cause and effect, which effectively undoes presence. As presence is the divine knowledge one dies to attain, it cannot be articulated in either sense of the word. In resting with the failure of knowledge, the Back-Ache seems resigned to the futility of bridging the gap between the two realms. Yet the poem nevertheless enacts presence after a fashion: it can be argued that the experience of encountering its metaphors induces the state that Emerson felt

before his landscape, the exposure to the unanalyzable and the incomprehensible he recognizes as beauty. St. John's speech deploys a panoply of techniques including negative constructions, irreconcilable images, and the very conceit of a speaking back-ache that render the exposure to the unanalyzable and the incomprehensible that is often experienced as beauty. Stevens's coy phraseology, his aphoristic encoilings, give off the commingled odors of irreducibility and profound depth. Their calculated obscurity seduces, stranding one precipitously--and blissfully--on the verge of discovery, before the fragrant portal of the divine. Obscurity is a vehicular technique by means of which what Emerson and Stevens call presence is imported into the poem.

Stevens, by his own admission, drew inspiration from Simone Weil's mystical theory of "decreation," the transition from the created to the uncreated that in his estimation characterized modern reality. Weil also embraces the present, as a means to self-annihilation:

We must also renounce the past and the future, for the self is nothing but a coagulation of past and future around a present which is always falling away. Memory and hope destroy the wholesome effect of affliction by providing an unlimited field where we can be lifted up in imagination (I used to be, I shall be . . .), but faithfulness to the passing moment reduces man truly to nothing and thus opens to him the gates of eternity. (21-22)

Weil's ascetic philosophy attempts to court affliction and to sustain it without succumbing to the temptation of hope. Her renunciation of the temporality the Back-Ache cannot transcend is a regression to a state of innocence, a value-laden station in and from which spirit may be fully realized. "Decreating" one's self by retreating into a state

that precedes creation inevitably returns one to one's origin (65, 83). As it is for Emerson, the state of presence is a self-effacement, a "dying into nature" which for Weil is exclusively, and not simultaneously God. Significantly, Weil seems to conceive of the regression in creatural terms as she writes, ". . . we must go down to the vegetative level" (83).

The paradox that it is the uncreating or the effacement of the self that returns it to its source is a core tenet of both Buddhist doctrine and Judeo-Christian mysticism. Stevens once again plays the role of demystifier. His version of innocent presence, *kinder-scenen*, makes the romantic move of invoking a developmental phase: ". . . much of the poetry of the whole world is the poetry of children . . . as if they were the creatures of a dimension in which life and poetry are one" (NA 159-60). Yet Stevens foregoes the romantic yearning after the lost "hour of splendor in the grass" and rather matter-of-factly assumes that this state is not only theoretically available in adulthood, but relatively natural and even pervasive. The quote continues: "The poetry of humanity is, of course, to be found everywhere" (160). Elsewhere, he maintains the theoretical identity of the two realms: "The theory of poetry is the theory of life" (OP 202). Preserving Stevens's attention to the etymology of "theatre," it is possible to claim that all the world is a stage on which the actor's dual functions of mediation and direct engagement play out. By way of naturalizing both the poetic vocation and theory, Stevens explains, "The theory of poetry is not abstract . . . but is a normal activity of the poet's mind in surroundings where he must engage in such activity or be extirpated" (NA 173). Poeticizing, theorizing, then, is an "acting" or enactment on the part of the mind-poem through which it maintains the embeddedness from which, like Weil's vegetables, it cannot be uprooted. The notion of

deracination expressed in this passage carries overtones of survival: the maintenance of the state of presence, it would seem, forces recourse to fundamental survival skills. Although life-or-death situations are not run of the mill lyric fodder,¹⁹ the natural necessity of the poetic enterprise is thereby thrown into relief. That lyric is a mode marked by some urgency is evinced by the poem of the mind's propulsive series of mandates, the "it musts" of "Of Modern Poetry," and by Frye's dictum that the poem arises from a compulsion or a need to interrupt the daily course of things in order to write ("Approaching" 34). Staying rooted for Stevens is a function of instinct, the transfer of agency not to God, but to "the precious portents of our own powers" (*NA* 175). Yet, his mellifluous phrase is not simply a slogan for the whelming romantic imagination; as for Weil, the goal of innocence is attainable only by the surrender of agency to the non-self. One strives, she writes, "to transfer the source of our actions outside ourselves. . . ." (82), a sentiment Stevens expresses in his wished-for "cure of ourselves, that is equal to a cure/Of the ground, a cure beyond forgetfulness" (*CP* 526). In "The Relations between Poetry and Painting," he quotes painter Paul Klee:

But he is one chosen that today comes near to the secret places where original law fosters all evolution. And what artist would not establish himself there where the organic center of all movement in time and space which he calls the mind or heart of creation--determines every function. (*NA* 174)

The turning of metaphors in the mouth of the prophet of apocalypse reveals and conceals a reality figured as the invisible but possible serpent "Whose venom and whose wisdom will be one." Ecologically, Stevens is closing in on the selective notion of niche, the point at which presence and mind co-exist. St. John's metonymic "venom" is a member of a

class of healthful self-preservatives that effect a species-specific participation in an ecology; its use is equivalent to the assumption of the user's proper place in the whole. Venom symbolizes a regression to ontological essence because it affords the ability to survive through who one is, having survived because of who one is. The point of selective success is the point at which one acts naturally, that is, in the way one has evolved to act, so as not to be extirpated from one's niche. Presence entails, in a sense, a correction of being that fosters right becoming through the recuperation of instinctual skills. It is, frankly, a return to the salutary, to "the mind of creation" or the external source of one's actions. The innocence that venom figures enables a purity of action that maintains oneself and the whole through the maintenance of one's place in that whole because the behaviors that maintain one's niche in the system also maintain the system. As complement to venom, wisdom emerges through the accumulation of experience: unlike venom it is innate only potentially. Wisdom implies the ability to engage a prophetic mode, to look toward and at the more expansive knowledge that is by necessity posited in the future tense—the knowledge of "that day." It entails a sense of the whole that precludes the naive assumption of one's vegetative or species-level position in the whole. In revealing what is inaccessible from a local perspective, the prophet transcends his niche. "We shall be heavy with the knowledge of that day" because it is the knowledge all possibility shouldered by the one, who must, from his limited vantage point, reveal the whole of which he is a part without deranging it. As Weil says, "To be innocent is to bear the weight of the whole universe. It is to throw in the counterweight to restore the balance" (27). While Weil's end is the comfortable resting place of self-abnegation, Stevens's poetically-framed pursuit of what he posits elsewhere as "reality"

is doomed because he recognizes that reality includes the mind, preventing its ascension to a bird's-eye view without the enabling artifice of a supreme fiction. Revelation is always a self-violating act. The dilation of one vantage point in order to involve all vantage points or modes of knowing assumes no less than an apotheosis and the replacement of the usurped Hindu turtle that now shoulders the heft of worldly affliction. On the other hand, the coordination of an instinct "below the will" with the assertion of one's self through the exercise of one's wisdom is an earthy and earthbound, animal feat. What exists at this juncture of the "possible impossible" but the human mind, whose brute and best instinct is to accumulate wisdom or the far-reaching predictive power that maintains its niche?

Insuring naive functioning by positioning mind at the point of selective success at which being and function are one and the same, at the point of metamorphosis to *the* bird, the representative member of the species, marks the recursion to an ontogenetic ground that is the point of seamlessness of species and individual characterizing Aristotelean set theory. The origins of poetry are cognate with mathematics in the sense that they presume that each member is fully representative of the category ("Categories" 15-16). At first glance, this position seems to be at odds with the traditional view of the poet as an exemplary, superior citizen. Yet, as Emerson's poet ("Poet" 447-48), Stevens's Major Man is representative among men based on his ability to transcend locality and to impart the commonwealth he perceives to others, and to do this, he must be most like his peers. The poem of the mind is both particular and universal, individual and species, providing a site of interchangeability that allows one's fellows to enter into and to share the space of the poem, to fit comfortably into its ecological crevices. One is welcome because another

has successfully homesteaded in the wilderness. Universality meets contingency in the nest, the cradle of being that is invisible in its possibility and possible through its invisibility. It is in this way that obliquely but surely, Stevens naturalizes the poetic enterprise and, in the transcendentalist tradition, makes what is developmental ongoing by recalling the phylogenetic in his ontogenetic recapitulation. The return to a point of origin in instinct is, then, the premise of a naturalized originality.

In rendering the nest of origin invisible or obscure, lyric orients itself toward destination, but a destination without end in both senses of the word. As what will suffice is not prescribed, finding involves an incessant recursivity or circling back into the bounds defined by pain through the process Frye observed to be revolutionary. Versions of pain come to figure the “involving” dynamic of self-awareness, whose entropy must be overcome through the submission to an environment that enables the drive outward. The poet-metaphysician in the dark is “like an insatiable actor” speaking what the “ear of the mind” wants to hear, suspended in the present act of *satisfying* itself, to use the term Stevens possibly borrowed from Alfred North Whitehead. As Stevens tells us elsewhere “It can never be satisfied, the mind, never” (*CP* 247). To suggest that a satisfaction has more than a momentary extension would be to implement predication, to determine and to obviate the search. The act of finding is therefore enactive without predication: both passive and active, present participle and gerund, it is enfolded in its search for sufficiency.

As predication confers the permanence and the exclusivity of ownership, it correlates with and enables an ontology of substance. When Whitehead proposed his syncretic process philosophy, he found it necessary to discard predication as untenable,

indicting it in the downfall of all previous metaphysics. He remedies the impasse in philosophy he identifies by developing an alternative metaphysics of event. It is important to acknowledge that a non-predicative construction does not invalidate agency: Stevens's "poem of the mind" is not grammatically patient even as its activity is encased within an ambivalent noun form. The basic unit in Whitehead's monism, an "actual entity," is likewise a unit of process and not of substance, that is, one that cannot be acted upon merely as object.²⁰ Whitehead's qualifier "actual" embraces the senses of both action and actualization, invoking perception and potential in turn. An actual entity may be an emergent unit of any variety, and Whitehead refers to such units as "drops of experience, complex and interdependent"(18), but his is specifically a philosophy of *organism* that organicizes all experience.

Actual entities become through a process of what Whitehead calls "concrescence" that is necessarily directed toward novel unity or togetherness (21).²¹ "Concrescence is the name of the process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity in a determinate relegation of each item of the 'many' to its subordination in the constitution of the novel 'one'"(21). Concrescence—or growing together—is the process of becoming through what Whitehead describes as prehensions, the gestures through which the actual entity appropriates particularity (18-20, 290). An actual entity is then a concrescence of its prehensions, the means by which it prehends or literally "seizes" what Whitehead calls "initial data" (by way of making it palatable to minds nurtured on a metaphysics of substance) and assimilates it into its ever-emerging whole (236). Each venom-driven prehension must maintain a unity like a homeostatic balance within the actual entity. The process the actual entity prehends is always another actual entity. As

subjects in themselves, each actual entity is then composed of other actual entities (12). Whitehead uses the terms subject and superject (29) to capture the joint sense of dominance and submission that characterizes the process of prehension: it is in the nature of the entity to be both simultaneously. At any given point within the event, the actual entity maintains what is abstracted and simplified in a metaphysics of substance as the dual status of subject and object. Stevens's understanding of the poem as such a processive organism is revealed in his lines "It may be *of* a man skating, a woman dancing" (emphasis added); the mind-poem as organism is constitutionally indebted to rather than, or in addition to, being "about," a potential multiplicity of events.

As actual entities are formed of other actual entities, they are effectively constituted of a sheer multiplicity that is their vital source (24). It is in the nature of every entity that it is potentially every other entity. On the surface, Emerson's rhapsodic and symbolic death into the West might be taken to be a strategy of passivity or mystic surrender that entails yielding to the fate that has betrayed, but upon closer look, simple faith is revealed to demand a quiescence of the will tantamount to submitting to the indeterminate in the explicit form of co-extensive causality. The hardness of the present, Emerson writes, lies in its ability to transcend "the perfect calculation of the kingdom of known cause and effect" (482). It is altogether too tempting to live by the superficial certainty of the multiplication tables. The deeper nature of causal relation is that it is ungraspable because causes are not singular but multiple and contemporaneous: many contribute to the precipitation of one convergent effect (482). One cannot predict here, at least not local occurrence. Emerson draws upon the new field of statistics to explain how the unpredictability of local variations nests within the divinely determined tendency of

the whole. In assigning a moral role for art, Friedrich Schiller identifies two sorts of indeterminacy: the indeterminacy of nothing (or of the homogenous) and the indeterminacy of everything (or of the heterogeneous). He dedicates the latter as the fertile source of the aesthetic within the sensory that is then determined in the building of ethical thought (140-41). The aesthetic is the response to potentiality conceived as all-inclusive. Emerson notes that the hoi-polloi assume the opposite, that “all is impossible until realized” (“Experience” 485). Because causality is simultaneous and far-reaching, we cannot access it in its totality without the broad scope of omniscience. The network of multiple and co-extensive causes is a realm darkened to the view of the individual man, and, as Emerson beams, “God delights to isolate us every day” (483). Potential is then akin to the invisible cause that is Stevens’s mysterious nest/*n’est*. In Emerson’s parlance, unenlightened causes go by the name of fate. “Fate, then, is a name for facts not yet passed under the fire of thought--for causes which are unpenetrated” (958). But the epistemological latency of causality also allows for the ongoing exercise of free will, as one’s free agency is a player effectuating the grand plan to the extent its aim is refined and attendant to its multi-dimensional connectedness to nature.

But to see how fate slides into freedom, and freedom into fate, observe how far the roots of every creature run, or find, if you can, a point where there is no thread of connection. Our life is consentaneous and far-related. This knot of nature is so well tied, that nobody was ever cunning enough to find the two ends. (961)

The will of one amounts to one parameter among many constraining another as fate.

According to transcendentalist tenets, the intellect is properly embedded within a causal network that eludes its apprehension. Holistic systems permit this paradoxical

dynamic: causal agency must be obscured because if one is connected to the whole, one is constrained by the nature of the connection and the nature of the whole of which one cannot be fully aware because one is at the same time constituted by it and isolated in his own consciousness or, more broadly, his concrescence. This is not to badger the weary notion of the alienating cage of self-consciousness, which does not depend upon a notion of embeddedness. It is rather to stress that the nature of embeddedness, neglected throughout the twentieth century in approaches to both literature and the sciences of the mind, is necessary for understanding how the dynamics of both the poem and the mind give rise to their emergence from the nest and the possibility it entrains.

Emerson's notion of death into generative causality eventually converges with the vatic notion of the poet as conduit, as a mouthpiece or prophet who has squelched his libido in the relinquishment of known formulae. It is the self-relinquishment of the vatic notion of the poet that is often overlooked. To recoup broad potential, one must suspend the will, as Schopenhauer picks up in his famous definition of lyric as "an inverted action by the mind upon the will" (250). This level of surrender to unknown causes is necessary to effect a communion with nature Emerson attains through the activity of attending to potential he calls *thinking*. As a capacity for determination, potentiality in and of itself is transcendent, and thus, Emerson seeks to access it by embedding himself rightly within it in order to at once maintain the authority of God's grand plan and become the "Latest Freed Man," embracing moment by moment determinations at the local level that nevertheless achieve God's or the system's ends.²² There is then a further facet to the function of exile or social alienation Emerson enlightens. If lyric, in its execution, amputates its spawning context, and, in so doing disables determined causal efficacy and

the mastery of the same, the past can not bear, or support the future; the future no longer bears, or sustains, the past. The rupture or hiatus between the crutch of the predictable alliance of cause and effect results in the suspension in a hypothetical interstice where habit and history have been rendered passé. (It is here, where effect does not follow from cause, where the “then” clause cannot complete the implicit “if” clause, that Dickinson’s poem tests the abyss.) In positing a wholly other locale, an extreme asymmetry is wrought as between language’s habitual usage and the use for which it is immediately needed. As a sign of the spiritual, language becomes a repository and a vehicle of potential application in this initial responsive state in which one cannot infer causes from effects and call it a day because the experience is untested. Lyric in this way establishes an immediate locality that cannot but force attention to the constitution of the unencumbered present tense, precisely what Stevens meant by *kinder scenen*, the immersed state of childhood. James Longenbach borrows child psychologist D.W. Winnicott’s term “potential space” to claim it as the proper domain for poetry:

Children spend most of their time in a psychic space that is neither completely internal nor completely objective—the “potential space” of play. Adults may too readily capitulate either to a world of inanimate objects or to a world of uncontested fantasy, but the healthy adult continues to live in increasingly complex and tenuous versions of potential space. (56)

The adult trained in the dialect of cultural interchange, that is, in conventions that entail given relationships of cause to effect, must contrive to maintain “potential space,” that which is idealized to exist before accumulated use value, in order to maintain its health. What is perhaps the most rigorous codification of the ontology of potential is to be found

in Charles Sanders Peirce's architectonic system erected from a chronic triad of categories sporting the generic names "first," "second," and "third." Peirce refers to his categories alternately as "moods," "tones of thought," ("Guess" 247) and "modes of being" ("Principles" 75), attempts at description that emphasize their object's ephemeral nature. As non-substantive entities, they nevertheless structure a semiotic system dependent on an inaccessible realm of firstness from which all order arises. Firstness is an attitude of immediacy, that which is, but is not (yet) mediated ("Guess" 250).

It must be initiative, original, spontaneous, and free . . . It precedes all synthesis and all differentiation: it has no unity and no parts. It cannot be articulately thought: assert it, and it has already lost its characteristic innocence; for assertion always implies a denial of something else. Stop to think of it, and it has flown! What the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it, before he had drawn any distinctions, or had become conscious of his own existence, that is first, present, immediate, fresh, new initiative, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious and evanescent. Only remember that every description of it must be false to it. ("Guess" 248)

Peirce clarifies this passage by explaining that firstness is neither unified, nor differentiated, but constituted of a variety that is in his word *virtual*, that is, not definitely present and therefore not definable ("Guess" 257). The potentially heterogeneous²³ quality of firstness aligns it with Emerson's and Schiller's aesthetic privileging of an all-inclusive indeterminacy over the indeterminacy of the vacuum (140-41). Peirce envisions an inceptive role for firstness, a developmental, if not necessarily a sequential, priority when he writes ". . . the indeterminate first of anything is the *material*

of which it is formed” (“Guess” 257) (emphasis added). Tiffany alights on the same term, “material” (in the sense of raw material) in attributing lyric obscurity, providing his own emphasis: “What precisely does obscurity yield in the act of reading—in the absence of clear, cognitive meaning—if not a sense, strange indeed, of poetic *materials*” (83). “The formal sophistication and delicacy of the riddle-poem, coupled with its inherent obscurity, points to an ‘unresolvable’—and productive--ambiguity in its literary character” (78). The indeterminate yet productive quality of obscurity is firstness, the possibility within which Emily Dickinson wished to dwell (657).

Obviously, lyric obscurity thrives in the absence of the philosophical quandary over the nature of materialism, and so Tiffany’s allegory must remain that. It is not necessary to resort to something so far afield of daily experience as the contemplation of subatomic phenomena in order to explain obscurity as a poetic phenomenon. Though Tiffany does not directly explore the perceptual element in the dynamic he limns, he grazes the subject in probing the paradoxical core invisibility of matter. Yet, the subatomic is fundamentally imperceptible and not available to the kind of knowledge that is perceptually dependent. Although potentiality may inhere within the atom, it is not in any direct sense *potentially* visible. In order to be productive of vision--and the vatic sense of vision is salient here—obscurity must consist in what may emerge into visibility.

Nor is it necessary to render language strangely autonomous and unearthly to account for its obscuring tendencies. The slant of much recent thought attributes the disintegration of reference to the poem’s struggle to constitute itself verbally as against language’s inherent fluidity. Obscurity, postmodernism would have it, is simply a textual function arising from the resistance of language to the stasis interpretation inflicts. Paul

de Man's notion of "undecidability" as between syntax and figure, or as between the allegorical and the representational modes of linguistic performance as they engage in mutually undermining play, and Derrida's anti-theory of the irrepressible motion of referential subversion, for instance, are particular renditions stressing the bent of language to resist stasis and ultimately transcendence.²⁴ To a significant extent, the logic of paradox deconstruction abstracts and motivates, that is to say, sets into motion, would seem to have much in common with the paradoxical co-presence of the polarities of venom and wisdom. However, accounting for obscurity is not simply a matter of acknowledging the play between signifieds but rather the way that that play realizes a potential that is nevertheless irresolvable. Poststructuralism is remiss in dodging the question of the purpose of resistance.²⁵ If an organism is to contend with newness, there must be a source and a mode through which meaning is renewed at the intersection of observer and fresh scene. Derrida's version of deconstruction in particular lacks an historical sense and thus the capacity for origination. While it implicitly acknowledges that the power of evoking a particular meaning must have attached to the signifier at some point in time and trace does linger, the inversion upon which his theory is based presumes no cumulative dynamic and in fact denies the possibility of the extension of presence altogether existing, instead, in the stalled, repetitive time of the obsessive-compulsive. The brain is not permitted to register the completion of the deconstructive action. Yet, actions, including actions of signification, are irrevocable, constructing not only themselves and their enactor, but an arrow of time, and it is by virtue of their irrevocability that they become functional. If life were a play of reversible, flip-flopping actions entailing no historical sense, no one action could have significance to future

survival because it would be immediately recalled. In the physical world, each event entrains a web of connections that cannot simply be circumscribed and absented as *other*, even as a provisional object-other, as each “actual entity” is both subject and superject. The paradoxical status of the subjected subject, the subject on the verge of silencing as it recognizes that it is comprised of the presence of others is the crux of lyric. Neither subject nor object nor even the verb that links them, the entity is a verbal in the act of finding.²⁶ Lyric embodies its performance, a mandate I am taking literally to make an homologous connection between a neurological, physical embodiment and the poem. The actor is a figure for the poet not only because the poem is embodied linguistically, but because the poem of the mind’s embodiment is the embodiment of the mind of the poet, a fact which must be kept in the foreground if one is to make sense of making sense of anomaly sensorially.

The indeterminate quality of the word or the semantic unit in poetry is often celebrated, especially by poet-critics, as its natural attribute. Within its fictional frame, the lyric effectively dishevels reference because its language is imported into the adopted homeland and is not immediately responsive to unexplored circumstances. What the poem resists in admitting potential meaning is a pre-packaged system of signifieds, automatic or facile categorization, habitual usage. In lyric poetry, language shimmers with a foreign patina: a repertoire of potential meaning hovers over the poem like an aura that is visibly indistinct. In restoring language’s full functional, that is semantic potential into the milieu of the poem, poetic obscurity puts language into epistemological alignment with a theory of embedded cognition. Given the mutual constitution of actual entities--of organism and environment--any entity consists within itself of other

constituting and therefore extant entities: by simply existing, it refers beyond itself in and to a limitless web of interconnection in the same way a word refers to an ideal total of denotative and connotative significance that then refers beyond itself in a continuum of potential lexical meaning. Obscurity is a symptom of the embeddedness of the sign; it is lexical to the extent that prehensions gesture beyond themselves in a chain, not only of reference, but of constituting effect, that is without end. Saussure, of course, was instrumental in pointing out the relational nature of meaning made as between the units of the language within a system of difference (165-66). Yet, he does not take the critical step of claiming that words embody their relations. The sense of potential that lingers is both lexical and physical, or “material” as Tiffany points out. It evinces a lexicality conceived as a physicality. In so doing, lyric expression strives to render or make present the fullness of its supporting context rather than masking it, and acknowledges the fact that its local freedom is encased in determinations made by other events. Wisdom, or the knowledge of the tendency of the whole that is precluded by the singular position of the grammatical person within it, is thereby admitted into the poem as a reflection of its rendering of an embodied voice and as a consequence of its obscurity. Embeddedness and embodiedness is a fact of language: lyric simply restores a balance. And it is a fact of language because these two events—language and biology--are different interpretations of the same process. Lyric technique, like the mind, maintains the existence of the ever fluid pre-conditions of linguistic decisiveness which mirror and most likely arise from the elusive preconditions of consciousness. This marks a casual gesture toward a biosemiotics that I wish to extend as Emerson did in making each natural fact *significant* (“Nature 1836” 20) and as Whitehead did in offering a pervasive definition of organism

(128-29).

Because lyric poetry reflects as well as effects this connectedness in a structural replication of the same, its obscurity may become practically inexhaustible—the *raison* for its durability. The word, in poetry, exists in the fullness of its evocative power, bringing into the present the totality of its past experience, its accruals and purgings, expansions, revisions, scars, in short, what corresponds to its genetic, and in turn, its evolutionary memory. Obscurity-producing techniques vary widely and are privileged differently by different poetics, and I will not here attempt to compile an exhaustive list. The “out-of-the-ordinary” quality of poetic language is usually attributed to the negation of linguistic convention. Enjambment, line breaks, collage, *mélange*, elision and *liason*, allusion, mixed discourses, vague antecedents, conceit, repetition, parallelism, disarranged syntax, subject/object confusion, unfamiliar diction, and above all sound, comprise a partial compendium of techniques. The apparent impenetrability of “surface seeming” is an effect that Stevens’s poetry achieves exquisitely through, for instance, the way his poems do not rest for long at stable meaning, his practice of inviting even the most obscure meanings of words in order to elongate the chaotic, messy activity of recuperation. This sheer excess is Stevens’s “gaudeum,” and it is analogous to the endless potential of Orpheus’s love for Eurydice. It is Hopkins’s “All things counter, original, spare, strange” (1063) and the reason Emerson can declare that “Every word was once a poem”²⁷ (“Poet” 455).

Constitution by informing, in the sense of physically forming within, supports Olson’s notion that “form is never more than an extension of content” (16). And indeed, first experience recurs thematically in lyric as, for example, the advent of the vista from

the mountain top, death, religious communion, and most often love, which is always initially fresh, unfamiliar, and, it would seem, withheld. As a mood, mode, or tone, firstness is thematically pervasive. It appears in the medieval trope of vernal rebirth, invoking the seasonal juncture immediately prior to the revelation of life through the realization of possible life. If the reaction of the modernist iconoclasts and masculine detractors of romanticism (of Pound and company especially) claimed responsibility for the historical swerve away from some of these themes to a hard-edged, no-nonsense poetics, the belief in the inexhaustibility of firstness new love confers was earlier spoofed by Sappho in the self-deprecating, invocatory piece “Artfully adorned Aphrodite,” in which the summoned goddess inquires “Whom *this* time should I persuade to lead you back again to her love?” (3). But lyric utterance flirts with obscurity not simply because its object is obscure (travel writing and teenage journals would then pass as lyrical), but because the lyric’s and the mind’s grasp of the strange is accomplished by airing potential, by evoking it. To confront the estranging hand of fate—to act wisely within the new situation—possibility must be entertained, and as Emerson intuited, as much of its overlapping presence as possible embodied in the act of thinking. In practical terms, lyric renders the processes of decision making in which all options, or at least all best options, are entertained simultaneously, or as close thereto as is possible, so that best matches may be constructed, or pre-existing sets of connotations reshuffled in order to restore an efficacy to the words Shelley sought to “shake up” to enable the lawmakers to enact wisely. Firstness is thus naturalized as the set of implicit possible relationships between organism and environment—and by extension between reader and text—evoked as the organism acts, what is implicated, but cannot be perceived because perception is the

perception of difference and already a determination. Obscurity acknowledges an expanded version of perception, one that reaches backward to what might be termed the pre-perceptual, that is undetermined within a subset of possibility or unselected according to Darwinian argot. It is sought in Stevens's correction of predication -- "The stream of consciousness is individual; the stream of life is total. Or, the stream of consciousness is individual; the stream of life, total" (*OP* 184). Totality cannot be predicated or, as Peirce would say, to state it is to see it evaporate on the voice.

To broach the ineffable realm of firstness, Peirce resorts to allying it with feeling, and explicitly the feeling of what he calls the *tout ensemble*, the simple emotion that inevitably accompanies the whole of "every operation of the mind" (81).

By a feeling, I mean an instance of that kind of consciousness which involves no analysis, comparison or any process whatsoever, nor consists in whole or in part of any act by which one stretch of consciousness is distinguished from another which has its own positive quality which consists in nothing else, and which is of itself all that it is, however it may have been brought about. (81)

In corresponding to the whole mental operation, the emotion Peirce qualifies as first lacks a specific object (emotion with an object would be second to that object). In the present context, this fact allies emotion with the musicality of poetry. As an emotional vehicle and prod, musicality is popularly thought to be universal and to transcend, in hyperbolic accounts, not only species boundaries but the distance between the human and the inanimate. Orpheus's playing moves not only his attendant beasts, but rocks as well.²⁸ As music is sound disassociated from an object cue, an objectifiable referent, the emotion elicited by music is without a causal object as well; it is therefore first,

apparently *sui generis*, the phoenix rising. To the degree that music's universality inheres in its emotional efficacy, lyric is thought, reductively, to be the medium of emotion. It is the prevailing bias of specific movements in art—such as that of sensibility—that artistic product is a consummate emotional vehicle, and no literary form shoulders the task in reputation of rendering emotion to the extent that lyric poetry does. The most infamous simplification of the genre is no doubt the philosopher Carnap's relegation of lyric expression to an emotional ejaculation that categorizes it with laughter and other forms of primal outburst (17). In this aspect also its roots run deep. Two senses of the primacy of lyric emotion recur within popular culture: its lack of reference and its phylogenetic priority. In a nuanced treatment of the subject, Wordsworth illuminated a third sense when he rooted the start of the compositional process in the tranquil recollection of emotion and the material basis of the poem in its subsequent "spontaneous overflow" ("Preface" 596, 608). Within a genre that revolves around the artifice of origin, emotion is first by virtue of its apparent spontaneity. As the principle of spontaneity, firstness must be generated spontaneously: "How is variety to come out of the womb of homogeneity; only by a principle of spontaneity, which is just that virtual variety that is the First" ("Guess" 257).

Moreover, music is famously an "abstract" medium, one dominated by non-referential patternings that in the lyric are perpetually in tension with the determinate thrust language. Even within the most lucid lyric poem, the music intrinsic to the genre itself obscures, perhaps as much as a present and literal accompaniment as it does as a derivative verbal phenomenon. It bears mentioning that poetry becomes linguistically "difficult" at the moment it becomes writerly, at the point it divests its musical

accompaniment and assumes the task of generating an atmosphere of firstness verbally. At the point lyric absorbs the music that had previously accompanied it, it becomes imbued with greater structural complexity and generates what is often referred to as an architectonics to carry the function of musicality.

Inhering in lyric poetry, then, are two distinct forms of poetic firstness as provided by the emotional timbre and obscurity of the poem. They are linked to one another in the source of musicality although neither is wholly dependent upon the sounds of words for its effect. The emotional content of both poetry and life can be notoriously and problematically obscure. In fact, it was the vagueness of interpretations based in the emotional responses of the critic that was the target of the case Wimsatt and Beardsley made against the Affective Fallacy (21). In the tradition of Eliot's objective correlative, they deemed emotion to be problematically obscure if it was not correlated with an objective idea. Yet, leaving the value of genetic interpretation aside, emotion's functionality is indebted to its vague quality, and here, the history of the refinements of the neuroscientific understanding of emotion bear rehearsing, for they reveal a progression of bricks laid in the foundation of the present understanding. The study of emotion has seen camps divide on the question of whether cognition, in the form of cortical activity, is necessary to emotional experience or whether emotion-action cycles may play out subcortically. It is related to the question of when emotion arose phylogenetically, for if emotional activity can transpire in the absence of cortical involvement, it is theoretically present in species lacking a neocortex. The modern study of emotion begins with William James, who, more or less simultaneously with the Danish physiologist Carl Lange,²⁹ proffered a theory that reversed the longstanding supposition

that cognition is prior to emotion and holds sway over it (442). The James-Lange theory, as it has come to be known, maintains that the cognition—or the categorization—of an emotion follows the physical response to an emotion-provoking stimulus consisting of the activation of autonomic responses and muscular-skeletal reactions (450). He proposes that “. . . *the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same change as they occur is the emotion*” (449). In his oft-cited example, we do not run from a bear because we are frightened; we are frightened because we run from the bear. Our identification of the emotion is made upon our reading of bodily changes prompted by the inciting incident and our reaction to it. James goes so far as to claim that if we were able to abstract the emotion from its sensorial, bodily context, there would be no remaining experience that would strike us as emotional (451-2). He points to poetry and music in particular as examples of experience in which bodily response—“the cutaneous shiver which like a sudden wave flows over us”—occurs prior to our idea of the emotion (456-7). James’s theory is significant to subsequent research for several reasons. First, it recognizes the subtle varieties of bodily processes within emotional experience which must logically occur in as many combinations as there are particular identifiable emotions. Evoking the romantic emblem the Aeolian Harp in describing emotional experience, James writes, “*the [physiological] changes are so indefinitely numerous and subtle that the entire organism may be called a sounding-board*” (450). “Our whole cubic capacity is sensibly alive” (451). Second, James’s insight that the action prompted by the stimulus to the emotion intensifies our sense of the emotion, suggests that a feedback arm from the periphery to the emotional center must exist (462-3). His suggestion that the spur to emotional experience (the object of

the emotion) is not consciously available as an object until after the emotion registers as such is perfectly compatible with the present theory of emotion as it stands although, logically, the object must be perceived unconsciously in order to prompt an appropriate response.

In the short term, the James-Lange Theory was to prove vulnerable to experimentation. In the 1920's, Walter B. Cannon countered its claims by demonstrating that the neurophysiological mechanisms do not support them. Qualia, Cannon argues, are too indistinct to correspond to the extensive array of human emotions, a point he was able to support with evidence that the sympathetic nervous system controlling the viscera functions as a unit and that similar, if not identical, autonomic responses may be triggered by radically dissimilar stimuli (351-53). The consistent response of the autonomic nervous system (hereinafter, the "ANS") is at odds with the diversity of our emotional experience (351). His claim is not only phenomenologically-based: Cannon observes that efferent nerve fibers (those transmitting from the brain to the periphery) outnumber afferent fibers (those transmitting from the periphery to the brain) by a factor of ten to one and that input from the viscera is therefore insufficiently diverse (353-4). He further demonstrated that when visceral activity is artificially induced in subjects, a specific emotional experience is not reported by them (355-56). James's argument hinges on the priority of the visceral component of emotion, and Cannon undermines it by showing that feedback from the periphery, including visceral backflow, has a longer latency period than emotional response: subjects are sometimes able to identify their affective responses before visceral responses are generated (354-55). In addition, animals from whom the sympathetic nervous system³⁰ (and thus visceral response) has been excised nevertheless

exhibit emotional responses in their organs that remain functional (348-50). Cannon concludes that emotional mechanisms cannot reside solely in the periphery. He ultimately relocates the process of emotional discrimination to the brain, buttressing Eliot's and Wimsatt's claim that emotion must be grounded in an objectified idea.

James's theory also cannot explain the persistence of feelings that linger after pertinent physiological signs and symptoms have subsided. Most of the subsequent work on the topic is in some respect an attempt to synthesize thesis and antithesis and to thereby integrate the alternative assignments of priority made by James and Cannon. In the midst of the debate, Magda Arnold developed the first full-fledged appraisal theory of emotion. Appraisal is the unconscious, emotionally-driven process by which the organism determines the significance of a stimulus to itself, making a crude distinction between likely harmful and likely helpful objects based upon its past experience with them (vol. 1 54-56). Emotion is the felt tendency to act in an appropriate direction, either toward or away from the provoking stimulus as it behooves the percipient organism (vol. 2 94). In defining emotion as an action tendency, Arnold casts her lot with Cannon. The tendency to act, she argues, is formed from our past experience with a stimulus and may be constituted by cognition alone: bodily response is not a necessary component of feeling. Arnold also makes the useful distinction between *emotion*, the bodily experience, and *feeling*, the conscious labeling of the emotion (vol. 1 19-21). The former, as Darwin averred, is consistent across species, possibly homologous between them (*Expression*), while the second is uniquely human in its specificity, socially constructed and perhaps linguistically dependent.³¹ Preserving James's emphasis on the role of feedback from the periphery as a fundamental component of emotional experience while at the same time

conceding Cannon's charge that it is irresolvably ambiguous, Stanley Schacter and Jerome Singer played mediators in claiming that specificity is assigned to emotion by the act of categorizing (making what they called "attributions") within a past and a present context.

Preserving James's sequence, they describe feelings as "cognitive translations of ambiguous peripheral signals" and regard translation as a creative process constructing emotions from the concededly ambiguous messages originating in the periphery (291). The appraisal of emotion, they argue, implicates individual history, as well as expectation, each of which profoundly influences emotional interpretations of physiological states. The state of mind into which the stimulus intrudes is primarily responsible for teasing specificity out of non-specific responses in determining emotions (289). By demonstrating that spinal cord severance can cause a reduction in emotional intensity, they provide experimental evidence that "objectively distinguishable emotions can be correlated with specific patterns of autonomic, endocrine, and voluntary response" (297).

Arnold's separation of feeling and emotion is grounded by the recent work of Joseph LeDoux, who identifies discrete physical systems supporting the unconscious and conscious processing of specific emotions. Seeking to rescue emotion from its reduction to a cognitive function, LeDoux assumes the two to be interactive while demonstrating that they may also function independently (69). He accepts an evaluative role for emotion but stresses its unconscious aspects. First, he establishes that the separate processes of the perception of an emotionally significant object and its appraisal may overlap: evaluative mechanisms may be activated before perceptual processes reach their

conclusion (69). In his work on the fear system,³² LeDoux then distinguishes the role of the hippocampus, which, by virtue of its intricate connections to the rhinal cortex, is involved in the formation of explicit emotional memories, from the subcortical thalamo-amygdala pathway, which processes emotions unconsciously and, because it is implicated in implicit or unconscious memory (such as “muscle memory”), prompts autonomic response (202, Chapters 7 and 8). He argues that unconscious processing through the amygdala is activated first and is the more expeditious of the two systems, allowing James to flee from the bear (285). Cognitive input intervenes between the perception of the significant stimulus and the action taken in response. Drawing on an understanding of ANS functioning not available to Cannon, LeDoux claims that the autonomic nervous system can respond selectively *to some extent* (292) (emphasis added). Cannon was on target about its dilatory response, but missed the specificity of somatic response, which James perceived (293). The participation of nuanced somatic responses provides the variety necessary to correlate the peripheral registration of emotional stimuli with the feelings experienced. Conceding that there is not yet an adequate understanding of the role of bodily states in emotion (295), LeDoux establishes the thalamo-amygdala pathway and its activation of arousal systems together with feedback from the periphery as indispensable to emotional experience while remaining doubtful as to whether cortical input to the amygdala is absolutely necessary to that experience (298). In the wake of a century of inquiry, the question remains “Is there, in fact, a completely subcortical or non-cognized version of emotional experience, or are the two levels so intimately related as to preclude the priority of sub-cortical processing, much less its independence?”

Valerie Hardcastle distills the situation:

There are now two views of emotion on the table. Cognitive appraisal theories claim that cognitive interpretations are an integral part of emotion and either precede or co-occur with physiological responses. In contrast, the basic emotion theorists propose that physiological arousal precedes cognitive appraisal and is the more fundamental process. (243)

In an attempt to soften the divide between appraisal theorists and basic emotion theorists, Hardcastle accepts LeDoux's claim that the amygdala tags incoming data with a valence of potential meanings (238) but takes to task his extrication of non-cognitive emotion from cognition. She argues that the amygdala does not and could not generate its valence prior to cognitive input and that cognitive activity is not, as James first proposed, a *post hoc* amplification of the experience of emotion, but rather may be a determining factor within the latter (239). Adding fuel to appraisal theorists, she concedes that we seek to confirm our preconceptions, including our emotional preconceptions (241). She challenges LeDoux's claim that the independence of the subcortical processing mechanism is a timesaving development (242), pointing out that that the assumption of the functional specificity of subsystems does not entail the assumption of their functional isolation (244). The two, she reasons, must be highly cooperative in order to insure a coherent response. She proposes that their interactivity is generated according to the principles of non-linear dynamic systems theory via recursive feedback loops that enable the virtually simultaneous engagement of the two.

When the brain receives some emotion-laden stimulus, it will seek to interpret that, just as it would any other stimuli. Amygdala activation is part of the

interpretation; so is cortical activation. That is, both the amygdala and the cortex are part of the resonating brain circuit relevant to emotion. These two regions work together to establish coherent and cohesive response to input, to maintain the circuit's trajectory in an established attractor basin. (245)

Hardcastle thus makes the constructivism of Schacter and Singer bi-directional. The use of deterministic chaos theory to characterize the interplay provides both a stable integrated response over various input and a novel response when appropriate. The mutual construction of the cognitive and bodily representation of emotion Hardcastle posits accords with and is, I think, a necessary precondition enabling Antonio Damasio's rather elaborate claim for emotion as an appraisal mechanism. Damasio argues that emotion, that is, the bodily sensation, is evaluative in a complex way, distilling the possible repercussions of one's actions into the environment into a "somatic marker" that amounts to a judgment about the best course of action in a given situation; it is a guide and goad to most appropriate action (173-75). This complex processing ability avails the human organism in social situations especially, as they are among the most complex we encounter. Far from being a gratuitous and irrational vestige of our animal past to be reined in and mastered by the advanced human forebrain, emotion is a shorthand representation of the evaluation of projected effects from the projected cause that is the anticipated action into the environment. Damasio's view of emotion empowers the faculty to take into account the extensive set of possible repercussions (reactions that are irrational in their virtual simultaneity) that might follow from social gestures and not merely from the basic survival tactics of seek or avoid.³³ The feeling of the *toute ensemble* assumes an intricate calculation of potential consequences that posits the

potentiality of firstness in a forward-looking direction, projecting the ramifying effects of the action into the environment and their possible repercussions to the organism and distilling them into an action tendency. Emotion experienced bodily is vague because it points to a set of potential versions of the organism's situatedness in the form of contingency projected into the future. Emotion, in other words, approaches the prophetic in accounting extensively for potentiality. It is the experience of as-yet-unrealized heterogeneity, a summation of consequences to the organism. Cognitive participation is necessary to account for the complexity of the projected outcome versions. If there is in fact a strictly non-cognitive form of emotion, potential must inhere within it simply, as a minimal set: the dyad of survival-demise or the Christian version of revelation, the decision (Whitehead's technical term for the determination of the event) boils down to the grant of salvation or its refusal. However, human experience is rarely so simple: to borrow James's incident of encounter with a bear, the unlucky hiker has many more options in this archetypal life-or-death scenario than to run or be consumed: he can call for help, play dead, appropriate a weapon, or engineer an elaborate escape involving swinging away on a vine and plunging into a moving body of water.

The dynamic of emotion then recapitulates the dynamic of apocalypse in projecting the tendency of the whole, the set of potential versions of the organism's situatedness forward. As in a prophecy, the referent of the emotion is obscured. In the human conception of God, an end point must be imagined in order to posit a point of stasis from which the whole can be accessed retrospectively. This maneuver is necessary due not only to the singularity of consciousness, but to the fact that the whole constantly undergoes a flux born of the ongoing readjustment of its mutually co-constructed parts

through their actualization. Apocalypse is the ascension to the bird's-eye view that extricates the one from its dependence on other actual entities so that it may divine. The Shelleyan, Emersonian, and Stevensian poet strives to envision this ultimate form of vision,³⁴ but the latter two figures especially realize that the whole the emotion responds to is a derivative whole—the whole of the repercussions of the organism's potential actions to its situatedness. That poetry is never really revelatory of such fundamentals in any event is explained by Hardcastle's comment, "The stimulus drops in, so to speak, onto ongoing interpretive efforts against a background of experiences, onto an activity pattern sensitive to initial conditions" (245). The chaotic phenomenon of "sensitive dependence on initial conditions" attributes disproportionate effects to the particular initial condition the anticipated action constitutes (Crutchfield, et al. 50-53). As a feeling organism attempts to foresee its own action as a stimulus impacting a larger system in which it is embedded, the totality of the effects of its actions are fundamentally unpredictable and therefore not representable in that the parameters constraining the formation of the projected trajectories are generated as they emerge. Emotion is always at best a guess, an essay, the complexity of which is distilled, like all prophecy, into a vague expression that must be interpreted because its vagueness lingers, even when it is attached to an idea.

What is naive, then, about Carnap's equation of lyric with primal utterance is not its charge of primitiveness, but rather its utter neglect of the context emotion necessarily entrains as recognized in Stevens's modifying epigram, "The poem is the cry *of its occasion*/Part of the *res* itself and not about it" (473) (emphasis added). This is another way of saying that lyric renders the process of decision making in which all options, or at

least all best options, are entertained in their totality, so that pre-existing sets of connotations may be reshuffled or shaken up and potential realized appropriately.

The manifestation of firstness in lyric poetry is then significant. If the emotional energies of a poem tend to construct a consciousness into which they must be integrated by beginning to concentrate inwardly on the organism they figure, obscure poems would seem to diffuse those energies, allowing them to radiate out into the environment of which the organism is constituted, dilating it. Yet the presence of emotion implicates an environment by implicating the potential impact to that environment and so, even the subject-centered poem is one responsible to its dependence on a larger, far-reaching context and is, in a non-political sense, ecologically aware. This is not to imply that emotional content tied to a personality, whether an empirical or a fictive one appearing in the form of a persona, is a necessary feature or end of lyric poetry. The poem of the mind may not cohere fully into self-consciousness; when its consciousness of itself coheres fully, it has usually reached a terminus in characterological stability, defined as the self simplified into a set of traits predicated for the sake of social interaction. It is ancillary to my thesis that, to flirt with the precipice of biography, in which the self is no longer emergent through an environment it alters, but is rather determined, or, conversely, to verge upon its counterpart, an utter obscurity that does not yield to a degree of coherence, is to risk tipping off the lyric plateau.

There is a stylistic, an ideological, and to some extent an historical breach as between the consciousness-centered poem in which feeling is expressed and the language-oriented poem in which obscurity prevails. And while poems that privilege on quality *tend* to minimize the other, the focus on one does not preclude the other's

presence. In fact, one implies the other as an organism implies an environment and vice versa—yet the divide between them is problematically entrenched within contemporary American poetry. Billy Collins’s “On Turning Ten” and Ashbery’s “Flow Chart” represent, to most, spectral ends of lyric experience. For those who choose to situate their lyric theoretically within the romantic “subjective” notion of poetry, the Ashbery poem and others like it are not lyrical at all. But then one is faced with the phenomenon of an obscurity that is nevertheless musical, in language poetry for instance, and the basic divide within the theory of lyric re-emerges. Dickinson’s and Stevens’s poetry and Emerson’s poetic prose are quintessentially lyrical in remedying the venom/wisdom split by finding the fulcrum’s point between the two. Since the organism is also a participant in the larger environment, the relationship of homology between emotion and obscurity is also one of nesting. Qualitative experience emerges from sets of potential that can be conceived as scalar and can swell to encompass the planetary environment and beyond. When seen as homologous products of an embedded consciousness, the two features can be reconciled.

Though the debate over the function of the substrate of the emotional systems thrives, the most convincing view of emotion sees it as a total systemic event. For all but the most rabid of cognitivists, the periphery is intimately bound up in emotion. Work on the modulation of emotion through the manipulation of bodily postures implies that the two “interact” through extensive feedback loops (Sheets-Johnstone 263-64). It is precisely via the embodiment of emotion that access to other minds is given and what has become known as intersubjectivity--or welcome in Steiner’s sense--occurs. When Stevens describes the poem as “expressed/In an emotion as of two people, as of two

emotions becoming one” in “Of Modern Poetry,” he positions his poet-actor to register responses to emotion bodily and makes such bodily registration the site and means of connectedness between his audience and himself. The poet is an actor in this sense, and the staging of the poem no idle figure or convention.³⁵ Emotion is theatrical in its amplification of invisible symptom with visible sign. One’s own qualia and the manifestations of others’ are intimately connected, perhaps bound within a single mechanism permitting empathetic responses in which “two emotions become one.” Patients with damage to the amygdala are not only unreceptive to fear conditioning, they cannot accurately read facial or verbal fear responses in others (Adolph *et al*, LeBar *et al.*, Scott *et al.*). “Music is feeling, then, not sound,” may be taken in the logical as well as the temporal sense. The music of Orpheus heals the breach between creatures, in Whitehead’s sense, by creating a place of direct contact between them.

In rendering the nest of origin and in rendering it invisible or obscure, lyric also orients itself toward destination, but a destination without end in both senses of the word. As what will suffice is not prescribed, finding involves an incessant recursivity or circling back into the obscurity through the process Frye observed to be revolutionary. Stevens’s and Emerson’s versions of pain come to figure the involved self-awareness whose entropy must be overcome through the submission to an environment that embeds one in the ongoing, present act of finding. To suggest that a satisfaction has more than a momentary extension, or is other than a process, would be to implement predication, to determine and to obviate the search. Totality cannot be predicated or, as Peirce might say, to state it is to see it evaporate on the voice.

That the co-extensiveness of obscurity and emotion inhabit its musicality suggests that the presence of music is part of the *res* of lyric and not embellishment to it. Stevens’s

claim that poetry is a health can be interpreted to mean poetry is sound, or healthful, and that its soundness is maintained by the regular relaxation into the convalescence that firstness affords. It is the versatility of the music of lyric that makes it not merely an escort to poetry, but a vital immanence gesturing toward transcendence, which is, in Whitehead's definition, the capacity for determination.

¹ See *Macbeth*. Act V, Scene V.

³ The case for the primordial status of lyric was largely a romantic argument made in turn by Vico, Herder, and Rousseau. It is, however, widely accepted that the lyric was an early form of linguistic expression that emerged from religious ritual. See *the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, p. 715.

⁴ The references are as follows. Friedrich, Hugo. *Die Struktur der Modernen Lyrik*. Jauss, Hans Robert. "Zur Frage der Struktureinheit alterer und moderner Lyrik," and Stierle, Karlheinz, "Möglichkeiten des dunklen Stils in den Anfängen moderner Lyrik in Frankreich."

⁵ The sanctity of this custom is exemplified and codified in the host/guest contract. In his *Inferno*, Dante accords the crime of its breach a penultimate gravity, second only to the betrayal of divinity.

⁶ Stevens's preferred title for his *Collected Poems, The Whole of Harmonium*, was rejected by his publisher Knopf.

⁷ Although Keats's substitution of Cortez for Balboa is usually considered to be an error, the possibility that it was intentional is suggested by the name's resonance with *cortesia* and its invocation of the courtly gaze.

⁹ I am indebted to Joan Richardson for this interpretation.

¹⁰ The premiere investigation of lyric temporality is, of course, Sharon Cameron's *Lyric Time*.

¹¹ See Hegel's *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*.

¹² See also Frye's *Spiritus Mundi*, especially pages 141 and 145-46, for an earlier version of several of Tiffany's insights.

¹³ Cameron's reading of "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" as an action repressing pain assumes this.

¹⁴ It is the premise of this argument as well as the neuroscience it draws from that this sequencing is at best partial and at worst incorrect. See Walter Freeman's version of intentionality presented in Chapter 5.

¹⁵ To recap, both Philomela and the Kaluli boy are turned into songbirds. Orpheus gains the ability to communicate to a host of evolutionarily primary life forms and even rocks by in effect singing their songs.

¹⁷ De Man dissents from this view, positioning trope in a position anterior to the lyric itself, which is by his definition anthropomorphizing. *See*, “Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric.”

¹⁹ “The Seafarer” is a notable exception. One also thinks of “On the Eve of His Execution” and the urgent life and death topos of love poetry.

²⁰ Stevens’s ubiquitous, significant “it” which must, among other things, *change*, is grammatically neutral, and its neutrality not only opens reference, but permits it to refer to either an entity or an event, or an event as entity.

²¹ This is pertinent on a neurological and a psychological level, where new experience is integrated into Gestalts of pre-existing experience. *See* Chapter 5.

²³ Peirce makes an important distinction. Firstness is not potential via its in heterogeneity; it is potentially heterogeneous. The structure of firstness is homogenous because not yet differentiated.

²⁴ This theory is set forth in his early work, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.”

²⁵ One could make the argument that its purpose is political subversion, but per Derrida, this is more properly a result of a dynamic that is already in motion.

²⁶ Tiffany provides the fascinating detail that the riddles were sometimes inscribed directly on the objects themselves, allowing for the simultaneous perception of poem, poet, and referent.

²⁷ The passage continues: “Every new relation is a new word,” a sentiment that also fits with an embedded concept of language.

²⁸ The former phenomenon is not without a biological basis. That emotional expression may evince similarities across species was the subject of Darwin’s research in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.

²⁹ *See* Carl Lange, *Ueber Gemuthsbewegungen, uebersetzt von H. Kurella*.

³⁰ The sympathetic nervous system is the portion of the ANS that innervates smooth, cardiac, and glandular muscles.

³¹ Righteous indignation is an example of a feeling.

³² LeDoux points out that what we classify as emotion is not systemically monadic but rather, consists of discrete systems that exist to process different emotions (16).

³³ Interestingly, these directionalities underscore the courtly dynamic no matter how elaborate or nuanced its seductive techniques.

³⁴ See Emerson's "The Poet" and Shelly's "A Defense of Poetry."

³⁵ The argument has been made that the ancient theatrical conventions for portraying emotion derive from Sappho's poem "That man is a god . . ." The physical expressions of emotions she lists were apparently adopted by classical actors to convey the emotions of their characters.

Chapter Four

“This is Where the Serpent Lives”: Presence, Pain, and Prophecy Part II

Lyrics vary in the density and the quality of their fogs and the extent to which those fogs dissipate to disclose their latencies. While they linger, forms of firstness render a veiling effect that is in its essence a tactic of seduction. The role played by the immanent tones of firstness finds a neurological parallel in the pathological resistance to radical novelty in the form of profound loss. As part of his clinical work, the neuroscientist V.H.S. Ramachandran chronicles a case involving the disorder anosognosia that casts light onto the nervous system's ambivalent tolerance for novelty. The brain, it is theorized, maintains discrete mechanisms for preserving the status quo and for admitting and constructing a system that challenges it. It is perhaps not surprising that these opposing functions are hemispherically discrete. Anosognosia is a condition suffered by paralysis victims whose left side is afflicted due to an injury of the right brain. Patients with the disorder are remarkable for the fact that they disown their paralysis through a set of tactics extending to elaborate rationalizations and confabulations concocted in order to deny to themselves, and by extension to others, that their paralyzed limb is in fact their own, techniques that, as Ramachandran observes, read as pure Freudian defense mechanisms (130-131). It is the right brain that admits radically new concepts, or to use the term Ramachandran borrows from Thomas Kuhn, “paradigm shifts.” Ramachandran suggests that this mechanism is somehow damaged as a result of an injury to the hemisphere that inhibits the integration of the new condition of paralysis. To test this hypothesis, he injected the patient's already paralyzed left arm with a saline

solution, explaining to her that a side effect of the injection would be a temporary paralysis. Surprisingly, she admitted to the fact of the paralysis when it was presented to her as a passing condition.

Ramachandran deduces that the less threatening prospect of a temporary paralysis did not impact the left brain's defense system and galvanize it to protect the reigning order (151). One accepts newness if it is tempered, qualified, or minimized--if the lily is gilded. Speculatively, we might claim that music, which is also processed in the right brain (Zatorre), performs an analogous tempering function that serves to facilitate introduction. (The conservative left brain, it is speculated, processes syntactical and semantic abilities not involving figuration.) One softens to the revolutionary if one is seduced or lulled into it, and obfuscation is an essential tactic of seduction. But so is the promise of its gradual revelation; the complement of obscurity is the promise of unveiling and the disclosure of meaningful order mystery anticipates. It is such an order lurking within the obscure as an immanence and an imminence that music's harmonics indicate or point toward, to echo Mackey's physical conception of gesture within the medium. Musicality--sound in poetry--is instrumental in its non-referential signification that reduces to the process of marking significance. The situation of the mismatch between the language one has at one's disposal and the environment one has entered into alters its functionality: rather than become the ornamental verbiage of the aesthete, poetic utterance is forced into a predicament where it must become proto-functional. Its pre-semantic resonances in the form of the aural, the pictorial, and the tactile--what Frye called "babble and doodle"--are released in order that they may perform. As a font of meaning, obscurity in its sundry forms must gesture toward Peircean secondness, the principle of precipitation into distinction afforded by the foregrounded structure of the lyric poem.

Within Peirce's schematic, the potential of firstness is realized through the contrastive principle characterizing the realm of secondness. Emergent from firstness, secondness is "Precisely that which cannot be without the first" or ". . . that which it is by force of something to which it is second" ("Guess" 248). Effort and resistance, cause and effect, and brute factuality populate the realm of secondness ("Principles" 75). Secondness is a fragile, ephemeral stage; it will evaporate as soon as the duality it effects is mediated, yet its evanescence is vital to its success. It is an operative mode of constraint, of bringing into relief through the contrast that delimits and thereby defines. What is strictly inapprehensible because potential in firstness, becomes suggestively semantic by means of immediate or proximate contextualization. Secondness is the "consciousness of an interruption into the field of consciousness . . . the sense of resistance, of an external fact, of another something" ("Principles" 95). The Pacific was just such a second to Calvin and Cortez.

For the late neuroscientist Francisco Varela, distinguishing an object from the continuity in which it is embedded is tantamount to an act of interpretation, a process he defines as "the enactment of a domain of distinctions out of a background" (156). The enactment of distinction from out of the connectedness of actual entities is named "deciding" by Whitehead in order to evoke the word's root sense of "cutting off" (43). Varela's designation of the activity of secondness as hermeneutic emphasizes that basic organismic functioning is a process conferring significance through selection amid pre-existing randomness (156). His enactionism, which sees perception to "consist in perceptually guided action" (173), that is, to facilitate the action of the organism rather than to represent the world as it is, assumes that randomness is indebted to continuity and that border discernment is the basis of functionality. Although artificial in an absolute sense, such delineation enables the physical responses of grasping and avoidance (Gibson

39-40, 76-77). While perception has been commonly viewed to be an interpretive act, it has been consistently seen as integrative of environmental input rather than selective or decisive of it. The legacy of empiricist philosophy, especially the theories promulgated by Berkeley and Locke that simple ideas of sense are combined in the mind to produce complex ideas formed of combination, relation, and abstraction (Locke 129-32), has proved a hindrance to understanding fully the perceptual mechanism of an embedded organism. Empiricism's objective atomism was adopted by neuroscience, which for decades professed a model of perception in which discrete sense data (in the form of electromagnetic radiation with respect to vision) are transduced by the receptor neurons of the various sense modalities and then unified by the brain into a percept that is representative of an object in the world. In his landmark 1906 text, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, Sir Charles Sherrington reveals the atomistic bias of the discipline: "If the nature of an animal be accepted as that of a whole presupposed by all its parts, then each and every part of the animal is integrative" (xiii). This assumption has resulted in one of the most intractable conundrums to beset the field, the "binding problem" so-dubbed by Sherrington himself. The perceptual system is organized hierarchically, and that its function should be the integration of diverse data is necessary to account for its anatomy: cortical neurons along visual pathways respond to progressively larger and less definite receptive fields, the sets of conditions that potentially activate it. Further, neurons interact more extensively, forming larger neuronal networks as input proceeds along afferent pathways. At the level of phenomenal experience, perception would seem to depend mainly on an integrative function as well, as consciousness itself is most often integrated, possessing the property of unity. But an exclusive focus on this directional thrust leads predictably to the positing of a site of integration within the brain, an executive office, if you will, where a

neural correlate of the percept is reintegrated to correspond to the object in the world it represents. The resulting need for a synthesizing ur-intelligence who judges the accuracy of the representation is spoofed in the figure of the resident homunculus, the personified transcendent subjectivity within the brain who must exist to ascribe meaning to the arrangements of neurons.

As the central unresolved problem of neuroscience, the binding problem expresses a dilemma of representation that harkens back to philosophical empiricism. As William James argued in “The Stream of Thought” empiricism’s approach is curiously anti-empirical as one never experiences sensation discretely (171-72). James’s phenomenological critique exemplifies his radical empiricism. Supporting his claim and extending it, recent studies suggest that with respect to perception, the integrity of consciousness precedes and survives its attention to specificity. The work of Shaul Hochstein and Merav Ahissar on reverse hierarchies in the visual system implies that explicit perception, defined as “stimulus-driven experiences that are accessible to conscious identification and recognition,” is experienced first as an already-integrated whole (794). In the phenomenon Hochstein calls “vision at a glance,” “consciousness first registers the whole impressionistically and then focuses in on details, enacting “vision with scrutiny” (791). One does not approach a visual tableau by making acquaintance with its individual elements and subsequently uniting them into a cogent whole; the whole is accessible despite the fact that its parts are as yet undistinguished. At the level of conscious experience, a model exists in which the motion of disintegration proceeds from a whole whose conscious apprehension does not depend on conscious integration (791). “Reverse Hierarchy Theory” (RHT) posits that explicit visual perception occurs in reverse hierarchical order while implicit processing ascends the hierarchy, but is not

consciously available until the whole has registered to consciousness (794). The first exposure to a scene amounts to a loose or “crude” binding; re-entry, the process of scaling down the hierarchy to focus in on details functions subsequently “to confirm or refute such initial guesses” (794). Hochstein describes the phenomenal impression of unity as an hypothesis about the whole. The as-yet undifferentiated, crude binding would seem to be itself a crude version of firstness in that its differentiation into variety is initially potential. Hochstein’s findings complicate the issue of binding, which must incorporate disintegration into its dynamic. Clearly, the synthetic conception of perception is partial.

Collaborating with neuroscientist Walter J. Freeman, the philosopher Christine Skarda has revisited the perceptual paradigm in order to reinstitute the functional contribution of systemic wholeness to perception at the level of the substrate.¹ Skarda begins with the assumption that a functional integrity pre-exists perception: it is given that an organism is an integral component of an environment; it cannot, therefore, be the end of perception to mend what is not rent. Adopting a radical stance that obviates integration as a perceptual process, she argues that perception’s flow proceeds unidirectionally toward articulation, or a dividing into components in the way that a limb is articulated at its joints (83). The relationship between a sense receptor neuron in the retina and the spectral range of electro-magnetic radiation that potentially triggers it (its receptive field) assumes, she argues, a pre-existing relationship governed by causality. Her assertion “To be subject to causation is to be related from the start”(82) relocates relationship within the potentiality of firstness. Upon absorption of a photon of light, the sense receptor neurons of the retina transduce its energy into electrical form. A photon

causes the activation of sense receptors; the latter transduce or cause electromagnetic energy to become electrical in form. This is unadulterated Aristotelean physics: a causal relationship is necessary to release and make patent the innate potentiality that is integrated within a substance (“Physics” 249).

Adopting a thoroughgoing pragmatic stance, Skarda defines perceptual processes as “‘uses’ that progressively articulate the interactive organismic events taking place at the interactive interface between the organism and its environment into percepts” (81-82). One notes the exertion in the repetitive stress placed on the fact that articulation does not efface the integration assumed by the phrase “interactive interface” as well as the inveterate tendency of the English language to articulate subject and object. Like the shifts and slides of the littoral, the events belong to both the shore and the sea and may appear as one or the other: the sea contracts and the shore is unveiled as the tide recedes, yet it is still permeant of sea. Washed over to become apparently the sea itself, it is ever roiled with sand. Assuming the mutuality of event, Skarda then rather boldly refutes the neurocentric doctrine, the tenet that neural activity is the sole creator of the percept (83, 85). This move allows her to claim that the sense organs themselves contribute to the percept by co-creating what she calls a “phenomenal fabric” that will form the basis for subsequent neuronal functioning. Within the visual system, the lens (with, one assumes, the cornea and the vitreous humor) creates a “complex light phenomenon,” a structured tapestry of electromagnetic energy projected to the sense receptor neurons of the retina.² Unwittingly echoing Peirce, she describes the phenomenal fabric as a “complex, but as yet undifferentiated, sensory content directly apprehended prior to the intervention of neural activity” (83). In other words, the “complexity” of the phenomenal fabric is

virtual. The phenomenal fabric, as the shared construct of the organism and the environment,³ is the set of possibility giving rise to the percept and constituting a point of immediate attachment she resorts to calling the interface between the organism and the environment.

In order to effect the construction of the percept, the sense receptor neurons of the retina onto which the phenomenal fabric is projected then proceed to “fragment” it, to use Skarda’s term that is analogous to Whitehead’s “deciding” and Varela’s “distinction.” What Freeman calls Level One neuronal activity is parallel; neurons in the early phases of visual perception do not interact with one another but serve to isolate or “articulate” their triggering stimuli into what will become the features of the percept. Receptor neurons specialize, that is they respond maximally to the limited range of energy that defines their receptive fields, which are defined in probabilistic terms. The brain then engages in a series of compare and contrast mechanisms in order to tease out information from the energy it has segregated. For instance, the post-receptor ganglion neurons, which receive input from the retina, specialize for center and off center location. The receptive field of each cone is approximately circular; each cone attaches to one ganglion neuron specializing for the detection of light at the center of the field and one specializing for the detection of light in the surround. On-center neurons fire rapidly in intense light while off-center neurons fire slowly, and vice versa.⁴ Excitation of one type results in the inhibition of its partner. The enactment of contrast is the mechanism by which the system begins to make distinctions within its visual field, resolving detail from out of the broad swath of the phenomenal fabric by bringing edges and borders into relief. This dynamic is further exemplified in the early stages of color vision, in which a three-cone

system produces color by a simple mechanism of secondness. The three types of color receptors, the S, M, and L cones, respond preferentially to the small, medium and large wavelength portions of the color spectrum.⁵ Color receptor neurons are specialized to respond to a range of electro-magnetic radiation. It is not possible to discern simply from the activation of a receptor neuron from which end of that spectrum the photon hails. The electrical response following transduction is consistent although the range of wavelengths triggering it is significantly variable. Upon the firing of the retinal receptors, the wavelength detected still exists as firstness as a potential range of qualia inhere within the signal, making it possible to embed another level at which potential is introduced. The brain begins to create information by contrasting the signals emanating from the three cones by means of a simple mechanism of secondness: it first calculates the “difference” between the long and medium wavelength receptors (L-M) and then contrasts the subtractive difference (the variation between them) with the signal from the short wave (S – LM). In Freeman’s theory, systemic behavior involving globally distributed neural networks continue this contrastive activity. Progressively larger groups of neurons oscillate synchronously until a neural correlate of the self is finally articulated from a neural correlate of the non-self. Whole organism functioning ultimately creates from the whole what Skarda calls “the subject-object form of use” (91). Contrast is the beginning of the process of contextualization that will eventually lead to a decisive categorization that is a hermeneutic and a functional necessity. It proceeds from nested levels of firstness inhering in the perceptual process--Hochstein’s phenomenal firstness--and the firstness implied in the concept of the receptive field that is narrowed to the firstness

represented by the phenomenal fabric as a point of contact between organism and environment.

In attributing significance to contrast mechanisms, Freeman identifies a necessary intermediate phase in the realization of potential in which meaning is indicated, but not yet confirmed. In perceptual terms, the devolution into secondness initiates the recovery of bearings; perception animates virtual variety through an articulating mechanism, realizing potential through the elaboration of the difference that is the necessary precondition of mediation. Secondness is the basis of the bottom up processes of perception. As sense data enter and begin to ascend the neurological hierarchy of the brain, they are immediately governed by a differentiating mechanism the organism uses for its own ends. Information comes into being through a process via which the visual system begins to distinguish relative location through fine contrast, creating a chiaroscuro effect, if you will, by making distinctions that will enable the bringing of the edges and borders of the features of the percept into relief.

As it selects by actualizing potential, the operation of secondness is among the mechanisms responsible for the distortion of reality “as it is” by the perceiving entity. The wavelength of electro-magnetic radiation that is physically specified for color does not make it past the retinal cones, which fire based on the probability that they will absorb a photon of light within a particular range of wavelengths. There is no consistent correspondence between a wavelength and the color perceived. The color qualia is rather created and regularized by the aforementioned contrastive techniques, a discovery Edward Land exploited in developing the Polaroid process (“Retinex”). It is important to stress that the retinal image—the pattern of activated neurons over the retina—is not a

spatial correlate of the percept. The receptive field of a neuron is defined probabilistically and the distribution of neurons distorts the spatial arrangement of light. In its relationship to physical reality, the perceived greenness of the leaf becomes a sign, which is in itself stable but corresponds to a fluid array of referents. Perception is presumedly regularized in this way because it is constrained by the fact that the organism necessarily attaches value to the percept. Perceived consistency amid inconsistency facilitates categorization and thus the use of the object. Secondness is the mechanism that creates the stability of appearance that leads to the illusion that perception is unmediated. It is the necessary intermediate phase in which relation is precipitated, but not yet confirmed through the mediating activity of thirdness. What is unknowable, because potential, begins to be suggestively semantic by means of localizing proximate contextualization. In a sense, Peirce's is a puzzle piece theory of semiotics: in it, as in riddles, resolution begins by immediate linkings that create first small and eventually larger determined pieces from which a "reality" is inferred.

The assertion that distinction must follow from indistinction is logically unflappable; secondness allows the inference of firstness. Skarda is correct in that there is a structure not yet discriminated at the point of contact between organism and environment that at any given instant points back toward the stimulus and forward toward the percept and begins to evanesce as the analytical act of sorting commences. The continuity of the phenomenal fabric is an effect and a subset of an ecological holism, a momentary manifestation of connectedness. The phenomenal fabric corresponds to poetic obscurity in constituting an unknown whole different from the unity of the percept or the internal coherence of the poem. As such, it will give way to the integrated entity that is

the percept, but not without an interceding reorganization. The hierarchical dynamics of the brain imply both synthesis and analysis: they allow the brain to perform functionally and constructively integrative acts and not the re-integration of what is, as Skarda says, already integrated (83). As she puts it, use correlates with creativity (84). Skarda's theory, it should be stressed, does not obviate the directionality of integration: in fact, her emphasis on the "shattering" function of peripheral neurons would seem rather to stress the significance of the subsequent need to bind what has been shattered or to maintain integration in the face of shattering, as per Hochstein. What it does do is to posit another, separate, qualitatively distinct level of integration that is private to the organism. When Frye opines of lyric language that "the words do not resonate against the things they describe, but against other words and sounds" (35), one takes this as a relative statement, to mean that they do not resonate against the things they describe to the extent that words deployed differently do. Yet, his sonic retreat into the poem where meaning is made against other sounds betrays an assumption about the reconstruction of significance within the pretense of an alternative, private medium whose arcane rules for emergence are constituted by the poem. Because features are created in contrast, they are created in context, in perhaps the most minimal sense, yet in a private context, in which they are regularized within a private history. The attribution of semantic significance to form is a common and even a characteristic poetic maneuver that precedes formalism proper. Form becomes a valuable concept within poetics the moment it becomes dynamic, productive of meaning and not merely an instantiation of it. Understanding this, Culler follows Empson in making the claim that the "[p]oem's organization absorbs and restructures [received] meaning" (183, 185). Privacy in lyric is, then, not simply a thematic or

situational privacy, the personal content of a love affair or a lament: it is paradoxically the dependence of a self-contained semantic strategy on a larger, informing context from which it is selectively derived.⁶ An understanding of the logic of the internal apparatus of meaning-making as secondness further justifies the poetic figure of perception. It also sets up a circumscribed version of obscurity that is highly yielding to resolution and maintains a thrust toward the individual organism.

Skarda's theory exhausts and perhaps oversteps itself in claiming that the organism "recovers" the phenomenal fabric without neuronal intervention. A valid objection to her understanding of the function of the phenomenal fabric is that there is no non-neuronal material substrate to preserve it and to recover it to perception.⁷ Her word choice is unfortunate, for she is on target in her description of the phenomenal fabric as a boundary condition (84) by which one assumes she means a set of conditions acting as a parameter shaping the potential realized in the action of shattering. In this way it is "directly accessible to perception" (82). Her theory is important for laying emphasis on directionality toward articulation. To the extent the phenomenal fabric is not retrievable, perception becomes all the more an interpretive event. A more viable interpretation might be that the phenomenal fabric remains as potential, as a state of firstness and that as the neurological constructions that partially realize it are functional and not veridical constructions, they do not therefore need to be exhaustively correlated with things as they are by means of retrospective gestures; rather, they are tested prospectively, through their correlation with subsequent input and one's results.⁸

Among the characteristic tendencies of lyric is its naked exploitation of secondness, an instinct it instantiates diversely. Secondness is first posited by the lyric

frame: the dislocating precedent to lyric inflicts a presence/absence dyad the expressed pain of lyric mediates as a third.⁹ Secondness is a necessary intermediate phase in which meaning is indicated, but not yet confirmed. There is a set of methods, common to lyrics, by which obscurity is resolved into features in the manner in which firstness precipitates into secondness. Aside from sonic structure, the purest form of secondness, the one in which relation is most purely formal and least overtly semantic because it does not depend upon pre-existent reference, is deixis. Culler is one of the few if not the only critic to make deixis a basic lyric principle and his schematic is unusually insightful for this fact (*Pursuit* 164-70). Although deixis and resistance are two separate of his four criteria for the form, he considers the former as if it were productive of the latter: deixis is an indication of language's ultimate inability to signify (168-70). I argue, quite conversely, that resistance, as he defines it, must precede and occasion a recuperative strategy and that deixis, understood properly, intercedes between the two, as the incipient lack of customary significance is the condition to which deixis responds. Poetic obscurity differs from the narrative technique of withholding in the degree and kind of its functional semantic participation as randomized potential selected through the operation of secondness.

Deixis, like secondness, begins in the here and now, in what Peirce calls "haecceity." It is language's orienting function, the making of spatial and temporal relation through the deployment of shifters,¹⁰ words whose referents can only be understood from context. Deictics operate in accordance with a contrastive principle, and contrast has its limit in indication. They are the first resort of one for whom the sheer chaos of novelty impinges on the senses and threatens perception, a quasi-gestural

linguistic strategy in which tentative or preliminary designations establish proximity: the "there" takes on significance in relation to the "here" with which one is newly acquainted. Deixis speaks to both an exoticism and an immediacy of locale. Dickinson's "here," where "I" and "silence" are wrecked, points toward an incipient knowledge, a basis for reconstitution given the implicitly unchristened or contingently christened "there." In abandoning Poem 280 at this point, a definitive unity cannot be conferred and the result is a state of limbo.

The effect of deixis is to render meaning nascent, to mark potentiality significant pending the emergence of the referent through the transcendence of context. This elementary mode of ordering must not be foreclosed upon prematurely but allowed its full breadth if one is to glean accurate meaning and act appropriately. It demands an extension that is often met with frustration: "If we had world enough and time," pens Marvell, "This coyness, lady, were no crime." (50). The lady's provisionally decriminalized attitude is a metaphor for the extensive play of secondness (the approach and recoil, the here and there of courtship) against an ultimately unyielding, virginal firstness. Lyric invites lingering here where there is, as Keats would prefer, "no irritable reaching after fact and reason" (*Letters* 167). It is this intuitive, pre-perceptible sense of relation that Orpheus violates in breach of the condition that he not look upon Eurydice prematurely. Not content with vague, relative knowledge, faithless that the "here," the "this," and the "I" entail or are trailed by the "there," the "that," and the "you," he turns to "see," to fully know the presence of Eurydice, reaching after fact and rushing on, unwittingly, to thirdness, "the attempt to bridge over and create a relation between the first and the second" ("Guess" 249). (As we shall see, to mediate the gap paradoxically

and ineluctably expands it.) The courtly figure dares not consummate his courtship, for such a lucky end would dessicate the courtship lyric in drying up its fancied forms of firstness and secondness, among them the regenerative potential of the underworld.

The range of deixis knows no bounds and may extend indefinitely. “Here” and “there” may exist as the extremes of Arcadia in the past and Utopia in the future, so that deixis is not merely local and localizing but scales to the poem’s unknown extremes, creating a continuum Emerson configures as a stairway. Within deixis, the spatial is also temporized because there is a time element involved in defogging the portals to attain translucence in evolving the apparent clarity of thirdness. This temporal expanse opens space for the vatic: the referential postponement deixis effects is the deferral of apocalypse--and therefore of closure--the maintenance of the uncrossable interval between prophesy and its fulfillment. Culler explicitly associates deixis with vision, which he calls an “invocational-projective mode . . . an instance of the energy of anticipation that characterizes the poetic spirit: a spirit which can envision what it calls for” (*Pursuit* 166). Gaston Bachelard captures the drama and the lure of poetic initiation, as well as the psychic danger or trauma faced by the poet when he writes:

The poet has brought us to an extreme situation beyond which we are afraid to venture . . . The slightest sound prepares a catastrophe, while mad winds prepare general chaos. Murmur and clangor go hand in hand. We are taught the ontology of presentiment. In this tense state of fore-hearing, we are asked to become aware of the slightest indications, and in this cosmos of extremes, things are indications before they are phenomena; the weaker the indication, the greater the significance, since it indicates an origin. (175-76)

For Bachelard, poetic images are "images of the first time," images of incipience because, as he suggests, they image the faintest of indications. The primary is the domain of the poetic and distinctly not the scientific. "Observation . . ." he writes, "belongs in the domain of 'several times'" referring to the experimental requirement of repetition (156). The mad winds that ready a general chaos bespeak a Dionysian version of firstness. It is intrinsic to the ontology of presentiment--here a *learned* and not a divinely bestowed mode of existence that is at the same time an epistemology--that it exist a shade past the pure presence categorized by Peirce as "firstness." Sensitive attention to indication evades the impasse of the inexpressibility of the first. Presentiment narrows by selecting virtual potentiality as it articulates the present and the future, yet it maintains the priority of firstness because the future remains lodged with the present as potential. The state of presentiment common to lyric is a state that commands indication as a tactic to initiate the bringing into relief of features, a precondition for identification. Presentiment is a pointing toward what can only become certain, that is, come into the being conferred by mediation or naming, with the referential stability of Peircean thirdness in the future, once an effect is precipitated permitting the inference of its cause.

Presentiment is a particularly foreboding version of prophesy that captures the apocalyptic dread absent from St. John's ecstatic utterance. Stevens's naturalization of the poetic project is concerned, after all, with "Not the revelations of belief, but the precious portents of our own powers" (NA 174-75). Deixis functions as the method of "finding" in which one is embroiled. It is the ineluctable next step following immersion within firstness, and the play of deixis against firstness within "St. John and the Back-Ache" is ingenious. The Back-Ache's audible musings or "wonderings" first divide

mind-as-force from world-as-presence in a clearly delineated relationship of secondness that both creates “presence” as an object of inquiry and renders it inaccessible to mind. The deictic strategy of referring to presence begins, paradoxically, with the naming of the unnamable and then withdraws the name and substitutes the shifter “it,” moving simultaneously from firstness, as represented, to secondness and from thirdness, as the representation of firstness, to secondness. The technique of negation by unnamings—one that Dickinson was prone to draw upon—can be construed as the attempt to access firstness by making it available through expressing it in terms of what “it” is not. The anaphoric repetition of “it is not” echoes as the converse (and thus second) of “it is,” the objectified version of the riddlic “I am.” Its paradoxical effect is to invoke secondness by making absence present. In an example of pure apocalyptic technique, the list of features that precedes identification is therefore simultaneously disqualified. The subject within St. John’s oratory of tropes is slyly switched from “presence” to “the effect of the object,” a coy way of saying “the subject”—the object’s effect and its second—in a doubling that serves to undermine their independence from one another as each “unravels” its partner. A more straightforward example of deixis is found in the use of the modifier “*That* big-brushed green” that, by virtue of its presentation with the negative qualifier (“it is not . . . “), may be construed logically to mean “*This* big-brushed green.” The deictic pair is both established and not established: The negative pulls the poem back into the ephemeral ground of firstness as the ever-emergent deictic pairing countervails it. It is easy to see how both this poem and the deictic play it enjoys might be interpreted as a deconstructive exercise.

If deixis is a chiaroscuro technique, the fine-grained play of light and shade that

brings detail into relief, its most basic prosodic adaptation takes the form of rhythm. In claiming to speak “below the tension of the lyre,” St. John seeks to supersede distinction and to deliver unto presence. The tension tuning creates permits the manipulation of vibration to produce the discrete tones upon which secondness depends. Making relation through the negotiation of difference is also a primary musical technique. Prosodic and sonic devices--repetition, alliteration, assonance, meter, rhythm, and rhyme--rely, in one way or another, on the establishment of distinction as between similarity and variation. Any set of words paired sonically is brought into contrastive relation, creating a disjunction within the poem that exemplifies a significant point of contrast. In traditional meter, the difference between stressed and non-stressed syllables--or relative syllabic length within quantitative verse--highlights the difference between the terms in question. Alliteration focuses attention on initial sounds and contrasts them to the non-repeated sound in order to isolate them, creating local islands of order or potentially meaningful clusters of location. In both its literal and derivative forms, music establishes similarity as against difference, permitting the division-making from which the features of the sonic landscape may emerge, a musically produced secondness indebted to its compeer musical firstness. In the transition from the latter, “the beauty of inflection” becomes “the beauty of innuendo.”

The truism that the meaning of poetry is made in the gaps enjoys broad application within lyric as its arsenal of techniques for creating spots of secondness is deployed. That lyric poetry emphasizes the word more than its cousin literary forms is not simply a function of its brevity, but of distinctive techniques that isolate the unit, setting it against, rather than seamlessly linking it to, other words. The artifice of the line

break (manifesting as a pause in oral presentation) is perhaps the most representative instance of this tendency, and to the extent that it is a point of hesitation, a brink where meaning is multiplied and syntax made ambiguous toward the maintenance of firstness, the juxtaposition prompts a relation of secondness. An obscure line can be brought into relief, imbued with meaning based on what follows it. The opportunity for larger scale instances of secondness abounds and can be found, for instance, at the caesura between the two halves of the Anglo-Saxon line and the stanza break. To offer what is perhaps the most highly touted example of radical juxtaposition-- Pound's technique of superpositioning--the meaning of "The apparition of these faces in a crowd" is complemented and filled out by the ensuing unit "Petals on a wet, black bough" (111). The interpretation that mediates them is third. Peirce categorizes this instance of secondness as degenerate, that type in which the first and the second do not depend on one another for their existence, in order to distinguish it from the true secondness that more accurately characterizes deixis ("Guess" 253-254). This generalization is not to simplify the relationships of units that in themselves may be very complex, but rather to point out that the dynamic of secondness between units does not flag as the units themselves grow larger and absorptive of an irreducible density of meaning. It is in this overlapping plethora of significant division that lyric begins to be most clearly distinguished from other genres. Because it breaks down into units, or self-shatters, more extensively than other literary forms, multiplying and exploiting its borders, secondness is released into play in the earliest stages of encounter with a poem. We tend to think of discontinuity with obscurity as a contemporary phenomenon, yet this estimation proves equally untenable. By way of example. one of the oldest extant verses in modern English

veers from its first stanza, “O Western Wind, when wilt thou blow,/the small rain down can rain?” to the subsequent “Christ if my love were in my arms/And I in my bed again!” (68) betraying a discontinuity of tone, diction, and content that is strikingly modern in presentation.¹¹ Lyric poetry has been continuously discontinuous, and its discontinuity is indigenous to its formal radical.

The ultimate deictic negotiation within the lyric poem transpires as between the “I” and the “you” constructed by the utterance, a duality often adduced as the crux of lyricism, especially a lyricism that inclines toward the romantic. Like perception, the poem can culminate in the separation of the self from the non-self, forming true seconds that mutually create one another. The eavesdropper of Frye’s overheard utterance is created in co-creating the poem. Culler believed deixis to be a sign of the fictionality of lyric, and his observation is accurate if fictionality is limited to the sense of “making” (*Pursuit* 172). His claim that deixis is evidence of language's ultimate inability to signify, however, is refused and the technique argued rather to be symptomatic of the conscious destination of the method of the human mind’s perceptual functioning that gives rise to the “subject/object form of use.” As Freeman argues, contrast mechanisms continue to play out along the afferent pathways as sensory input is processed at successively higher levels of the brain, and finally at a global level, as between populations of neurons (*Brains* 101). The behavior is functionally identical to lower level contrast mechanisms, but works through the alternate synchronization and desynchronization of neural networks based on negative feedback between excitatory and inhibitory populations (101). The “outcome” of perception is the divisive act that externalizes the object, one that does not necessarily entail self-consciousness, but is

intensified by it.¹² It is a pragmatic distinction because the perception of an object as distinct allows for strategic action toward it. In order to act into the world, the organism has to distinguish itself perceptually from what is not it. This establishment of difference in self-conscious awareness is the origin of the terror of the “terriblest force,” the mature mind left to “defend against itself.” The mind is the “force” of severance.

The gaze of feminist-political theory is thus pernicious because it is objectifying: one does not gaze upon because one considers object, one renders object by gazing upon. Objectification is a symptom and not cause of the organism’s navigation of the presence of the world. “Seeing creates the dialectics of seeing.” Or as de Man states with the aphoristic profundity often reserved for the footnote: “We do not see what we love but we love in the hope of confirming the illusion that we are indeed seeing anything at all” (“Contemporary” 63fn.). The course of perception toward articulation allows for the disdainful glance of the objectified beloved to render the lover object in return; this is the effect and the cause of her rejection. Because object is second to subject, it is created of the same *process*. As the lyric “you” is made other, it is reflectively animated, or given mind. Thus, “being” thrust into what Whitehead would call an “actual world,” the environment available to the actual entity in question, creates a disjunction that is pregnant in a convergent state of high promise. This is the dialectic of the riddle: the conferring of “adjusted contrasts” in the form of features results in the naming that then enlivens the named as it inevitably enlivens the Genesis namer, the two entities collapsed within the poem. The dynamics of perception further create the reader, who can be inferred in the critical lingo to be “ideal” in relation to the poem.

Further, within poetry, as in the mind, a hierarchy of scale exists along which

secondness can act upon increasingly larger semantic units, “As at the moment of the year when, tick,/Autumn howls upon half-naked summer” (*CP* 437). The elements of the poem may enter into relations of secondness promiscuously and participate in both horizontal and vertical contrasting behavior: for instance, a line may function as against the sentence that contains it as well as against a stanza that does not. Stevens extends this tendency as far as the borders of the poem itself by occasioning suggestive points of contrast in subtle and broad strokes by, for example, placing the “The Snow Man” after “Domination of Black” in *Harmonium*. The poem then shares with the brain a structural foundation permitting the ascension along scale and complexity (though not value) toward larger and larger contrasting units, together with an ability to reverse the directionality of influence and modulate a smaller unit with a larger. (Hochstein’s dynamic implies a scalar dynamic of secondness in the contrast of detail as against the whole.) Like the brain’s neural pathways, the parts of a poem are intricately interconnected, and the process of reading may involve both bottom-up and top-down integration. Units existing at a different level of scale can inhibit, oppose, or constrain the meaning of other units, including from a distance, in the forging of semantic connection. The units cohere through intricate feedback loops and interrelations, from which an “I” and “you” may at length arise.

The tension de Man identifies as between the figural and the literal uses of language describes a class of literary devices common to lyric poetry that do not depend on formal discontinuity for their effect. In addition to the standard tropes, it includes the tension-producing devices to which the New Critics were partial: irony, paradox, and ambiguity itself when reduced to the dualistic dynamic Empson explored in *7 Types of*

Ambiguity. The co-animation of the “I” and the “you” creates an anthropomorphizing tendency that apostrophe and prosopopoeia trope; as they imply one another, they are also figures that stand in a relationship of true secondness. The generic centrality of apostrophe in particular is stressed by Culler who describes it as “the characteristic trope of the lyric” (“Reading” 99). The gesture of speaking to the absent as if present amounts to a *fiat lux*, a speaking into existence that brings the object “you” into co-extensive emergence with and as against the assertive “I.” In describing apostrophe as “an identification on the level of substance, the *taking* of something for something else that can then be assumed to be *given*” (241), de Man speaks to the nature of the figure as an imaginative appropriation and projection. He also underscores the fact that the object is determined in its taking or grasp—or prehension. Balancing Culler, de Man’s self-described lyric reading of Baudelaire’s sonnets “Obsession” and “Correspondances” centers the genre around the anthropomorphic figure of prosopopoeia, “the giving of face to the faceless.” A prosopopoetic expression is a “claim” he writes, that is also “not given in the nature of things” (“Anthropomorphism” 101-02, 241), by which, it is fair to assume, he means the objective or uninterpreted nature of things. Neither figure is cognitive in the sense of truth-dependent: “. . . an O, devoid of semantic reference, is the very figure of voice” (“Reading” 99). Eschewing reference, the poles the lyric creates, are thereby jointly and contemporaneously co-constructed within a dynamic internal to the poem. Anthropomorphizing the object recognizes that one’s knowledge of it is of the same cloth as one’s knowledge of oneself. The anthropomorphism of lyric is a recognition that the genre fosters the tandem emergence into what Culler calls “commensurability” – a term evoking the problematic status of riddles (“Reading” 101).

The understanding of perception as creative of an apparent dualism frees these figures of the egocentric charges levied against them and naturalizes them as reflective of the perceptual act.

It is also within this divisive, relational destination of perception that the odic and elegiac modes invest a disproportionate amount of energy. Among lyric forms, they concentrate most directly on maintaining the negotiation between the subject and object forms the lyric accomplishes by dwelling on the fact of their co-emergence. The ode is particularly suited to its role a public medium bridging the gap between the private citizen and the commonwealth as it represents the third person as a “you.” To praise an “object” betrays an existential leaning because the choice of invocational approach is intimately intertwined with the fear of loss of that object and the contemporaneous, co-constructed loss of the self constructed with it. Poems fueled by desire also evince this motivation, as does the elegy. Once a general song of praise associated with love, elegiac verse was recast in the seventeenth century as a form for honoring the dead. As such, it subsumes the minor modes of lament, consolation, complaint, and planctus. In its revisioning as an instrument of consolation, it also posits an absent object of address as if present. The invocational, anaphoric “ubi sunt” structure of the lament, for instance, has the secondary effect of rendering absence present. Behind every elegy is the fear of one’s own death, spawning the intense reaction of attempting to forestall it by maintaining the presence of the other in song. Through the celebration of the other, the consolatory function expands beyond the presentation of themes of permanence or longed-for ideals¹³ and extends to self-consolation reflecting a constructivism that resonates in the Quaker saying: “It is the thee in me that is precious to me.” As a formal expansion of the

apostrophe and prosopopoeia, each form maintains or evokes a “you” on the scale of the poem. Basing the ode in the figures of apostrophe and prosopopoeia, de Man wisely made the form exemplary of the genre: “The figure of address is recurrent in lyric poetry, to the point of constituting the generic definition of, at the very least, the ode (which can, in its turn, be seen as paradigmatic for poetry in general. . .)” (“Hypogram” 32). The thrust of lyric continues toward this phenomenal division; the stubbornness of its fixities is evidenced in the set of contrary drives that attempt to overcome the apparent division and to span the “dumbfounding abyss” through the restoration of the object’s so-called continuity. The attempt to re-embed the odic object is a common thematic pursuit: Horation odes secure the “divine” status of the leader while Pindaric odes deify nonpareil athletic achievement by fabricating a divine lineage for the hero at the fleeting moment of youthful excellence as a stay against its certain decomposition. Courtly love enshrines the moment of supreme beauty in paying worship to a beloved who “holds in perfection but a little moment” (Shakespeare 1193). Such expansive gesturing roots the object, and with it the subject, back in the firstness that Weil cryptically reassures us is a constant.

Attachment is no more or less than an insufficiency in our sense of reality. We are attached to the possession of a thing because we think that if we cease to possess it, it will cease to exist. A great many people do not feel with their whole soul that there is all the difference in the world between the destruction of a town and their own irremediable exile from that town. (59)

On a lighter note, Ben Jonson pays tribute to the co-evolution of the “I” and “you” in penning “An Ode to Himself,” a pep talk for writer’s block that opens by lamenting the point of frustration it will overcome by engaging in the single process of exercising the

wits in the production of art.

Where dost thou careless lie

Buried in ease and sloth?

Knowledge that sleeps doth die;

And this security,

It is the common moth

That eats on wits and arts, and oft destroys them both. (304).

So-called private odes such as this and the major works of Keats tend to struggle to secure immortality for their poet-speakers in recompense for the breach they render. Keats's speaker of "Ode to a Nightingale" yearns to identify with the unself-conscious bird while mourning and thereby conceding the futility of this quest. Wordsworthian romanticism bends the form, making the child's first experience praiseworthy in a psychological naturalization that places embeddedness in the past. It bears noting that the Pindaric Ode was set to dance and music and performed in the presence of pre-semantic expression. Even at the quintessentially Western end of the lyric spectrum in which presence is privileged over absence, and independence over interdependence, poetry understands that the "you" is constructed as the "I" is constructed and vice versa, not as simple byproducts of one another, but as vital, co-determined consequences of the mind's shattering of a seamless process.

It is in defining the perceptual event systemically and distinguishing it from the rest of the organismic functioning that the self is generated in contrast to its own perceptual system. Organismic functioning defines what counts as extra-organismic. Skarda's careful phrasing articulates her pragmatic stance: "Perception is a process by

which organisms use their embeddedness in physical reality as if they were independent of it” (81). This view diverges from both naive realism and the subjectivism with which the lyric is both casually and systematically allied. The percept is not a pure creation of the perceiving subject because all events are causally embedded within the system from which the subject simultaneously emerges. Paradoxically, by articulating the phenomenal fabric, the mind produces a perceptual unity that is not representational; though derivative of the subset of environmental holism, the percept does not mirror the noumenal unity of the object, but is a “construal” of it, to borrow Varela’s term (156). After breaking down the information from the environment through its selection and isolation, the brain dynamically merges it with the other ingredients shaping the percept which include organismic history (memory), motivation (emotion), proprioceptive information about the body’s location in space (embodiment) and information from the other sense modalities (other dimensions of perception) through chaotic feedback and feedforward loops to create a serviceable percept (*Brains* 33, 108). It thereby unifies the content of the percept with the organism, constructing one from the other. The organism forms the percept in accordance with the way it is equipped to use it. Consciousness is a form of use that generates both the perceiver as subject and the percept as object and is therefore the precondition for subjectivity and objectivity (Skarda 91). In itself it is neither subjective, nor objective but the form of use that brings the two poles into mutual relief. Positing lyric activity as the construction of the logical outcome of the initial condition of firstness justifies the basis of the genre within the materiality of consciousness. This movement toward objectification that is the making that is *poesis* is the vital and fictive business Stevens characterizes as the finding of a satisfaction.

Whitehead's notion of satisfaction creates the fiction of separation in order to concretize or circumscribe an entity. The satisfaction is the end of the concrescence (14).

. . . the notion of 'satisfaction' is the notion of the 'entity as concrete' abstracted from the 'process of concrescence'; it is the outcome separated from the process, thereby losing the actuality of the atomic entity, which is both process and outcomeThe 'satisfaction' . . . closes up the entity . . . (17)

The ability to distinguish one's self from the non-self (consciously or not) enables the self-sustaining actions of the organism into the environment. An action or a decision asserts the relation between the subject and object form for which it is made. Organismic action then functions as a form of thirdness, bringing the organism into a more salutary alignment with its environment.

Thus far, I have been concerned mainly with the emergence of secondness within the poem and the poem's encasement in a precipitating instance of secondness that permeates it as a fiction of origination. The construction of the "you" implicitly gestures out to initiate yet another instance as it positions a reader before the immediate "here" of the poem. If Whitehead's metaphysics implicitly recognizes this reiterative nesting dynamic, it is Gregory Bateson who creates an unambiguous common origin as between the system of thought and the encompassing system of nature within an ecological program calling for an understanding systems within the larger systems they constitute (x). In the culminating *oeuvre* he entitles *Mind and Nature*, he meticulously defends an homologous linking of mind and species, going so far as to forge a grand science of mind: "It is the Platonic thesis of the book that epistemology is an indivisible, integrated metascience whose subject matter is the world of evolution, thought, adaptation,

embryology, and genetics—the science of mind in the widest sense of the word” (81-82). The rather untimely claim to a metascience (or a metaphysics in Whitehead’s case) at a cultural moment advocating for radical contingency is, for both thinkers, the identification of the universal dynamic that renders the content of Stevens’s reality inaccessible.

For Bateson, nature and its constituent minds are defined according to the requirement that they be stochastic systems, that is, subject to chance events that are subsequently ordered by selective processes. This assumes the presence of a random background “stream of events” operative against “a non-random selective process” (139). Randomness is necessary to induce mutations, the evolutionary manifestation of difference (45). For the mind proper, randomness is generated at the interface of the phenotype and the environment (168). While natural selection acts upon the phenotype as it interacts with environment, it is supported and registered genetically. “In sum, the combination of phenotype and environment thus constitutes the random component of the stochastic system that *proposes* change; the genetic state *disposes*, permitting some changes and prohibiting others” (168). Selection is the determination through which latent chance is actualized by the preservation of the mutation; the neuronal equivalent of preservation is the learning enabled by neuronal plasticity.

If the chromosome is the gateway of chance occurrence with respect to evolution, where genetic mutations arise via the admitting of difference and its selection in the form of genetic change, the point of initial registration of differences between sense data is its analogue (89). In both cases, the triggering episode is the operative mode of secondness, the creation of difference as the pre-requisite of selection.¹⁴ Within both system and

subsystem, difference can be formalized spatially or temporally, and its registration is threshold dependent (27); as Bateson puts it, the difference must matter (78). The registration of difference in each case is the first step in the creation of information, which in a physical system incurs the literal meaning of a physical formation within. As Emily Dickinson avers, difference is the origin of meaning:

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us-
 We can find no scar,
 But internal difference,
 Where the Meanings, are— (Poem 258)

The instance of the selection of difference must then be assimilated into a system. The next step in Bateson's homology is the temporal coding or transformation of the difference initiated within what becomes an "information-processing entity" (64, 66). It becomes information once it is incorporated into a circuitry in which it sets off "trains of consequence" (102). Bateson uses the example of the governor on a steam engine in which information entering a "circuit" shapes the creation of subsequent information within the circuit. The governor serves as a simple example of an emergent system, one which creates its own parameters and is capable of incorporating them into its subsequent functioning. Bateson's homology is consistent with Susan Oyama's claim that information comes into existence only through the process of ontogeny (xiii, 3, 4) or within a system nested within another. In the mind proper, the encoding takes the form of the activation of trains of consequences in the form of the invigoration of neural pathways that dynamically influence the pathways and the networks they activate. In poetry, precipitating difference is, of course, encoded in language. Bateson's linking is

essential, because it secures the role of firstness as a generative randomness (randomness is first because structure is potential within it) originating in the larger enveloping system that gives rise to secondness determined within the subsystem. It insures that the source of obscurity in the larger, encasing system is inexhaustible based on the dynamic by which its potential extends down into the derivative system that renews it by engendering a novelty that impacts the larger system and estranges it. The perceptually-guided actions of the organism alter the environment whose potential with respect to the organism is thereby altered; a poem changes the linguistic landscape. The mind–nature homology ensures that the replenishing font of firstness is itself replenished. That the poem recapitulates Peircean emergence allows it to function as an authentically derivative environment for the reader, an estranging form that serves to elongate perception. Recall that Shklovsky’s sense of the purpose of the extended envisioning of art was to know “the object in its continuity” (22).

The final piece of Bateson’s theory mandates for the activity of learning a “hierarchy of orders of recursiveness” (188). Learning, Bateson posits, discloses a hierarchy as it ascends through types. Each level of the hierarchy must consist of a shift to what he calls a different logical type, a phenomenon explained by the truism, exemplified by nonlinearity, that the emergent whole is more than the sum of its parts. What Bateson adduces as a “circuit,” the governor of a steam engine, is a simple example of an emergent system. The dynamic by which the brain forms a coherent sense of the subject and object is an emergent process dependent on a much more complex system of connectivity and distributed, that is, decentralized activity. A specific dynamic will be discussed in Chapter Five, but, as Bateson suggests, it must also meet the following

criteria: (i) it must embrace vast numbers of interconnections between functionally heterogeneous units (Bateson 1977, see also Edelman); and (ii) the connections themselves must be reciprocal enabling top down and bottom up functioning. The fact that either element in the dyad may serve as effect or cause in the transmission of information becomes an invitation to read non-sequentially and against the forward flow of language. The interconnected activity allows the reader to use the poem as a systemic event of his own making--it thereby enables novelty.

Thus, the mandate that mind be understood in accordance with evolutionary principles exists not merely to secure a philosophical bond between the theory of lyric and pertinent neuroscience: the principles of Bateson's theory bear directly on lyric operation. For the mythical and the empirical poet, the language of the poem is selected for survival following the encoding of the difference that prompted the compositional event. The infliction of exile itself is, as noted before, an instance of the registration of secondness that prompts poetic mediation and infuses its firstness into a lower level event, recapitulating its emergence. For the reader, the difference or discontinuity perceivable within the poem (as well as the difference that is the encounter with the poem itself) prompts encoding, or mediation that might survive in the form of interpretation. Each process is dependent on difference occurring above a threshold level of perceptibility, or within a receptive field. A reader might not, for instance, concern herself with the differences *within* customary grammatical construction occurring within a poem such as, "It is a beautiful evening, calm and free" and treat the report instead as a unity. Donne's line "Batter my heart, three-personed God" introduces several points of discontinuity within a roughly equivalent number of syllables. To echo Bateson, every

opportunity for difference is not significant. The freedom to select¹⁵ from Nature's latitude—what Darwin called the tangled bank--bestows the freedom of thought, vital to composing and necessary for reading.

Peirce defines thirdness as “that which bridges over the chasm between the absolute first and last, and brings them into relationship” (“Guess” 249). The poem's evolving expansion into a polar tension allows it to be conceived of as a single and singular act of intercession between the absolute “first and last” instantiated as the “I” and the “you.” It is within the intentionality to intercede between perceived pronominal difference and to relate them that the poem as a whole becomes a mediating event. Lyric can thus be said to be the medium of medium formation and an ur-medium as such. As executed, thirdness is the mode of the prehension: “a prehension is a vector in that it bears along what is there, transforming it into what is here” (Whitehead 23). In its foreshortening or collapse of distance, it is a prediction come true. Thirdness is of course, also scalar and particular to each instance of secondness. The expressive force of the poem is itself a thirdness of decisive verbal action that realizes a satisfaction for its author, and mediates the distance between him and his reader. The interpretation performed by the reader is a “higher” level third, one of a different logical type that incorporates the writer's mediating action as an environment of firstness. The interpretation of figure is another “lower” level mediation broadly associated with lyric poetry, a prevalent recuperative tactic deployed against resistance. The list of “illustrations,” spun by St. John are gestures toward thirdness whose primary purpose is not to represent, but to “help us face the dumbfounding abyss between us and the object.” Yet, by virtue of their repeated substitution, they contribute to the “effect,” if you

will, of firstness occurring “beyond the mind’s extremest pinch,” the evolutionary regressive grasp of the pincer (rather than “this living hand”). Revelation, by its nature, reveals nothing (Hillis-Miller 39, 43). Rather than initiate us into the secret of the whole, it re-conceals it, deferring that event to the day when venom and wisdom are united, until the divine dispensational shift that would see the impossible yet possible apotheosis of the mind. As Stevens knew, the attempt to apprehend essence perceptually can only give rise to further obscurity because it is through perception that attributes are predicated and reality constructed. The nature of mediation is revealed to be tenuous, gossamer in its proclivity to dissipate into firstness.

Yet, as presence, the obscurity of “world” takes on a positive value in consuming its own objectification. Pain, as feeling, is an arid state because it is a cognized, existential, self-reflective sort of pain and not pain experienced as emotion in Magda Arnold’s sense. The Back-Ache, as an instantiation of thirdness, cannot access presence because it seeks to address it within the realm of secondness, to comprehend in rational terms its *reaction* to the goad of pain that is by definition irrational because as firstness it exists below the rational devising of cause and effect relation. Pain as a character is an “articulating” force in both senses of the word; it is the affliction of the human consciousness of separateness that spurs the search for meaning. Firstness appears as the overwhelming obscurity of the lines Bloom has identified as among the most difficult in all of Stevens (298), and as feeling, *not* the “woman come upon not yet accustomed yet humane to most incredible depths,” not she, but the feeling, associated with her. The woman as feeling--as love--appears earlier in, for instance, “The Woman in Sunshine,” who also sports a “yellow shift” of sunlight. She is prior to form, pre-natal warmth and

movement, the music as feeling of “Peter Quince at the Clavier”; as the depths of the humane, she is the “little ignorance” that fills the lacunae we persistently create.

Emerson also understands that firstness must be conserved through its regeneration. If the poem does not maintain the nourishment afforded by embeddedness it stalls at the dead-end of unambiguous, descriptive presence. In consequence, man’s fate that he think and choose freely is put into contest rather than concert with the freedom of others in the form of universal constraints. This can amount only to the dead-end of “parrying and defence” (949), the negative feedback of the point attractor, a system, like a pendulum, overcome by the resistance of friction, whose dwindling momentum will eventually graph to the stasis of a point.¹⁶ To circumnavigate this impasse, Emerson puts himself back into not merely the whole of nature, which is God, but conceives of this whole as thought itself. “It is not in us, but we are in it.” (955) Emerson’s expansive view “It is not mine or thine, but the will of all mind” (956) will be picked up by James’s provocative statement “it thinks” (“Stream” 170). Each thinker anticipates Bateson. It is in its embodiment of the acts of mind that the consistent threads of lyric are knotted. By instigating embedded thinking, lyric fictionalizes and re-enacts original creation and is not itself secondary to it, merely result or exemplar.

In de Man’s sequencing of “Correspondences” and “Obsession” in “Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric,” he arrives at the conclusion that the anthropomorphic tendency of the latter poem “freezes the infinite chain of tropological transformation and propositions into one single assertion or essence” (241). The tropological transformations are provided by its predecessor sister poem “Correspondences.” De Man issues a dictum against reversibility in reading: it is

apparently not possible in his system to devolve from the anthropomorphized to the decreed: one would seem to be loathe to sacrifice the endpoint of intelligibility. Lyric reading is the emergence into anthropomorphic certainty that cannot be undone; once stabilized so, the poem has been “read lyrically” and cannot be unread, a fact that for him disqualifies it as a genre: “The lyric is not a genre, but one name among several to designate the defensive motion of understanding, the possibility of a future hermeneutics” (261). He precludes the possibility of a reverse reading, which Jonathan Culler, as a fellow deconstructionist, is quick to critique as irresistible (“Reading” 105).

De Man is correct in presuming that the reading cannot be simply erased through its inversion in the Derridean manner as it is now guaranteed an informational presence with the recipient. However, other satisfactions may be found as different “I’s” and “yous” emerge and the lyric’s generic cohesiveness is at least partially indebted to this fact. As Whitehead puts it, “The creative process is rhythmic: it swings from the publicity of many things to the individual privacy; and it swings back from the private individual to the publicity of the objectified individual” (34). Emerson and Stevens understood that what Stevens calls “the good of thinking in poetry” (165) restores the condition of firstness and that a lyrical reading strategy is self-renewing. “St. John and the Back-Ache” is at least superficially ordered from the dialogic, ossified, character-driven interchange of ranked individuals to the blurry assertions of firstness. Viktor Shklovsky also saw firstness as the end of aesthetic experience. Form and the formal experience of art *estranged* (22). Or as Weil puts it, “Nothing can have a destination which is not its origin (28; see also 65, 83). Mourning is forbidden in Donne’s “Valediction “ because the condition of firstness is constant: it is not transcendable no matter how productive of

duality it becomes. It is always refreshed in the creation of novelty--in the novel creation of duality--and remains as a constitutional principle within the bordered object. The replenishment of the well of firstness forestalls the co-opting of art as raw material for other purposes. While we conceive of firstness as a semantic source and name it first, it is as much a product of meaning-making within a system governed by the mutual construction of its elements.

The definite ingression into a particular actual entity that is the prehension is not to be conceived as the sheer evocation of determination out of indetermination.

Potentiality becomes reality; and yet retains its *message of alternatives* which the actual entity has avoided (Whitehead 22) (emphasis added)

We may choose to dismiss potential, but it remains as the alternatives created and not merely abandoned in the execution of the creative act (23). Peirce understood the necessary co-existensiveness of the three moods, and all exist in the poem as constant, pervasive undercurrents driving and impeding hermeneutic response. De Man relies upon a linear sequence and does not avail himself of a notion of either reversibility or a recursive hierarchy. As Frye understood it, “there is still this residual sense that something inexhaustible lies behind [the other world of lyric] that it is good not merely to be there, but, as Ferdinand says at the masque in *The Tempest*, to remain there” (“Approaching” 36). It is his attentiveness to the potential infused by the musical mood of poetry that leads Poe to imagine the greater promise of a beauty beyond contemplation which in turn suffuses the experience of lyric with a wistful sadness (“Poetic” 342). Within the genre, epistemological frustration is indelible.

Peirce’s triad, of course, is operative within other milieus and does not in itself

justify a perceptual dynamic, which will be covered in more detail in the next chapter. The poem can be safely said to dramatize the complex inter-relations of perceptual stages, forcing the conditions predicating reference to be re-enacted step-by-step. The lyric rendition of obscurity and emotion, the creation of meaning through deixis and discontinuity, and the termination of deixis in the lyric “I” and “you” which must be diversely mediated, comprise a co-dependent range of modalities in which lyric is invested formally. Every lyric poem inscribes itself as a participant within the process; a particular poem may gravitate toward one end of it or the other, and some participate in the process more fully than others, but each positions itself selectively within the spectrum and assumes the full extent of the spectrum. If language poetry immerses the reader in the preliminary phases of apprehension, it does so by way of emphasizing the organism’s embeddedness. Likewise, a poem with a relatively unified subject enables the activity of secondness to create the features by means of which that identification is made, and those processes draw from a firstness that evidences the subject’s embeddedness. Although postmodern bewilderment is proposed as an end in and of itself, it, of course, cannot maintain utter unintelligibility in the confrontation of mind with mind. And if there are not lingering mists out of which secondness can emerge, the features presented function in the service of stabilizing character in order to satisfy social expectations. At that point, the emergent contingency of the self and the other has been arrested, and we are no longer within the sites of lyric. The attempts to replace the term speaker with “voice” and then disembody even voice mark critical efforts to avoid narrative or dramatic characterization as against its tendency to gel within interpretation. Poetry recognizes that the human is of the earth, or the *humus*, with which it is cognate

and evinces this recognition in conceiving of “verse” as a ploughing, a cultivation or insemination of the soil with difference to effect the emergence of the human from it. It is this inexhaustible proposition that lyric poetry offers and accepts. The dancer is by her nature indistinguishable from the dance and is, by virtue of this fact, mesmerizing.

¹ As set forth in the introduction, I am assuming with Gerald Edelman that a structural correlation exists as between the neurological substrate and the contents of consciousness.

² This idea derives from J.J. Gibson's ambient optic array. Stressing a natural model of perception in which light is the raw material of perception and not its object, the ambient optic array refers to the physicality--the physics--of the arrangement of light as it is available to the eye.

³ One assumes she means the structure of light as structured by the environment and as further structured by the sense organ, which would involve, minimally the compression and inversion of the structure impacting the lens. See J.J. Gibson's *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* for a detailed explanation of the structure of light the environment affords the perceiver.

⁴ Changes in intensity across the small receptive field of each cone are registered as a function of firing speed.

⁵ Small wavelength, or S cones respond maximally to wavelengths of 420 nanometers, M cones, 530 nm, and L cones, 560 nm.

⁶ Veronica Forrest-Thomson develops a theory of a self-contained semantics within poetry.

⁷ It should also be noted that there is in place no mechanism to account for the relationship between neuronal activity and the experience of qualia.

⁸ There has been no dearth of theories proffered to solve the binding problem. The Team of Gray, Singer and Eckhorn argue that perceptual unity is preserved through the synchronous firing of ever-larger neuronal networks, so that the pattern is preserved as it is integrated into a unified whole. On the other hand, Optican and Richmond hypothesize that higher level neurons convey the information from their subordinates by integrating it into the temporal pattern of their discharge, which becomes the informational medium. Each theory contains within it the capacity for the temporal preservation of the initial imprint and the inference of a phenomenal fabric, which must necessarily remain an inference. To date, how, that is, by what mechanism and where in the mind the discrete information is reassembled remains officially unresolved.

⁹ Presence, when taken to mean the present tense, is also a third, as Peirce points out, as it mediates between the seconds "past" and "future."

¹⁰ Shifters are terms whose referents are vague. They include personal and demonstrative pronouns, vague definite articles, spatial and temporal adverbs and the non-timeless present (one in the act of finding).

¹¹ I am indebted to James Longenbach for this observation. See *The Resistance to Poetry*, p. 27.

¹² This may seem like an odd qualification; however, is nevertheless possible to functionally differentiate between self and the other on an unconscious level. Note the phenomenon of blindsight.

¹⁴ That perception is initiated by difference and is of difference is a longstanding though somewhat over-generalized principle. It is implicit in Johannes Muller's *law of specific nerve energies*, which classifies the different receptors belonging to each sense modality, and in Helmholtz's analysis of the possible sensory differences within each modality. The more basic difference that triggers perception was first noted by both Johannes Müller who argued with Thomas Hobbes that a stimulus must affect a receptor differently if it is to be perceived. Information arises at the point of change of input. Consistent input results in the phenomenon of habituation. The very concept of the receptive field, the limited set of stimuli that will activate a particular neuron, insures the encoding that initiates the epistemological distinction of the self from the other in difference through the creation of further difference. This analytical technique ensures identification through feature recognition. However, habituation notwithstanding, it is possible for perception to proceed as input continues.

¹⁵ I do not mean for this statement to advocate for free will conceived as conscious choice, rather to point out that selection implies alternatives that are unselected and that choice is enacted on a physical level.

¹⁶ In the ideal case of frictionless motion, the pendulum will graph as a limit cycle or a circle which is nevertheless closed in upon itself.

Chapter Five

The Perception of Metaphor and the Metaphor of Perception

Nestled within *The Prelude*'s "Book the First" is the epic's celebrated "boat-stealing episode," the story of the boy Wordsworth's clandestine launch of an "elfin pinnacle" discovered on a twilight outing. In an act of youthful impetuosity, the ten-year-old William pilots the shepherd's skiff from its cavern mooring at the foot of one Stybarrow Crag only to find that a contiguous ridge rises unexpectedly into view as he rows out into the center of the lake.

A rocky steep uprose
 Above the cavern of the willow-tree,
 And now, as suited one who proudly rowed
 With his best skill, I fixed a steady view
 Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
 The bound of the horizon—for behind
 Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
 She was an elfin pinnacle; lustily
 I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
 And as I rose upon the stroke my boat
 Went heaving through the water like a swan—
 When from behind that craggy steep, till then
 The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
 As if with voluntary power instinct,

Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,
 And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
 Rose up between me and the stars, and still
 With measured motion, like a living thing
 Strode after me. (394-412)¹

At the commencement of his venture, it is unknown to the future poet that the more massive Black Crag lies beyond Stybarrow, and so the former cliff appears to him to advance of an animal volition as his vantage point recedes. Wordsworth's use of the intransitive form of the verb "struck" to portray his reaction affords the reader the temporary sense that he acts directly upon the crag, striking at it in a desperate act of self-defense. Presently, it becomes clear that he is rather striking the water with his oars, frantically rowing away from a looming mass that only appears to be striding after him. As the past tense of both "strike" and the oarsman's term "stroke," the verb ambiguously evokes the actions of fight and flight, innate responses that prove to be equally inappropriate to his perceptual predicament. One can infer that, in confirming the fugitive's backward motion, the input of peripheral vision (registering that motion), audition (the sound of the "striking" oars and the lapping of the water audible in the still night), and tactile perception (the sense of his hands on the oars) do not therefore conform with the image swelling in his visual field, and so the crag is misperceived as a prideful, threatening animal. Disorientation, heightened by fear and panic, guides the boy's reaction, which is genuinely motivated by his perception, but the action does not jibe with the sequent perception: rowing away from an inanimate mass does not yield the mass's expected diminishment in appearance as a result of the increased distance of the

viewer from it. The attribution of autonomous movement and even life to an inert geological formation is indeed the result of a breach among perceptual modalities. Yet, the sensory schism experienced is further symptomatic of a more fundamental disconnect as between action and the perceptual content that follows from the action. The phenomenon of reafference, in which the global neuronal activity patterns instigating action simultaneously prepare the sensory cortices to expect the consequences of that action, is interrupted (*Brains* 33). In this case, the “corollary discharge messages” sent to the cortices leave them woefully unprepared, and the poet is thrust into a state of limbo.

In this insightful passage, Wordsworth unwittingly produces an archaeology of the pathetic fallacy and a subtle one at that. A secondary meaning of “uprear” is to “exalt,” to “elevate with joy, pride, or confidence,” and by virtue of this particular denotative complex, the verb lends a specific emotional valence to the cliff’s apparently volitional action. By grounding the projection of feeling in an instance of unsuccessful action into the environment, Wordsworth roots the pathetic fallacy much more deeply in the perception/action cycle than does Ruskin, who takes the fallacious practice to task as the irrational projection onto brute nature of a confused emotional state, one ungoverned by the reason (155). The discomfort produced by this “fallacious” practice is far-reaching in the subsequent critical tradition. Wordsworth’s emotional reaction, which Ruskin would attribute to a weakness of mind, is indeed implicated as a player in the event: it spurs the inappropriate action of flight. One could argue that it is simply the emotion of fear that confounds the boy, yet the episode suggests that his emotion does not originate apart from or prior to his intentional participation in the landscape. Wordsworth does not simply “perceive wrongly because he feels” (Ruskin 158): he feels as he does because he

perceives wrongly. The projected emotional valence is neither frivolous nor indulgent, nor is it unmotivated: it complements, rather than reflects, the poet's emotional response to his misperception.

This pregnant incident in a self-confessed "preparatory" essay to a full-fledged poetic memoir resonates as a symbolic point of embarkation within Wordsworth's career.² The dramatized displacement of secure perceptual knowledge constitutes for the poet a partly biographical, partly fictionalized instance of conception made possible by the obsolescence of past categories. His betrayal by non-mythologized nature is disconcerting and profoundly so. No longer in concert with his native surroundings, he is thrust into the impotent condition of isolate consciousness. In a layered, Freudian reading of this passage, Joshua Wilner notes, by way of establishing its significance to the authorial gesture, that the boat stealing scene is in fact the culminating displacement in a nesting series of displacements:

His ramble into the countryside is part of a succession of displacements to ever less familiar places of dwelling: having initially been transplanted from his birthplace to school and Hawkeshead, he now is on vacation from Hawkeshead, and lodged in the village inn in Patterdale, "a vale/Wherein I was a stranger" (375-76). His discovery of the boat is thus framed as an antipodal scene of maximal displacement and symbolic condensation . . . (39)

The rebellion staged as a joy ride caps off and further intensifies the string of oustings (figured by the poet as outings) that terminate in the haunting of his consciousness. In the days following the incident, familiar thoughts and customary images are usurped by the residual impress of the encounter. The mature Wordsworth

names the resulting psychic infliction “solitude/Or blank desertion”:

after I had seen

That spectacle, for many days my brain
 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
 Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts
 There was a darkness—call it solitude
 Or blank desertion—no familiar shapes
 Of hourly objects, images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,
 But huge and mighty forms that do not live
 Like living men moved slowly through my mind
 By day, and were the trouble of my dreams. (417-426)

The disassociation of the visual from the kinesthetic that culminates this outing interrupts the seamless cruising of the child and gives rise to an almost solipsistic feeling of isolation conflated with, and indeed caused by, the erasure of the familiar, which estrangement accompanies and inspires origination. In classifying the faculty of perception as the primary imagination upon which the creative secondary is built, Wordsworth understood, with the more critically-inclined Coleridge, that original experience is available only perceptually or via an homologous act of conception (and I wish to emphasize the double meaning of the latter term); the dynamic of creative agency is explicitly rooted in perception (Coleridge 263). Wordsworth turned to poetry to remedy the schism in basic biological function that his verse Bildungsroman marks as incipient with respect to a poetic career. It is hardly surprising that the poetics of

romanticism naturalize the exile motif, realizing it in the figure of the poet as a solitary, errant consciousness spurred on to a less than voluntary exploration of “unknown modes of being” as part of the project to recuperate the loss of the “hour of splendor in the grass.” The recovery of the cove is a symbolic re-entry into a womb-like orifice, an original point of mooring and a clearing of the perceptual slate that is the birth of his poetic career. His aborted negotiation of the landscape inspires the derivative dynamic the figure of metaphor encapsulates because it is so imposing a perceptual failure. This stance assumes that linguistic metaphor, as a symbol of the romantic imagination, “echoes” perception, and that the figure of speech proper is a compressed linguistic version of, and prompt to, a dynamic that is aboriginally perceptual and is therefore repetitive in this respect. Wordsworth has reached back to a fissure within mental functioning to locate the fundamental impetus to *poesis*.

The claim that metaphor discloses or engenders insight has served to secure a special cognitive status for the figure that is yet shrouded in the rhetoric of truth that the term “cognitive” once implied. One of the most intractable lines within the philosophy of metaphor divides those theorists who secure a special cognitive status for the figure—either because it is seen to structure or constitute processes of thought, thereby engendering insight³ or to reflect them, an idea that has roots in Aristotle’s claim that the figure originates in its author’s intuitive discernment of similarity in dissimilarity--from those for whom metaphor is something else, whether a mere linguistic or a mere referential phenomenon.⁴ It is my intention to ally myself provisionally with the former camp by suggesting that the experience of fresh or poetic metaphor engages (as it reflects) the perceptual processes used by an embedded organism in the maintenance of

an integral relationship with its environment. I shall argue that metaphor is cognitive to the extent that its experience is like that undergone by an organism perceiving in an aware state, that is to the extent that it continues to invite creative activity, the dynamic of which is based in the contingency of the pre-conceptual. The metaphoric tendencies of mind reside within the neurological mechanisms underlying the process by which mind relates itself to fluid circumstance. Metaphor, especially to the extent that a subclass of poetic or literary metaphor may be said to exist, is indigenously cognitive because it embodies and prompts the dynamic enabling the perceptual processes used by an embedded organism in the maintenance of an integral relationship with its environment. It is cognitive to the extent that its experience is like that undergone by an organism perceiving, that is, to the extent that it continues to invite the creative activity that is by definition prior to conception. It is fallaciously seen to be cognitive when that term narrows to lay claim to transcendent truth value and is not applied more broadly to general mental activity.

The position that metaphor is the instrument of truth is simultaneously evoked and perplexed by Nietzsche in his infamous proclamation that all truth is metaphorical (a category he extends to include metonymy and anthropomorphism and is more properly tropical, broadly speaking). Perpetuating the rhetorical perception that metaphor dazzles and thereby falsifies, he uses the figure to defame the notion of truth, deemed illusory in the wake of the death of God and the turn to perspectival understanding:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms-- in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which

after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power . . . (46-47)

Nietzsche's conviction that we once knew our "truths" to be illusory (our metaphors to be metaphors, as it were) pushes the figure's reality back into a mythic past he denominates in terms that are both neurological and Darwinian (45). Illusion is in its basis a perceptual phenomenon, and Nietzsche's demotion of the truth is an attempt to root what legitimacy it has in the efficacy of the impulse of the individual nerve: "What is a word? The image of a nerve stimulus in sounds" (45). "A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image—first metaphor. The image, in turn, imitated by a sound—second metaphor" (46). Through the neurological process of image-making, "[o]ne designates only the relations of things to man, and to express them one calls on the boldest metaphors" (45-46). Linguistic expression removes itself from the native, survival-based, and only authentic version of truth, its "life-preserving consequences" (45) by conceiving relation-making as transcendent truth (46).

Much later, Jonathan Culler will caution that when we elevate metaphor to a conveyance for insight, we are in danger of debasing truth in the manner Nietzsche describes (204). An objective notion of truth clouded by the mystique of transcendence and the romance of empirical fact that the term cognitive still entails tends to invite such a caveat. The truth value created by figuring perception, however, inhabits the making of personal history, a fictive, Stevensian business firmly ensconced within the individual mind and fully invested in the pragmatics of the "consequences of truth" (Nietzsche 45). For the late pragmatist--early postmodernist Nietzsche, the acknowledgment of the

constructive power of the senses and the relegation of truth to provisional consequence ironically breeds the power to vitalize the senses. What he realizes is that metaphor, especially to the extent that a subclass of poetic or literary metaphor may be said to exist, is indigenously cognitive because it embodies the core constructivist dynamic enabling sensory perception as distinct from conception. The preponderance of metaphor, its centrality to our thought, and its robust career as a site of philosophical, linguistic, and cognitive contestation may be accounted for by recourse to a naturalized, Nietzschean function of relation-making, the necessarily originary activity of “first metaphor” that is central to poetic making, or creation.

Western poetics is heir to contradictory accounts of the nature of creative conception. The first, which imagines the poet to be primarily a vatic or prophetic figure, is given seminal philosophic defense by Plato: the argument staged within the *Ion* that the poet, like the prophet, is a ministrant of divinity serves to relegate him to a mere mouthpiece whose performance is devoid of both personal artistry and authentic knowledge. To compose, the rhapsodist must be “out of his senses,” possessed but not self-possessed (*Ion* 533d-534e). Plato's devaluation of poetic artistry is a necessary tactic deployed along the way to discrediting poetry as a didactic instrument. The poet is a conduit

. . . like a fountain which gives free course to the rush of its waters, and since representation is of the essence of his art, he must often contradict his own utterances in his presentations of contrasted characters, without knowing whether the truth is on the side of this speaker or of that. (*Laws* 719c)

Yet, the view that the poet is "inspired" by divine breath, and poetry a balanced

transaction in which output equals input is persistent in its appeal. Within the 74th sonnet of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* sequence, his speaker dubs himself a "layman" and then coyly inquires

How falls it then that with so smooth an ease

My thoughts I speak, and what I speak doth flow

In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please? (184, lines 8-10)

The answer divulged at the poem's climax is that his lips are "inspired with Stella's kiss." Although his muse is flesh and blood and his process humanized, the poem recapitulates the originary occasion of Caedmon's versifying as from the mouths of the unschooled and the inarticulate spews the miracle of finely-honed verse. (It is precisely, then, the lowly stations of the neophyte and the smitten that serve to underscore the divinity of the verse's source.) The most extreme versions of vaticism may be said to inhere in the visionary poetics of Blake who claimed to transcribe metered passages as long as thirty lines against his will (Letter 4/25/03 To Thomas Butts) and in Yeats's siphoning of the poetic metaphors channeled, conveniently, by his wife (8).

Vying with the vatic conception of poetic praxis is the superficially less glamorous idea inherent in the English word "poetry," deriving from *poesis* or "making." In an implicit quarrel with the Platonic sentence to madness, Horace's *Ars Poetica* marks an initial attempt to formalize and to prescribe technical standards for greatness that was to prove vulnerable to extreme treatment. The robust revival of the Renaissance treatise as technical manual produced ample fodder for the parodic pen of Edgar Allan Poe, who, in "The Philosophy of Composition," purveys formulae for the calculus of poem-making, an enterprise realizable through what he calls "the precision and rigid consequence of a

mathematical problem” (1081). His search for terms prescriptive of superlative poetry culminates in the determination that “o” is “the most sonorous vowel” and “r” “the most producible consonant” (1083).

If Sidney is as delightfully arch in his treatment of the vatic as Poe is when prescribing rules for *poesis*, he is also quick to embrace the mode as evidence of the poet’s proximity to the divine (214-15). At the same time he divests the pejorative sense of imitation, he secures the poet a divine lineage by installing him as a competing maker, one who “groweth in effect a new nature” (216). Poetic creation is an echo of divine creation because the poet is the supreme creation of the Almighty in whose image he himself was made (217). If Sidney’s is not quite a syncretic view, it is through the marriage he arranges that “The Apology” apotheosizes the poet and organicizes the poetic act, giving us imagination as the preferred synonym for invention. Poetry is rendered appropriately didactic by virtue of its credibility and effectively didactic because of its eternally alluring beauty (219).

From a vantage point posterior to the advent of psychological interpretation, these historical and polemical shifts in emphasis seem to make for quaint taxonomy. In isolation, each view at worst rejects and at best sublimates talent and genius, the first to a godhead and the second to the tradition-driven expectations of audience. Yet the twentieth century neither escaped their influence nor transcended the dichotomy as such. The Beat poets--and Ginsberg in particular, following Kerouac--recuperate the visionary poetics of Blake and Whitman in an attempt to distance themselves from various formalisms, most notoriously New Criticism's quasi-mathematical reduction of the well-wrought artifact to a singular thematic value enabled by a centripetal architectonic. The

Beats' carte blanche eschewal of editing follows Blake's dictum that "First thought is best in Art, second in other matters." In a conversation with Robert Duncan, Ginsberg muses that composition is believed to flow from "an absolute, almost Zen-like, complete absorption, attention to your own consciousness, to the act of writing" (147). The notion that poetry emanates from a source below or beyond the level of conscious control serves to preserve a shroud of mystique for the form. Even the prevailing, temperate view that allows the obfuscation of genesis--the superstition that Eurydice, as inspirational principle, must not be looked upon--to exist in tandem with a conscious command of technique separates the two as processes, for example, pure creation and editing, or inspiration and execution. These distinctions persist even in Monroe Beardsley's refinement of the dyad and its relocation into a conscious, non-intentional poetics on the grounds that pre-conscious processes are unknowable ("Creation" 300). In what he calls the "finalistic" or telic mode, as in the vatic, a vision of the final product is believed to pre-exist its execution while in the "propulsive" mode, creative agency pre-exists the process without foreknowledge and each individual selection regenerates the directionality of the piece (294). Following Coleridge's observation that to distinguish is not necessarily to divide, I would like to suggest that the two notions--one involving initiation, mystification, surrender and by some accounts genius, the other long apprenticeship, painstaking skill mastery, experience, free will, and by some accounts genius--rather evolve within a single process in which they constrain, inform, and create one another, and that the dynamic merging the two may be explained by adducing the dynamics of certain neuroscientific theories of emergent perception, as well as their implicit epistemological revision. It is incumbent upon any discussion of creative agency

to recognize these divergent etiologies.

The necessary interdependence of making and inspiration finds an inchoate expression that is usually positioned within the romantic revision. It is precisely because romanticism negotiates what might be considered a definitive turn to internalization, because it naturalizes but does not fully divest its mythic inheritance, that the classical dichotomy is given complex formulation within its lore and theory. The figure of the Eolian harp, promulgated by Coleridge especially, recasts the inspiriting source as the literal wind, a natural force, personified on occasion, but never divinized. It re-figures the poet, reshaping the vessel as a tuned, that is meticulously prepared, instrument, capable of harmonic precision and technical virtuoso but still passive with respect to the physical agency of the inseminating wind. The relevant contribution of romanticism is the flipping of the active/passive dyad, dramatized at the moment in "The Eolian Harp" when Coleridge's speaker veers to ask

And what if all of animated nature
 Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
 That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
 Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
 At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (44-48)

The source of Aeolus's mythic breeze is internalized, rendered an intellectual animator of the instrument nature, which is in turn inspirited by human thought. This inversion and consequent doubling of directionality will allow the creative source to be relocated to the subconscious from which it is projected and interpreted psychologically. What is often under or even unacknowledged about the romantic dynamic is its recognition of the

importance of sensory input to the creative process. The internalizing of creative inception and the outward projection of its emergence is preceded and informed by an exterior source made internal. The "alliance" to use Wordsworth's word, between perceiver and object of perception, between within and without, is given poetic utterance in Book II of *The Prelude*:

. . . his mind
 Even as an agent of the one great mind,
 Creates, creator and receiver both,
 Working but in alliance with the works
 Which it beholds.--Such, verily is the first
 Poetic spirit of our human life. (1805 257-261)

Wordsworth's Latinate terminology is unfalteringly precise: "alliance" suggest a contractual relationship, an agreement between peers to fulfill a joint obligation, that is, to act in a way motivated by the alliance. To the extent that romanticism builds upon the genre of the romance and is, as Harold Bloom as has suggested, the internalization of the quest motif (3-4), it redirects the gaze of Eros trained upon a beloved toward "inanimate" nature. Sidney's Muse's injunction to "look into thy heart and write" (Sonnet 1) is, then, a prod to find inspiration in the beauty of Stella, the heart's inhabitant. The ultimate source of inspiration is the image. Following the pattern common to the conversation poems, "The Eolian Harp" opens with due indulgence in the multi-sensory imagery offered up by the consummate landscape. Reveling in "the clouds that late were rich with light," imbibing the scent of the nearby bean-field, and attending to "the stilly murmur of the distant sea" can be seen as attempts to abstract sensory experience from the perceptual

process, to acknowledge the temporal primacy of the primary imagination relative to the secondary imagination as well as the necessity for the dissolution of its content as a precondition to recreation, the suffusing of the perceptual stage by the imagination (263).

Coleridge's prescient understanding of imagination as a derivative (in the non-pejorative sense) perceptual faculty marks the culmination of a long tradition of enquiry into the nature of its functioning, particularly the attempt to reconcile empirical psychology's basis in sensation with "The Apology's" notion of creative transcendence. The perfection of the eighteenth century's dismissal of the idea of poetry as an act imitative of subject matter and its mastery as a technical feat was indeed one of romanticism's central accomplishments. He writes, famously and infamously: "The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" (263). Coleridge's secondary imagination, responsible for the generation of artistic product, is identical in kind to the form of imagination that generates perception (263). While romanticism is widely interpreted to be the valorization of a pure and consummate creativity whose matrix is lodged exclusively within the mind, this conviction also ignores the homology Coleridge strives to acknowledge.

If romanticism is deemed to be a correction of classicism, it is possible to locate a similar self-correcting tendency within that particular ethos. In his book charting the evolution of self-consciousness entitled *The Discovery of the Mind*, Bruno Snell stresses that within the textual evidence dating to pre-classical Greece, the motive force for all personal agency, including mental contents and actions, is believed to be external. "According to [Homer's] view—and there could be no other for him—a man's action or

perception is determined by the divine forces operative in the world; it is a reaction of his physical organs to a stimulus, and this stimulus is itself grasped as a personal act” (43). In a conception of the inspiring of the human that is paradoxically ennobling and humbling, one was informed and driven solely by external powers; whether battling or poeticizing, one never felt, thought, or acted but at the behest of the gods. The classical agency of creativity was, of course, provided by the sisterhood of the Muses. Sired by the all-powerful, Zeus, and given birth by the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, they specialized along genre lines. It is perhaps not earth-shattering that pre-classical mythology should have recognized the role memory plays in composition, but the curious lineage of the Muses takes on new significance given the extent to which we know the shaping agent of perception to be memory. At every stage of sensory processing, the present is “remembered” to use Edelman’s term (*Bright* Chapter 11). Input is shaped by the synaptic memory of prior perception, the mysterious, interior transformer that regularizes immediate experience. In an analogous framing of the dynamic, inspirational force is born from the insemination and subsequent shaping powers of memory. Zeus’s power is expressed in the generative, seminal, and informing act that initiates procreation and by extension creation. His is the force of external movement and the fertilizing infliction of difference his offspring recapitulate, rousing memory, a gift of the gods, as they inspire. Whether knowledge is put on with the power is matter for rhetorical cynicism in the completely passive “conception” of “Leda and the Swan,” a poem that exposes the sheer receptivity of Yeats’s mystical belief when the helpless Leda is read as a figure for the poet himself.

Yet Yeats’s poem simultaneously modulates its rhetorical posturing as the poetic

utterance creates a local knowledge that is inescapably personal. Snell goes so far as to credit lyric poetry, and particularly Sappho's practice of it, as the vehicle through which the recognition of a consistent, internal self first evolved within Western thinking. He interprets Sappho's self-deprecating tone when lamenting her suffering in love together with her realization that she will love again in the poem Jim Powell entitles [Artlessly Adorned Aphrodite] to be indications that she conceives her emotional response to her predicament to be within her own power (53, 57, 65). Love is still administered by injection: the well-aimed dart of Eros causes the speaker to love, but the response to the condition it inflicts is entirely Sappho's own. Through the practice of a derivatively perceptual art, Sappho has perceived herself into the discovery of her unique personal agency and, in so doing, has effectively perceived herself, a development concomitant with the historical emergence of self-consciousness. It is precisely the culmination of perception in the ownership of personal response that is frustrated for the boy Wordsworth: when his perception fails to accord with its precipitating action, it fails to confirm that action, thereby barring the claim to mind that working within an alliance demands.

The importance of perceptual influence to poetic creation was by no means a romantic epiphany. Aristotle's metempricism held imagination to be the reproduction of sensory input and recognized that metaphor, the mark of literary genius in his estimation, followed upon "the intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars" (Poetics 1459a 5-8) (emphasis added). Evidence for the primacy of perception within poetic utterance is then not merely to be found in the preponderance of imagery, which is often thought to be the mediated record of a seminal perception, but in the recurrent intuition that creative

or imaginary processes are homologous to perceptual processes. The admission of an originary relationship between sensory perception and the creative act is so pervasive as to be shared by classicism, where it is valued negatively by Plato and positively by Aristotle, and romanticism. Perception also garners post-romantic championship for its role as a prime source of poetic energy. In rallying poets to circumvent what he calls “the lyrical interference of the ego,” by which he means the rigid bourgeois category of the self, Charles Olson urges the direct registration of perception through the preservation of its energy within the poem and the transformation of that energy into a form transducible by the reader (16). “ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION.” Working at the speed of the nerves (lest the ego solidify and intervene) the poet must keep in mind that “. . . always one perception must must must MOVE, INSTANTER, ON ANOTHER!” (17) if “a change beyond, and larger than, the technical” (15) is to be effected. And lest contemporary thought be slighted, a perception-based poetic is given overarching, non-polemical formulation by Susan Stewart who pushes poetry's beginnings back to the pre-perceptual. It is the premise of her recent book *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* that all poetry is a “force against effacement,” a material vehicle to move one out of darkness and into sensory awareness (2). Each of these theories either proclaims or assumes poetry to be fueled by perceptual fodder and/or to function as record and residue of a perceptual act.

It is not insignificant that Coleridge and Olson lean rhetorically on capitalization to stress the urgent need to attend to the immediate juncture at which the nerve center, or being (I AM), is maintained. The breath is, after all, the first medium of poetic speech: it is not only in postmodern poetics that poetic being manifests specifically as voice. And

here the ancient understanding of the breath as the site of divine influence--as *inspiritus* or *afflatus*--makes for neat formula. To imagine that the stimulus to creation enters on the breath is wed to the creative impulse to the life-sustaining ebb and flow of respiration. It further ensures that the "output" arm of the respiratory mechanism will be engaged. Poetic utterance--aboriginal oral expression--transpires on the exhalation. Sound is transported on the medium of the breath; the vocal implies the olfactory and is one with it, for to engage the breath is to automatically stimulate, and hence to activate, the sense of smell. Inhalation not only entails exhalation, it is a stream on which sensory stimuli, the precursors to perception, are transported. Sense data, in the physical form of olfactory chemicals, are borne on the breath: sensory ingress surfs the current on which the divine and the mysterious are conceived to flow. Olfaction, or more broadly, perception, then shadows poetic utterance. Inspiration, in its distinctive Latin formulation, cannot but import collateral sense data. It is this the high romantics realized in both senses of the word: the creative act transpires at the vital intersection of an organism and its environment. The breath is an overt and uninterrupted mode of connection between the two. It is the primary event on which the mutuality of these two terms hinges, one which presumes a interdependence of constituent parts Wordsworth so eloquently dramatizes. My second premise is that the perceptual processes engaged by an embedded organism in the maintenance of an integral relationship with its environment are reflected in the dynamic experience of fresh or poetic metaphor.

The view of the poet as imitator and the derivative idea that poetry represents the world is as much the baggage of philosophy as it is an insight of poets. The

complementary movements of empiricism and idealism (and later rationalism) share a model of the mind as a reflective mechanism representing a discrete and cognizable world, a task which it either perfects or flubs by misrepresenting. The view that perception is a mediating activity (one thinks of Blake's "The altering eye alters all") is now commonplace, yet, the former position is still espoused within the functionalist approach of cognitive science, the affiliation of disciplines that regards the mind as a computer.⁵ Yet, the mind does not function as a computer, nor is it in any sense the disembodied processor of symbols cognitive science claims it to be. The last decades of neuroscientific research have offered an alternative view of cognition, one that allows the formulation of preliminary answers to the question, "Is the poetic process kindled by or in some way indebted to the physicality of perception and if so, how?" It is now possible to explain the manner in which a particular kind of perceptual acuity is, as Aristotle surmised, the genius of the poet. Two theories of the emergence of perceptual awareness based on models of distributed cognition will provide the basis for a neurological dynamic of perception and support the claim that inspiration naturalized and regarded as a synecdoche of all perception⁶ is indistinguishable from the making, craft, or shaping of sensory input that is perception.

To begin a syncretic endeavor, I would like to turn to the understanding of the clearly interactive nature of perception/action cycles cultivated by the hybrid field of neurodynamics, founded by neuroscientist Walter Freeman. Informed by non-linear dynamic systems or deterministic chaos theory, neurodynamics investigates chaotic neuronal activity ranging from the firing pattern of a single neuron to the mass action of cortex-wide neuronal assemblies. Freeman's work has elucidated the mechanism by

which the brain cannot but engage the world through constructed activity that is metaphorical in nature. His studies of olfaction serve not only to implicate the poetic medium of breath and then to explicate it; they are further exemplary for present purposes because olfaction is both analogous to the other sensory systems and simpler than they. Evolutionarily primary and close to the memory loops of the limbic system, olfaction is an especially evocative modality. As it is the system upon which the intentionality of all of the others is built (*Brains* 67),⁷ I reproduce Freeman's theory of olfaction here in detail.

According to Freeman's research, in the earliest stages of olfaction sense receptor neurons lining the nose are engaged as they capture a scent molecule for which they have a pre-existing affinity. Here and in general, neurons specialize: each has evolved to detect a particular range of stimulus odors known as its receptive field. The relatively few neurons activated by a given odorant form a pattern over the closely packed sheet of nasal neurons Freeman calls an "aggregate" (*Brains* 67). Due to the turbulent flow of inhaled air and the highly individualized repertoires of the receptor neurons, each encounter with a stimulus, no matter how ideal the conditions under which it is generated, produces an entirely new aggregate pattern arranged partly by chance as air currents swirl unpredictably within the nose (68). From this early stage in sensation, there is no consistent correlation between odor and aggregate pattern and thus no firm basis for a correspondence theory of truth (67). The energy transmitted by the nasal neurons following contact with an odorant is "simply a quantity . . . proportional to the input of energy from the environment" (67). The pulses the receptors will transmit to the brain carry neither information nor meaning and in no way represent the odorant (67). One can

hear echoes of Olson, who pegged energy as the highly convertible, consistent medium of the necessarily material act of poetic creation.

The sense receptor neurons comprising the aggregate transmit their pattern via their output arms, or axons, to the olfactory bulb, the next way station along the olfactory pathway, where they excite awaiting bulbar neurons (*Brains* 68). This juncture sees the ascent from a microscopic dynamic involving the activity of single neurons to what Freeman calls a mesoscopic level, a shift to an intermediate range of neuronal interaction constituting a critical transition to population behavior. As the aggregate pattern is relayed to the olfactory bulb, it is met by “background” activity generated by the random firing of the bulbar neurons. With every breath, the aggregate is transported from the nose to the bulb, eliciting a synchronous bulb-wide burst of oscillating motion from out of the random activity of the bulbar neurons (*Societies* 59, *Brains* 72). If exposure to an odorant is sustained, the elevated activity level induces pre-existent nerve assemblies to exhibit a common waveform called an AM or amplitude modulation pattern. The oscillating motion of the common wave is created by the synchronized alternation of excitation (in which neuronal outflow increases the activity of a receiving or postsynaptic neuron and inhibition (in which neuronal outflow decreases or suppresses the activity of a receiving neuron) of bulbar neurons. An increase in gain—the ratio of output to input at a synapse⁸—tends to occur at synapses between neurons that excite one another preferentially as a consequence of past learning, as Donald Hebb first theorized.⁹ In other words, these synapses and clusters of synapses, or nuclei, become efficient by producing output that is disproportionate to the input received. The gain then prompts a positive feedback cycle, a progressive amplification of input, that generates the pervasive AM

patterns as different frequencies from the bulb, nucleus, and olfactory cortex interact (69-81). The AM patterns graph as a chaotic attractor, that is, they are attracted to a limited and thus coherent and identifiable range of behavior that is nevertheless unpredictable within said range (Crutchfield et al. 50-52).

Freeman interprets his findings to signify that what gives form to the AM pattern is not the stimulus itself, but individual history, written in synaptic assemblies affiliated by previous learning (*Brains* 78). “Because of the contributions from past experience [the AM patterns] are aspects of the meanings of the stimuli, holding in the [organism] that has constructed them” (*Brains* 78). They are the embodiment of “salient information about [a] stimulus” (“Physiology” 79; *Brains* 78), the means by which an [organism] ‘informs’ itself as to what to do with or about an odorant” (*Brains* 89). Perceptual history is revived, or re-collected in the presence of the foreign as part of the activity of identification in which the organism’s past experience dominates the classification of new input. As every perceptual act serves to attune a finite, discrete and solitary organism to its infinite and boundless surround, metaphor, like perception, is a boundary function, a mode enabling interaction between incommensurate physical realities.

A second function of the burst is to insure the coherence of the message sent to the next location, the olfactory cortex. An aspect of functional anatomy that warrants stressing at this point is the brain’s hierarchical organization. As in any hierarchy, successive levels of neuronal assemblies along sensory pathways receive information broadly, from numerous sources, on a need to know basis. A single sender targets multiple recipients, thousands in this case, which are each contacted by multiple senders (*Brains* 83-84). AM patterns are transmitted from the bulb to the olfactory cortex by

means of such a divergence-convergence, or branching tactic that effectively eliminates the original aggregate pattern: its waveform is “ironed out” so to speak, in what Freeman calls a “laundering operation” (*Societies* 60). “The only portion of the output from the bulb that survives this operation . . . is the common wave form” (*Societies* 60). The olfactory system thereby elevates signal from background noise or, in qualitative terms, distinguishes a percept from a “recept” (*Societies* 60). The more expansive neuronal assemblies of the cortex will spin, or chaotically re-organize, this input once again, but it is possible to conclude even at this early stage that it is an individual’s history with a similar input, written in the synaptic assemblies (the way that groups of neurons have learned to interact) and not the stimuli themselves, that gives form to the patterns the brain uses to identify stimuli. This three-part drama plays out the preliminary phases of perception, a process that culminates with the organism acting into the environment on its own “in-formation.” In other words, the brain must thoroughly decompose and reconstitute the raw sense data it collects before it can apprehend them. It formalizes meaning by bringing known, relevant information to bear on stimuli unknowable as they are, while continuing to entertain their significance by means of the principles of deterministic chaos theory (*Brains* 82).

The bulb actively assigns meaning to the stimuli it receives based on a pragmatic accountability to the history of the value of the stimuli or their consequences to the organism. Meaning is formalized through the chaotic activity that arises when relevant information is brought to bear on raw sense data. As the sense data is washed away, there is no access to a stimulus in any objective sense. The truism that perception is a subjective faculty most often attributes such subjectivity to the coloring of bias, motive,

and belief; rarely does it acknowledge a constructivist epistemology. The material transformation that is transduction, and the evolution of pattern that define perception presume a plasticity of category that nevertheless allows for category maintenance. These processes speak to a tendency of the human brain to begin to comprehend input in terms of pre-existing categories and the concurrent need for a flexibility of category that enables confrontation with novelty. The dynamic identified by deterministic chaos theory is an effective means of both endowing stimuli with meaning and delimiting that meaning so that the individual organism may comprehend what is relevant within the infinite environmental expanse in which it is embedded. Chaotic attractors create coherent yet unpredictable patterns that can both regularize over-discrepant input and absorb novelty, providing for novel response by amplifying initial uncertainties (Crutchfield et al. 50-53). Freeman writes, “brains are drenched in chaos” (87), that is, their activity, ranging from the firing of single neurons to the improvised choreography of an entire hemisphere, is non-linear.

Neuroscientist Gerald Edelman also relies on the principles of non-linearity in his information systems approach to the brain’s dynamics. He hypothesizes a “dynamic core,” a complex system of linkages throughout the extensive network of cortex and thalamus-wide interconnections known as the thalamocortical system (Edelman and Tononi 42). The thalamocortical system is functional for precisely the reason that poetry is, because it is both highly integrated and highly differentiated into smaller “functional clusters” of neuronal groups, that is, units that “make a difference” (146). Edelman quantifies changes in neural complexity and arrives at the same conclusion as Freeman:

. . . extrinsic signals convey information not so much in themselves, but by virtue of how they modulate the intrinsic signals exchanged within a previously experienced neural system. In other words, a stimulus acts not so much by adding large amounts of external information that needs [sic] to be processed as it does by amplifying the intrinsic information resulting from neural interactions selected and destabilized by memory through previous encounters with the environment. (Edelman and Tononi 137)

Small degrees of “extrinsic” mutual information--that quantifiable between a stimulus and an organism--tend to alter drastically the value of the “intrinsic” mutual information that inheres among the functional clusters of the brain (137). As the preponderance of perceptual information is generated from the unique history of the organism, Edelman calls the scene of perceptual experience the “remembered present” (78, 138).¹⁰

We have, then, two models of brain functioning in which the past infiltrates present experience. The discovery of synchronous, bulb-wide activity has led to a model of brain functioning in which the past infiltrates and thereby shapes present experience, and energy, the fluid matter of interconnection between world and being, is *ab initio* converted, seemingly beyond recognition. “Things as they are/Are changed upon the blue guitar” (165) in Stevens’s words, things are rendered unintelligible as the brain re-shapes itself, “making” sense of sense data by contextualizing them within its history, thereby rendering the original datum unintelligible in and of itself. Inspiration cannot be articulated because it is reformed as it is presented to consciousness.

What is retained by the mind is retained as figure, both in the sense of a physical reconfiguration, and in the further meaning given by figure of contoured form, here

etched within the brain itself. The percept is embodied as a substrate of neurological electro-chemical energy, detectable in the patterns of its activity. To reshape the human form by the “in-formation” of configuring neuronal activity is to render a figurative view of the world.¹¹ Percepts are imaginative in the romantic sense: they are formed by a consummate plastic faculty, and, in enlivening objects epistemologically, they render objects as objects, that is, prior to their observation, “essentially fixed and dead” (Coleridge 263). This is the power of the Orphic gaze. Like Stevens and the phenomenologists, Freeman’s position with respect to an objective reality altered perforce by perceptual action is ultimately agnostic. His interpretation of his data leads him so far as to admit into his philosophical system an innate condition of epistemological solipsism, which he defines as the view that “all knowledge and experience is constructed by and within individuals” (*Brains* 9). It is this condition that is uncovered by the young Wordsworth when an alternate perceptual content is laid bare to him. To invert Nietzsche, Wordsworth’s attention to the fact of illusion (construction is a better word as illusion after all maintains its complement, truth), then, (a) frees one to forego broad claims to truth status; (b) forces the awareness that truth derives from the perspective-dependent activity of relation-making; and (c) re-empowers the senses to perceive afresh, setting the young poet on his ambitious course.

The dominant contemporary anatomy of metaphor, that theorized by George Lakoff in turn with Mark Johnson and Mark Turner, constitutes a subsequent attempt to naturalize the figure of metaphor as a mechanism of thought. This fluid partnership of linguist, philosopher, and literary critic respectively, grounds the endemically metaphorical quality of thought processes experientially, within the parameters of human

embodiedness, thereby providing the underpinning for the field of cognitive poetics. Their theory is useful not only because it recognizes the necessary limits imposed by the orientation of the body, but also because it delineates and clarifies, if it does not exactly discover, a dynamic common to all metaphor, that is, the shaping of one entity by another. Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor as consisting of two terms: the first, the conceptually elusive *target*, is rendered apprehensible when a pre-existing structure derived from the second term, the *source*, is imposed upon it (Lakoff and Johnson 5, 36; Lakoff and Turner 59-61). The target, they claim, initially wants elaboration; it is in some respect amorphous, remote from immediate experience, and most often, but not always, abstract. This relatively elusive entity gains instant coherence when overlain, or mapped, by a conceptual system that is familiar and complete (Lakoff and Johnson 109). They name the systemic whole imported from the source a “schema” (Lakoff and Turner 61). To resort to a timeworn example, to say that “she is a rose” lends the more mysterious “she” the intelligibility of a schema indigenous to roses. The transfer is not wholesale—the full conceptual weight of the source does not bear down on the target. Rather, each metaphoric mapping entails the discrimination of a pertinent sub-system from the source, one that is partial but nevertheless whole unto itself (Lakoff and Turner 62). For example, in saying that she is a rose, the fact that roses are woody shrubs of the family Rosaceae might more properly belong to a schema other than the one that is meaningful in context.

If one compares Lakoff and Johnson’s dynamic with Freeman’s, the similarities in their prevailing thrusts are at once apparent. The goal of each is to make apprehensible what is indistinct, to attribute meaning to an implicitly unknowable “target” variable. The

source is analogous to the meet resources of the mind, accumulated experience in the form of patterns of neuronal activity that pre-exist the confrontation with the unknown variable. In each theory, understanding is afforded by entire domains of experience or “experiential gestalts” (Lakoff and Johnson 117). The schema has its analogue in the particular past learning that is accessed to identify the stimulus. By virtue of bringing a sum of germane experience, an experiential gestalt, to bear on the stimulus--by introducing a schema to construct a target—a percept is formed, one that is thereby wholly structured and fully pertinent. Perception, like metaphor, has evolved as an efficient method of both endowing stimuli with meaning and delimiting their meaning by integrating them into an alternative systemic whole so that the infinity of the environmental expanse may be managed to the advantage of the organism. Yet upon closer scrutiny, the theory does not bear out the implications of embeddedness.

The first comment that bears making about this popular theory is that its sponsors seem to feel themselves curiously exempt from any debt to the philosopher Max Black who, in his 1962 elaboration of I.A. Richards’s seminal theory, proposed a nearly identical core dynamic for the figure of metaphor using the established terms “subsidiary subject” (analogous to the source) and “principal subject” (analogous to the target). Further, Black suggests that something remarkably similar to the schema is derived from a “system of associated commonplaces” evoked by the subsidiary subject/source. Analyzing the construction of the metaphor “man is a wolf” (in which man is the target and wolf is the source), Black ultimately argues for the same skeletal function performed by the Lakovian schema:

A suitable hearer will be led by the wolf-system of implications to construct a corresponding system of implications about the principal subject. But these implications will *not* be those comprised in the commonplaces normally implied by literal uses of “man.” The new implications must be determined by the pattern of implications associated with literal uses of the word “wolf.” Any human traits that can without undue strain be talked about in “wolf-language” will be rendered prominent, and any that cannot will be pushed into the background. The wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others—in short, *organizes* our view of man. (41)

In the Lakoff model, the metaphoric event begins and ends with the delivery of the organized schema: “target” is a deliberately passive term whose only function is to absorb the impact of the delivery. At the crux of their argument is the assumption that the informational flow of metaphor is unidirectional, that the informing source is untouched by the act of transference. As evidence of the irreversibility of the dynamic, they offer the fact that we do not invert metaphors, that is, we do not understand roses by conceptualizing them as women, or wolves by conceptualizing them as men, and that any bleed through of femininity or anthropomorphism is the result of a long association between the two terms, one definitively unmetaphoric in nature (Lakoff and Turner 131-33). Black’s more extensive theory is discounted *in toto* solely on the basis of its extensiveness, without acknowledgement that their theory mimics its core dynamic. Black, Richards, and the dynamic of interaction are rejected *carte blanche*.⁴ A minor premise ancillary to my larger claim for metaphor is that it is necessary that the source

and target interact to enable the dynamic of schema derivation if the target to be cognized is cognized by an embedded mind.

There is no doubt that Lakoff and Johnson have carved out a viable slice of the metaphoric process. Their dynamic is useful as a general description of the way in which stimuli take on meaning. In effect, it reduces to the comparison view of metaphor Black expresses with the formula “*A is like B in respect of P*” with the proviso that the notion of comparison is most fruitful when it is seen as an endpoint, the result of the figure rather than its ground (Black 37, Richards 100, Lakoff and Johnson 151-55). If comparison is the end of metaphor, then Lakoff et al. provide the answer to the question of the nature of its development, and that answer has but a single vector.

The Lakoff methodology begins with the empirical recovery of highly conventional and thus recurrent metaphors from languages, metaphors that by virtue of their sheer plenitude are assumed to reflect, and to a lesser extent to form, the conceptual systems of their speakers (Lakoff and Johnson 135-6). The Lakoff theory stems from the abstraction of the schematic transfer from metaphors bearing maximum social currency. As currency, their value is admittedly consensual as well as highly interchangeable and cannot by definition extend to accommodate idiosyncrasy. The schemas of such institutionalized metaphors remain relatively constant in the face of contextual shift with the result that they may be abstracted and exchanged for equivalent-value meaning. The metaphors the Lakoff model addresses adequately have been variously labeled “dead,” “exhausted,” “sleeping” or “frozen.” The nuances that distinguish such terms will be glossed over at present. Suffice it to say that each term itself a metaphor whose source is a state of being that does not demand acute perceptual attending; in other words, such

metaphors are utilized without a concern for the circumstance of their deployment. They find a perceptual equivalent in the more automatic neurological response to accustomed stimuli in the absence of attentiveness, while the experience of fresh or poetic metaphor mirrors the response to anomaly by demanding ongoing attention to the processes through which it creates understanding. In isolating equivalent meanings in order to categorize them, this linguistic theory neglects I. A. Richards's explicit topic: fresh or poetic metaphor. Their emphasis on received metaphors obscures the formation of the figure—how a schema comes to be considered appropriate, and how one recognizes its appropriateness given that the target is defined through it. How does one test for schema fitness if meaning materializes at the terminus of the metaphorical process? As external influence is explicitly eschewed, to achieve semantic culmination, the receiver of the metaphor must have existing knowledge of what is inadequately known, thereby obviating the metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson plug up this lacuna in the metaphoric process with the rather insubstantial term “association.” Yet, it is precisely the intermediate processes transpiring therein that involve interaction.

In referring to the figure as “a transaction between contexts,” I.A. Richards founded the interaction theory of metaphor and began thereby to deal with its operative complexities (94). In order to grant metaphor a significance apart from the rhetorical bias that it is merely ornamental, he defines it as “a borrowing between and intercourse of *thoughts*” (94). An irrepressible “host of implicit associations” (which for Black became the “system of associated commonplaces”) surrounding the metaphor proper organizes our view of the “principle subject” or target, because the medium of thought is language. The idea common to these theories is that metaphor evokes an ideal complex embodying

the sum total of possible connotations and associations that may be generated by the metaphor and must be entertained in order to understand it. Each insists that the experience of metaphor demands from the reader an accountability to implications extraneous to the schema that Lakoff and Johnson seem intent on suppressing or banishing to an extra-metaphorical realm. Each implicitly recognizes that language's ambiguity is a product of context-shift, that it is promiscuous in its propensity to an errancy through which it accumulates diffuse clouds of potential meaning that arise through recurrent assimilation into context. This tendency is central to Richards' theory of meaning, in which he defines signs in terms of their "'delegated efficacies' that is, their propensity to bring together into new unities the abstracts, or aspects, which are the missing parts of their various contexts" (93). By taking account of this pertinent, absent complex surrounding words, a complex of possibility as it were, what Richards essentially does, however indirectly, is to explicate the metaphoric nature of thought by evoking the linguistic equivalent of a memory (93, 94).¹²

In reviving the classical terms "tenor" and "vehicle," Richards redefines them to reference the ideas participating in the interaction in order to point out that the tenor (in a major sense analogous to the target) interacts with the range of associations trailing the vehicle. It is this "transaction" upon which the complexity of poetic metaphor, in his idea, depends. Vehicle (in a major sense analogous to the source) is, in the Richardsonian model, the principal conveyance for connotative freight, suggesting a prevailing directionality with respect to connotative drift. In an attempt to clarify Richards's work, Black broaches the logical problem of the priority of the target by a bi-directional process in which the constituents of the schema are subjected to a test of fitness as they influence

the principle subject/target. (Black's standard for passing the audition is that each element must be applicable "without undue strain" (41)). He does not, however, directly penetrate the necessity for bi-directionality, but resorts to the metaphors of patterned, glassy transparency and frame to explain its operation. "We can say that the principle subject [target] is seen through the metaphorical expression . . ." (glassy transparency) "or, if we prefer, that the principal subject is 'projected upon' the field of the subsidiary subject [source]" (41). As the lens through which it is visible, the source mediates the target at the same time the target *frames* the source, suppressing those elements that are outside of its ken. Black's most insightful contribution to the theory of metaphor is his extension of the notion of frame to the target, by which gesture he embraces a context alternative to the "system of associated commonplaces." His term "frame" refers strictly to the sentence in which the metaphor occurs (28), but is, I think, reasonably extendible to a more capacious textual environment. Ultimately, the larger situation in which target is embedded acts upon the source by suppressing irrelevance.

Such a notion of frame is unavoidable. As Black points out, the frame may in fact determine whether a focal expression is metaphorical at all: it may backlight a passage, casting a salience that marks it as figurative in the first place (28). Written metaphor most often exists within a framing textual milieu, but metaphor isolated from an embedding linguistic text, for example, an instance of graffiti, necessarily entails a situational or "environmental" context, which might range in this case from the building on which it is written to the physical, cultural, and linguistic moment of its production. The context of spoken metaphor includes an oral text as well as the non-verbal situation surrounding the utterance. This framing environmental context "imposes extension of meaning upon the

focal word” (where “focal word” is analogous to the source) (39). (The target, as evidence of its elusiveness, is not necessarily present in the metaphoric statement. It often must be inferred from the start and even then may remain undetermined.) The frame context is then, in the language of deconstruction, *textual* in contradistinction to the extra-textual or *ideal* context of the ephemera invoked by the utterance that are absent from it. If we consider the distinction drawn between these two forms of contexts in relation to the terms of the metaphor—and I am making this distinction in order to trouble it—we would find that in most instances what we are calling the ideal, extra-textual context tends to gather around the source term while the environmental, textual context belongs to the situation of the target. For example, placing “she is a rose” within a textual milieu such as a poem would tend to contextualize, that is, generate meaning around or tell us something about, the mysterious “she,” its likely center and principal subject and rather less about roses, an assumed point of commonality. On the other hand, the knowledge of roses we would bring to bear would likely be derived from the ideal context swirling about our pre-existing ideas about roses. This division is not strict, and it is conditional, but it is an important one for purposes of understanding the interaction. Either context alone may account for the freshness of the metaphor.

Shifting this extended dynamic to neurological terms, the ideal or extra-textual context corresponds to the sum of relevant experience the mind might bring to bear in the formation of a percept, while the environmental context is the physical environment in which the stimulus and organism find themselves commonly situated, as it is available for the organism to perceive. There exist, in other words, a context that is mental (and thus, of memory) and a context that is environmental (and thus, given by present

surroundings). The environmental context consists in, and therefore exists as, its applicability, as what J.J. Gibson first called “affordances” those elements the environment makes available for the organism to use (127). As Black suggests, the environmental context delimits the range of applicability of the ideal context, which is then, in a loose sense, projected back onto it: the environmental context is then apprehended within the mind ideally, that is, as an *idea*. This act logically preliminary to schema transfer (but in reality nearly simultaneous with it) assumes environmental embeddedness and that the act of molecular capture is analytic, or selective, as is the act of framing. It enables the construction of the percept by supplying appropriate raw material and a specific form of constructivism by means of the concomitant and mutually-formative functions of mediation and selection. Metaphor is like perception in that it is an event triggered by an impinging stimulus processed and understood entirely within another medium it constrains. Richards’s theory of metaphor, as elaborated by Black, must be a constructivist theory if one is to eliminate the problem of the priority of the target.

The basis of any comparison view of metaphor is that the figure entails a likening of two fundamentally dissimilar things that are nevertheless similar enough to tolerate the comparison. On one level, the terms of the metaphor must be substantively different (and this distinction holds whether one conceives of the figure semiotically or semantically), while they are coded monistically, within a common medium. The process of bringing the target and the source into relation is precipitated by a change of medium that enables the integration at the heart of figuration. An emphasis on the difference between the two terms invites a comparative theory of metaphor which stresses the method of bringing

into relation and implicitly the need to bring into relation. The target maintains a dual ontological status. The restive “she” remains obstinately herself, Coleridge’s “object as object,” the non-rose *Ding an sich*, as the metamorphosis through which she is rendered rose-like--the substitution--is played out. A substitutive view of metaphor, on the other hand, presumes a commonality of medium that permits the appearance of seamlessness necessary to a successful substitutive act; its ontology is skewed toward an epistemological, or phenomenological mode of being. An emphasis on the collapse of the two terms leads into a substitutive view of metaphor in which one term comes to stand in for the other.¹³ As it reshapes a bodily medium after having erased foreign sensory material, the neuronal reconfiguration amounts to a wholesale substitution of what is otherwise unavailable. The consistency of medium is the basic assumption of semiotic theories¹⁴ as it permits connotative shift. Monroe Beardsley understood the progression of metaphor from ontological distance to epistemological assimilation when he suggested that the propensity of language to accumulate connotations is in fact effected through the operation of metaphor. According to his “verbal opposition” or intensional theory, metaphor, and fresh metaphor in particular, is the means by which the properties of the object-referents are converted to connotations, by which extensions bleed across the language/object barrier to become intensions (30). In this sense, Beardsley’s theory is an amplification of Richards; in each, the verbal eventually subsumes the objective. Ontological distinction is finally troubled because it arises only subsequent to the translation of one medium into another, to a conversion to the common currency of language or grey matter in which interaction may occur.

The figure of metaphor is aspectual in this way, and both aspects are necessary to its efficacy. This tension between ontological distance and epistemological collapse remains ever-present in the metaphoric statement. Fresh metaphor, then, engages the creative process transpiring at the site of interaction between apparently incommensurate contexts that nevertheless exist within the whole of an ecological or a linguistic system. It is perhaps the basic tenet of ecological thinking that the terms organism and environment mutually imply one another and constitute a seamless systemic entity. The two contexts finally exist within the single medium of the ecological continuum that contains both. It is by contending with the full import and shifting nature of apparently discrete contexts that metaphor entails, that the reader changes himself, by expanding and finetuning remembered systems of associated commonplaces so that he may maintain his assimilated status in language in the manner that an organism changes itself to assimilate to its environment. The recipient of the metaphor participates in and does not simply observe the dynamic.

The most undefined area of the theory of metaphor to date remains the manner in which the connotations generated by contexts interact dynamically to effectuate meaning. Freeman has accounted for the alteration of stimuli as they are progressively embodied as percepts in terms of chaotic dynamics. Black makes the point that the transformation of the schema, the change it undergoes as it is assimilated into the target, itself involves metaphorical actions upon its constituent elements: “. . . some of the ‘associated commonplaces’ themselves suffer a metaphorical change of meaning in the process of transfer from the subsidiary to the principal subject” (42). He points to a potentially

infinite regress of metaphor that is reflected in the brain's multi-tiered progression toward the assignment of meaning. Each chaotic reorganization along "the stair" might be considered to be an individual metaphoric act committed upon another in a series that terminates with the act of identification. Positioned at the apex of the hierarchy is a global level of activity driven by what is known as the thalamocortical pacemaker, a non-linear systemic function of the brain. The pacemaker consists of the simultaneous activation of neural pathways projecting from thalamic nuclei (groups of neurons) to the cortex and other pathways projecting from the cortex to nuclei in the thalamus; such activation produces coherent spatio-temporal patterns (Nicolis and Tsuda 224). Thalamic nuclei are significant because they are capable of sustaining stable oscillatory activity from which a maximal range of behaviors may be generated in response to minimal stimulation (223). The processor also generates the recursive rules governing the sequential appearance of these coherent patterns. In other words, it sets the pace for the exercise of pertinent memories (224). This revivification of implicit memory--what Nicolis and Tsuda call "intermemory activity"--is also embodied dynamically in the form of an evolving series of strange attractors ("Physiology" 85).¹⁵ The processor's next task is to select, from among the multiple attractors it generates, the one that forms the largest cross-correlation with the unknown, incoming signal. In an attempt to assign an unidentified stimulus to an appropriate category, the processor creates an intermittent trajectory, known as a chaotic itinerancy, through which the individual memory attractors travel (217). The pacemaker thereby effectively selects a set of hypotheses from its store of memories representing a sum of relevant experience (Nicolis and Tsuda 216). This set of relevant potential is in effect a context Nicolis and Tsuda deem to be "a prerequisite of meaning" (227).

The fractal character of the basin boundaries, the borders separating the attractors, makes the act of partitioning external stimuli ambiguous. As the basin boundaries are ‘entangled’, a given stimulus--known with limited accuracy--as it ‘moves’ towards a given attractor, inevitably enters the domain of jurisdiction of others attractors, eventually landing on one. In the event the attractors become destabilized, they will intermittently “attract and repel” a stimulus, rendering perceptual categorization ambiguous. (218)¹⁶

In shuttling between destinations in this manner, the brain effectively tests its hypotheses. The unknown stimulus will eventually “land” on the attractor with which it forms the largest cross-correlation (218). This instigates the contracting phase of chaos in which initial uncertainties are constrained as the processor consolidates the basin of attraction created earlier onto one attractor (216). The “chicken/egg syndrome” is eliminated as observation (the taking in of a stimulus) and categorization (the bringing to bear of a set of experiences and the selection of an appropriate subset from it) arise coincidentally by means of recursive feedback loops (216). The brain’s hierarchical organization enables this: as in any hierarchy, high-level mass activity defines the role of new low-level input at the same time new low-level input is a parameter shaping higher-level processing. The parameters themselves are contemporaneously and mutually formative. This is an example of a highly enmeshed circular causality (itself a simplistic metaphor) from which linear arms are abstracted for the sake of comprehensibility. The complex and rapid synthetic capacity of the brain that permits effective simultaneity and expeditious response may account for the fleet quality of metaphors, the instantaneous rate at which we are able to assign initial meaning to them.

Given repeated exposure to a stimulus, the brain will reach its basin of attraction,¹⁷ defined as the set of initial circumstances that will evolve to a particular attractor, a context that will remain relatively stable over the history of the organism provided no assignment of new meaning is involved. It is significant that given familiar input, this process of airing a set of potential triggering events transpires. In confronting a particular target stimulus, the brain in effect introduces all known possibility, a set of absent causes to which efficacy is delegated, the system of associated commonplaces of the basin or source. It is necessary first to air connotations in order to derive the schema from them. In consolidating the basin of attraction onto one attractor—one schema—the processor effectively resolves the ambiguity it introduced, reducing uncertainty (Nicolas and Tsuda 216). Each act of consolidation entails an irretrievable loss of information (what is rejected from the connotative field of the ideal context as it interacts with the textual environment to form the schema) through the Markovian process of slow diffusion in which the initial stimulus is progressively “smeared out.” Not only is necessary to air connotations in order to derive schema from them, it is necessary that there be a progressive mixing of the specific initial stimulus over the evolution of the attractor. Once the attractor has reached a steady state, information contained in the initial conditions cannot be recovered" (Nicolas and Tsuda 218). The memory of the basin as a whole, though, remains intact and therefore retrievable. The emergence of a new percept from a context of possibility therefore signifies an absent context to which efficacy is delegated--the basin containing all points that may effect the attractor. Concomitantly, the attractor implies its basin, the complete set of points that bear a relationship of potential causality to the attractor. Basin jostling allows associations from a full set of pertinent

ideal contexts to be brought to bear, given the new environmental context, or sensory input, with which the organism is confronted. It is via this *delegation*, or removal of efficacy to an absent context--that is a context of potential and a potential context--that Richards locates meaning: “what words mean is the missing parts of their contexts” (93). The full meaning of a word is the set of connotations and denotations that flow in to it as every road leads to Rome. The sign is a destination.

The substrate’s dynamic of expansion and contraction may and often does result in the instantaneous and unquestioned recognition of an object of perception and in the appropriate action toward it. What happens when conventional strategies of identification fail, as they do for the youthful Wordsworth? When encountering a brand new stimulus, the bulb is so befuddled that it is unable to find an appropriate basin of attraction and flounders for a time in random activity. The olfactory bulb fails to generate a burst and the organism undertakes an “orienting response,” a stance of attention that maximizes the probability of re-exposure to the odor by soliciting further environmental context. Freeman maps the itinerancy of the AM patterns from the olfactory cortex to the entorhinal cortex, whose function is to integrate the disparate information relayed from each of the sensory systems by merging their waveforms into a unified signal (*Brains* 101-2). Synchronous oscillating motion provides a common dynamic that overcomes the modular nature of perception and provides a basis for perceptual integrity, the experienced unity of consciousness. At the same time that a feedback flow is responsible for the generation of the memory-attractors, a feedforward flow proceeds from the entorhinal cortex through the motor systems in order to gather in more sensory data by testing the results of action into the environment, deploying a tactic analogous to reading

further into the text to gather more information. If we had never before encountered the metaphor “she is a rose” and could not find a way to process it, we would focus on the remainder of the poem to learn more about her in the same way we might reorient ourselves to take in more of a vista, or focus aural attention to identify an ambiguous noise. The bodily mechanics of such perception-generating actions are often quite simple: they may involve, for instance, the positioning of the body or the training of the eyes toward a particular view, or the turning of the head toward a surmised location in order to pinpoint the origin of a sound. Signals from the entorhinal cortex also flow forward into the motor systems for the purpose of gathering proprioceptive information specifying the location and position of the body, particularly the muscular system, in space (101-02). The motor systems feed information back into the entorhinal cortex and hippocampus where the space-time orientation critical to the planning of action is accessed (103). The proprioceptive feedback messages and space-time limitations amount to order parameters that bias the formation of attractor landscapes in the sensory cortices, constraining them based on physical reality, the body’s motor capabilities, and its memory of past motor actions and their results (102).

In the event that input remains sufficiently unfamiliar that it becomes necessary to create a new attractor, all of the others in the basin rearrange themselves accommodate it (*Brains* 80, “Physiology” 85). Integration, then, the reshaping or embodiment of the target stimulus to fit it into the experiential whole, is simultaneously the reorganization of that whole upon the integration of the stimulus as refigured. Confrontation with anomaly entails the greatest upheaval in the attractor landscape. Each novel perceptual act is marked by the imposition of a structure onto an element that occurs subsequent to the

assimilation of the element into the source of the structure. The flexibility of chaotic organization allows for the continuous readjustment of the whole of the source. The figure of metaphor remains fresh to the extent that its contexts are rich enough to seem inexhaustible, to the extent that the window in which all possibility is entertained is lengthened. It is finally the commodious space carved by interaction that is the venue and interval of thought. The delay of action, from the initial indetermination of the metaphor to its contingent determination, allows “thinking about” to happen. When metaphor culminates in a stable concept, one that is derived without resort to contextual intercourse, the process is relatively inert. Fresh or poetic metaphor finds its analogue in the tidal actions and retractions of fresh perception.¹⁸ The hermeneutic is creative.

The source context is then a living entity that at any given moment exists synchronically, as an encyclopedic complex of ideas, which is why it is often difficult to perceive change introduced within it. The semblance of its rigid continuity arises from the lopsidedness of the interaction of an established and apparently integral system with a temporally and spatially circumscribed target. The impact to amassed experience of a solitary percept may go unnoticed, because the totality of individual history is vast in relation to a single instance of environmental interaction. The shift undergone by the source system accrues in the long-term and therefore only appears to be imperceptible. Within language, which is coded communally, the process of connotative shift is a rather sluggish one, rarely to be visibly affected by the instance of a single metaphor. However, the source assimilates perceptions as it categorizes so that future perceptions encounter a storehouse that is perforce newly modified. We may not define the source in the terms of the target, but it is shaped by those terms nevertheless. For instance, there are not many

schooled imaginations for whom the botanical rose is an ungendered specimen. It is true, as Lakoff and Johnson argue, that we do not routinely speak of roses as women, but we feminize them nevertheless. Their use is shaped by a feminine schema despite that fact that the directionality of their conventional metaphoric relationship runs the other way. This understanding directs our social gestures, by providing knowledge of when and to whom it is appropriate to give a rose. We give roses to women, not only because the two share features, but because roses are a gift conceived of as feminine. (The distinction becomes clear when it is noted that a rose is considered a less appropriate gift to give to a man, not because men are less like roses but because the rose itself has been feminized.) That our understanding of the rose is shaped as much by the prevalence of the metaphor "she is a rose" as "she" is shaped by it is *revealed* not by the way we speak of roses as women, but by our actions toward them. The interactive nature of metaphor helps us to understand the appropriate use of a rose. Whether the target is a word or sensory receipt, it does influence, that is, *flow back into*, the source, not only to prompt the activation of a present schema, but to shape subsequent schema through residual action. The target from the present context becomes part of absent ideal contexts in the future; this is the only way to know it. Unless and until rigid habits set in and retard or even preclude the integration of new sensory material, the grand experiential gestalt is by necessity expanded and fine-tuned with each waking moment, thereby ensuring the basis for appropriate *action*.

Emerson tells us that it is in the nature of words to be active: "all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as

farms and houses are, for homestead” (463). To root poetic composition convincingly in the neurobiology of perceptual processes, it is necessary to recognize and account for the privileged role action plays with respect to perception as well as the ways in which words function as actors as a result of the poetic gestures that restore them to the perceptual dynamic. The irrepressibly self-assertive “I AM” is ever-active on its own behalf and perhaps no more so than when it is versifying. The word--and the lyric word in particular --is an utterance: it emanates from a subject and is transported to a receiver which may be itself, resulting in a whirling positive feedback cycle Frye described as a revolution around an occasion that relegates the listener to eavesdropper (“Approaching” 32).

It is via its intimate ties to action that perception is finally a creative mechanism. As its primary function is not to represent the world, but rather to generate and govern action back into the world. The selection of an incoming path is a reduction in uncertainty tantamount to an increase in information inhering in the formation of an action (Edelman and Tononi 147-8). It is ultimately through action, then, that the organism constructs percepts as part of the ongoing process of forging of an "alliance" with the environment: in order to fulfill the terms of the alliance it must act in accordance with its embeddedness *into* the environment. The terms themselves are created as part of the evolutionary process of adapting within a niche. The formation of the action so constrained by adaptation is the organism's intentionality. Empirical and rational approaches to cognition might grant the functional interdependence of perception and action; they may further espouse the truism that perception exists to enable motor action. However, the directionality assumed by this commonplace is at best partial and at worst artificial. It derives from the precedence granted to sensation by empiricist philosophy, a

legacy influencing the cognitivist view that the brain represents sense data as it perceives, and action follows as a response to the world as it is. Yet this assumption overlooks the organism's reformation or "information" of stimuli based upon its history and the coincident and concomitant reformation of its self. "The body does not absorb stimuli, but changes its own form to become similar to aspects of stimuli that are relevant to the intent that emerged from within the brain" (*Brains* 27).

To engage in intentional behavior is to change the self through action. It is not, on the contrary, a reason for the action. In order to emphasize the active role of the organism in constructing perception, Freeman recuperates Saint Thomas Aquinas's Aristotelean position that perception is the result of action into the environment (*Brains* 26) defining intentionality as the process by which animals generate action goals by implicating past experience with an action to calculate the result of the action in a present circumstance (*Brains* 8, 26).¹⁹ Aquinas's correction of medieval church doctrine distinguishes intentional processes, through which organisms self-realize as a result of their actions, from the fully self-conscious, willful ones that qualify them to make ethical choices (26). Freeman defines intentionality as "[t]he process by which goal-directed actions are generated in the brains of humans and other animals" (8). Intentional processes draw on past experience with an action to calculate the result of the action in the present circumstance (Freeman and Hosek 511). The Freeman/Aquinas model of intentionality differs substantially from the analytic concept, which describes the apparent relation between mental states and the objects at which they are directed. Philosophical intentionality is a strictly psychological phenomenon, often conceived of as the "aboutness" of mental contents or the relation of thoughts and beliefs about the world

to the world (26). Belief and desire in the broad sense of wishing are intentional states. This stance toward intentionality assumes the representational mode of cognition endorsed by cognitivism, the idea that objects in the world are re-presented to a passive consciousness that subsequently adopts an attitude toward them (Freeman and Hosek 512). The assumption that the mind interprets inert symbols of the external world and then acts in accordance with its interpretation runs counter to the pragmatist model in which intent arises in the minds of embedded, embodied organisms and subsumes their action into the environment. It is the biological “process by which humans and other animals act in accordance with their own growth and maturation” (8).

Neurological evidence for the precedence of action is provided by the aforementioned phenomenon of corollary discharge that enables the process Freeman renames preafference to distinguish it from “reafference” and to thereby emphasize the primacy of action in the construction of perception. When a motor plan is sent to the motor systems in preparation for innervation of the spinal column, a “copy” of the plan (the corollary discharge message) is simultaneously relayed to the sensory cortices to enable them to predict the sensory consequences of the intended action (“Consciousness” 151). Preafference allows the organism to imagine the changed relationship of its sensory organs to its stimulus objects (*Brains* 33). The senses are primed, in other words, to expect specific stimuli. In mathematical terms, the corollary discharge message acts as a parameter constraining attractor landscapes by “deepening the basins of attraction” and thereby facilitating identification (*Brains* 133). Action reconciles memory and perception because it is constructed both by perceptual input and the history of the results of its

consequent actions with similar input. Given that action co-emerges with perception, sensation, the cornerstone of the empiricist project, can no longer maintain its primacy.

The inversion that underlies Freeman's notion of intentionality is a critical revision of priority. The late neuroscientist and Buddhist scholar Francisco Varela goes a step further in conflating perception and action. The first of two criteria he establishes for what he dubs an "enactionist" view is, again, a modification to the widespread belief that "perception consists in perceptually guided action" (173). The second is that "cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided" (173). Perception and action are identical within the experience of cognition, and they are jointly primary in relation to "higher" cognitive function. The neuronal "representation" of a hypothetically isolated percept is, in a strictly enactionist view, a schema for action that is potentially conceptual. Freeman's theoretical stance leans very near enactionism but does not ultimately align with it. Action and perception are not identical in his view, but continuously formative with respect to one another. The process of assimilation to the environment involves the simultaneous extension of bottom up and top down operations. By means of recursive feedback loops, global attractors bias lower-level action (sensory input) at the same time lower-level action shapes global activity, informing memory and action ("Consciousness" 154). This is an example of a highly enmeshed circular causality (itself a simplistic metaphor) from which linear arms are abstracted for the sake of comprehensibility. We say, exemplifying empiricist doctrine, that perception causes action or, if we are rationalists, that pre-existing mental contents shape perception. But these are retrospective assignments of agency fitted to our particular worldview that allow us to distinguish cause and effect in order to make sense

of the world. The construction of action and perception is ongoing and mutually effected. As the dynamic enabling it is complex in the technical sense, it is fundamentally impossible to isolate one or the other. The number of individual components in the system, the thwarting of proximity through the connectedness of neurons relatively remote from one another, divergence and convergence mechanisms involved in hierarchical “ascension,” and non-linearity all contribute to the impossibility of disentangling the origin of either.²⁰ It is no surprise, then, that divinity should so easily become the explanation for what is in fact unknowable. This highly developed constructivist model accounts for original action. The flexibility of chaos, in Freeman’s words, “expresses free will” (*Brains* 9), and individual freedom is a necessary component of originality. Sidney’s advertisement for a poetic creativity vying with divine creation specifically ascribes “divine force” to the “*liberty* of conceit” (114) (emphasis added).

Evidence for the primacy of action within the compositional process may be found in the poetic gesture by means of which one courts inspiration: the poet’s active receptivity is formalized in the convention of invocation. The ritualistic calling forth of the muse is a peculiarly literary-poetic invention and inventive device, and its fitness for the poetic enterprise runs deeper than its personification of the inspiriting source. By virtue of its live enaction of the process of summoning inspiration, it establishes itself as a gesture originary to poetic making. Invocation is a form of action, the action of calling in, the issuance of an invitation to a visit, or a visitation as it were. Invoking is a directed action that positions one to receive specific input. Within the pre-Platonic view and the practice to which Plato responds, the external stimuli or stimulant is courted through

action that is directed in however simple or representative a sense. When Sappho sings the following stanzas of her only extant poem that is in tact

Artfully Adorned Aphrodite, deathless
 child of Zeus and waver of wiles I beg you
 please don't hurt me, don't overcome my spirit
 goddess, with longing,

But come here, if ever at other moments,
 hearing these my words from afar you listened
 and responded: leaving your father's house, all
 golden, you came then,

...

Come to me again, and release me from this
 want past bearing. All that my heart desires to
 happen—make it happen. And stand beside me,
 goddess, my ally. (Powell 3-4)

it is her utterance, or speech act that positions her to receive the blessing of the goddess she *looks to* based on her successful past experience with said action. The ritualistic formality, the oral delivery, and the athletic tenor that typify the invocatory mode serve to intensify the sense of physicality attending its practice. The calling into being of Aphrodite, the expressed wish that she linger, like Wordsworth's beholdings as *ally* (in Powell's translation) is the wish to effect the palpable presence that will inspire the poem. The device survives in the figure of apostrophe. Each treats absence, which must be

imagined or conceptualized, as presence, which may be perceived. What is granted the poet given the capriciously granted favor of the gods is the activation of a perceptual dynamic at the level of the imagination. Both enactionism and preafferance preliminarily confirm that the composing imagination is in fact "an echo" of perceptual processes as Coleridge conceived it to be, a truncated repetition in which beginning is lopped off and latter processes reiterated:

The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects as objects are essentially fixed and dead.

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The secondary, creative imagination, that which produces poetry, does not necessarily engage in original perception as part of the act of creation, but is built upon its processes. It is an active endeavor whose agency differs in that it gives rise to imagined products—perception in the broader, secondary sense—rather than percepts. Within the process of preafferance, the failure of an expected stimulus to materialize activates the imagination of the stimulus. “When an expected stimulus is present, we experience it. When it is not, we imagine it” (*Brains* 108). It is possible to infer, then, that action plays a role in the generation of both percepts *and* imagined images.

This particular Sapphic invocation and the goddess’s response to it are unusual in that together they constitute the whole of the poem, the subject matter of which is

unrequited love and the search to assuage the vacancy it renders. The invocation both positions the poet to receive intake *and* is itself the inspired output, the poetic expression praising the god that cannot but be inspired by the gods. It becomes the poetic utterance in reconciling action and perception. We are provided the flank of action, if we choose to see it that way, in what is at bottom the presentation of an integrated perception-action event in which the dual nature of creation, the constant subtle shifts and adjustments between self and environment are distilled into the images of *vates* and maker. Plato overlooks the crux of the praxis of invocation, the critical, active role the poet plays in summoning images into being and the fact that his gesture toward the goal overrides mere passive attending and remains absent the record of the ritual. For Wordsworth, Stevens, and Verlaine, the simple, *pedestrian* act of walking was invocatory. Invocation is a pre-compositional process that finds expression in the superficially tautological folk wisdom that in order to write one must show up at the page--in order to write, one must write. It is an illustrative example of why often the sheer act of beginning to write is the prompt to further writing.

What Plato interprets as the poet's passivity is in part attributable to the substance-induced ecstasis that was the preferred compositional state within the Orphic tradition. Platonism demonizes the poet, accusing him of wielding a hypnotic power over his audience that lulls it into a similarly receptive passive state preclusive of the engagement of the reason necessary for dialectic success and the end of representative truth. *Poesis* assumes a reason-disabling infiltration that degrades creative acts as reproductions. Yet, ecstasis is a going out of one's self that presumes a moving into something else, the prerequisite for knowledge in the pragmatist sense.

If the dawn of self-consciousness in the West can be localized in and attributed to Sappho, one can also find in her work the embeddedness of that aborning self that is assumed by the acausal relationship of perception and memory. The classical conceit at large does not imagine self and world as discrete entities that interface as assumed by the customary usage of the word “interact.” Her poem implicitly recognizes multiple fonts of creative agency while giving final efficacy to the unanalyzable issue of their genetic union: the goddess-muse. Ultimately, organism and environment, perception and action, Zeus and Mnemosyne are co-extensive. The creative act is situated at the site of their merger and therefore derivative of all organismic-environmental interaction.²¹ The pragmatic, non-representational model of cognition in which meaning amounts to the way the action an organism takes toward an object changes that organism provides a basis for its fit with poetry, the linguistic mode that minimizes language’s representational function and sharply curtails the expository in its evolution of a subject. Poetic language is usually assigned a role other than reference or denotation, be it an expressive, an emotional, a visceral, or simply an imaginative one, with the extreme form of *poésie pure* striving toward the complete dissolution of the functions on which communication is based and the release of language into what has come to be viewed as its natural, autonomous state.

It bears noting that perception and action transpire mainly below the level of conscious awareness. Perception-action events may and often do occur in the absence of conscious attention and result in the instantaneous and unquestioned recognition of an object of perception and the appropriate action toward it. This pre-conscious dynamic is evolutionarily primary: it exists in organisms that are not conscious, and it constitutes the

better part of the experience of organisms that are. Our feeling that we are consciously controlling our actions is mostly illusory: the coordination of action and perception is mainly an unconscious skill, and the assignment of causality to the will retrospective (*Brains* 17-8). Perhaps it is no surprise that Frye describes the initiation of poem-making as a compulsive act, one the poet is drawn to without awareness of the source of its motivation, but that in any event “blocks” quotidian self-inquiry (32). We find further evidence for the generation of poetry at this instinctual level in the mystifying and divinizing of the inspirational source. Whether the muse will visit is often thought to be below or beyond conscious awareness and control. Attracting her involves a dynamic receptivity to an only apparently external voice, an active attention, or a listening, in Emerson’s notion, for the poem that will arise in spite of one (449). Another way to think of this is that the biology happens; the organism functions. As William James states succinctly, “*It* thinks” (emphasis added).

It is precisely this pre-attentive level of functioning that Olson aspires to access in order to achieve the poetic registration of perception. He wishes to position writing on the back of the perception-action event by recording each perception as soon as its predecessor is enacted, or given verbal form, before a self-aware “I” can intrude upon an unwavering attention to the poetic voice as registrar of perceptual flow and ponder its efforts. The speed and attentiveness required in attending to the movement of perception are defenses against interruptive self-reflection, what Ginsberg called the “feeding back” that distracts the attention from the object at hand (147). And indeed, self-consciousness is, according to Freeman, a mechanism of delay inserted into the uninterrupted flow of pre-conscious organismic functioning. “. . . perception is a continuous and mostly

unconscious process that is sampled and marked intermittently by awareness, and what we remember are the samples, not the process” (*Brains* 18). The meaning the poet seeks to convey is more capacious than that accessible to a consciousness conscious of itself. It includes if not the presence of others, the presence of the otherness of the self.

According to Olson, romanticism flounders as it fails to admit that the emergence of self-consciousness inhibits the creative act, and distances one from, rather than reunites one with, nature. High romanticism in particular suffers from its failure to revisit the “lost hour of splendour in the grass.” Spontaneity or no, in order to compose, a self-aware “I” tends to arise, an eventuality secured when Coleridge collapsed the will into the imagination. Though its goal may have been to re-enter nature, romanticism can be seen as an ambivalent attempt to re-achieve and maintain an instinctual mode of being. That poetry must do so is the paradox of the self-conscious genre of the lyric. Perception itself is an exiling mechanism, not only based on the carryover of past experience into which overwhelming novelty is integrated, but by means of its articulating directionality. The attempt to bridge distance by means of a metaphorical dynamic is also its emphasis. The gap is the chasm over which desire, enduring and unquenched, is perpetuated.

Richards’s resurrection of “tenor” and “vehicle” freighted the terms with a notorious yet productive ambiguity. While interchangeable with the target, the tenor is also the thing meant, the purport, and the intended meaning (96). This definition of tenor carries with it the unfortunate assumption that is among the baggage of New Criticism, that a translated or prose version of meaning can in fact be agreed upon, one that is tacit within Lakoff and Johnson's insistence that the schema is delimitable and determinable. Richards takes pains to distinguish the meaning given by the tenor, especially according

to prior theories, from the meaning of the full metaphor (100). For example, to say that she is a rose might be to intend for her the customary meaning that she is beautiful. (And customary meaning is precisely what is violated for the boy whose glance, fixed on the horizon, a limit significant, paradoxically, of illimitability, cannot expeditiously categorize it.) On one level, Richards's distinction between tenor and vehicle is a distinction between meaning at its most latent, from meaning as it is revised and revealed through attention to the contemporary forming contexts in which it is embedded. The dynamic of interaction between the two meanings plays on an external tension between unknown and known (different from, but homologous to, the internal tension between target and source) which allows new meaning to emerge. If a tenor is already known, an openness to possibility, introduced by attention to the absent context is a means by which assumed knowledge or expectation is eroded and meaning invigorated. It is a finding of a new, appropriate use, whether an immediate, customary set of associations, such as beauty and fragility, then gives rise to the less expected connotation of thorniness, or the metaphor is so new (and Black's example of Henry James's "blotting-paper voices" serves brilliantly here) that the brain has to create a new perceptual category from previous categories. Interaction occurs as between the presumed stability of the familiar and the necessary instability that must be entertained when novelty is admitted.

Such innovation does not, however, require that the dynamic of metaphor be present to consciousness. The activity of the neurological substrate has evolved as a purely unconscious one affording the presumable advantage of limiting consciousness to salient content. Richards makes a similar point: "A metaphor may work admirably without our being able with any confidence to say how it works or what is the ground of

the shift” (117). It is the level of attentiveness to novelty rather than the level of conscious awareness of that attention that affords the conditions enabling the fresh metaphor to be assimilated meaningfully. The automatic registration of a dead metaphor is tantamount to the instantaneous and unquestioned recognition of an object of perception and appropriate action toward it, a most common event. The encounter with the unlikely juxtapositions of fresh metaphor is, on the other hand, dynamically similar to fresh perception; the unlikely convergence of blotting paper and the voice forces a stance of attention that facilitates the transaction by permitting the bi-directional contextual engagement. The figure of metaphor remains fresh to the extent that the contexts engaged are rich enough to be effectively inexhaustible. When metaphor culminates in a stable concept, one that may be employed without resort to contextual interplay, it is dead. Fresh metaphor is a function of the engaged attention of the receiver permitting the creative process transpiring at the site of interaction between apparently incommensurate contexts that nevertheless exist or are encountered within an integrated ecological or linguistic system. It is through contending with the full import and shifting nature of the apparently discrete, yet mutually formative contexts that metaphor entails, by expanding and fine-tuning remembered systems of associated commonplaces and maintaining their assimilated status in language, that the reader changes him- or herself as an organism changes itself to assimilate to its environment. It is a participatory dynamic through which the reader “becomes the text” text and in so doing enlivens it. A highly metaphoric text, then, distills the dynamic of the assimilating act of perception that betokens embeddedness and at the same time prompts it so that intratextual relation-making becomes homologous to the relationship between reader and text. It is a function

of the environmental embeddedness of the organism that Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner finally do not take into account.

And here we come close to radiating out into the terrain evoked by pragmatics in its insistence on an alternative doubling or polarity implicit in metaphor as a communicative act. The metaphoric expression is an action, a verbal action, potentially observable by others once published, where observation is a synecdoche for ingestion. The doubling is common to all communication, but the figurative event tends to call particular attention to it in creating a tension between what are traditionally termed literal and figurative levels. What identifies a metaphor as such is the fact that its face-value statement or sentence meaning is incomprehensible as it is, suggesting an alternative meaning that must be discerned by the receiver through an act of reconstruction. However, the assumptions inherent in pragmatics' traditional distinction, as well as the one between "sentence" and "speaker" meaning, terms Searle coined to revise that problematic dyad ("Metaphor" 93) prove inappropriate because they defer to a determined "literal" level of meaning which does not exist independent of a perceiver. From a perceptual standpoint, the significance of metaphor is always "nonsense," that is, it cannot be fully sensed but must be inferred from the limited sensory stimulation that is available to the perceiver. The figure is, in its fullness, the change wrought to the originating organism as it is a complete manifestation of a perceptual and actualized event. And here we can posit the hypothetical extremes of a private, physical meaning embodied by the originator and an equally private, physical meaning embodied by a receiver of the action through which receptive act a second assimilation is prompted by means of which the mind of the former becomes available to the latter. Metaphor as

uttered and as perceived is a gesture that gives the relationship of the mind to its constituent environment absented through its construction over to another perceiver. This social level of metaphoric interaction communicates the intentionality of one embedded organism to another; in the process of the communicative act intentionality is reconstructed by the receiver and realized as the full meaning Richards might have meant to distinguish from the original intended meaning. As a gesture to another that is representative of a relation-making being in a particular instance and instant, the action of metaphor entails its formative history of contextualization and the receiver commits another assimilating act that aspires to account for the intentionality of the first. If the act is a pretense, it is one that communicates not merely the inner life of the organism, but its inner life as it has been formed by its environs and assumes them. The portion of the process that Lakoff and Johnson excise, no matter how central, may not be fully articulated without committing a simplifying act of violence (as all violence is simplistic). Like any utterance, the metaphoric statement only appears to be decisive, i.e., *discrete*. It is not possible for action, especially cognitive action, to transpire without entailing constituting perceptual processes.²² And here metaphor embroils the problem of other minds, the fact that what is sensorially available of the other is suggestive of a fuller, more ramifying meaning that engages and emerges from supporting contexts. The metaphor as act subsumes the metaphor as perception. The understanding of metaphor as a perceptual dynamic serving to attune a finite, discrete and solitary organism to an infinite and boundless surround in which it is already integrated is enfolded within this last instrumental facet of metaphor.

In recognizing embeddedness, it becomes clear that the individual renditions of metaphoric interaction ultimately nest within one another. As source and target interact as brain and stimulus, the given meaning produced by their initial contact interacts with extended contexts to produce a more apt meaning. Finally, metaphor's function as a communicative act in which the whole of the metaphor is publicized as *sign*, becomes a unit of action potentially observable by others.

It is not possible to conclude this chapter without first addressing the fact that poetry that remains lyrical in some respects may be polemically non-metaphorical by forging a claim for the inherent metaphorical quality of the most vociferously anti-metaphorical poetry. Poetry that endorses metaphor as a technique would seem to need no defense. Champions of metaphor tend to be the most self-evidently lyrical of poets and poetic movements: one thinks, for instance, of the Renaissance sonneteers, Keats, the French symbolists, Dickinson, and Stevens. Lyrics tend to be more densely populated with metaphors and with fresh metaphors in particular than non-lyrical utterances; further, the metaphors that constitute them are larger players within the textual field, central stages on which meaning is produced. (The present discussion of metaphor necessarily extends to cover closely related tropes, including personification, catachresis, and the conceit.) Yet metaphor is too often systematically rejected by lyric poetics to qualify as an enduring central feature, and as the present definition is expansive, it must contend with the dissenters, beginning, perhaps with Whitman.

By the era of the high modernist manifesto, conventional metaphor became a *persona non grata* within the avant garde yet remained a highly cultivated object within

more conventional poetics, such as that of Crane. It is viable, if not entirely accurate, to cite the shift away from metaphor as the basic feature of the continuing divide within contemporary poetics. With the waning popularity of metaphor, metonymy, as something of a poor cousin, has received increasing critical attention as a usurping figure, rising from its inferior position to become lauded as the representative trope of postmodern poetry. If metaphor is cognitive, metonymy is often considered the trope of the realist, the prosiest of the figures whose very figurative power is called into question by theorists such as Nicolai Ruwet. The 'contiguity' that defines metonymy for Roman Jakobson is often interpreted to involve an operation within reality, whereas metaphor is considered the product of a purely linguistic or conceptual operation (LeGuern). Unlike metaphor, metonymy does not bring disparate realms into relation, but rather assumes semantic shift within a given system of relations the figure itself does not create. As de Man notes, the two figures are not unifying because they assume no schism, but arise from a pre-existing situation of integration. The traditional criterion for metonymic connection, a relationship of association, is a rather loose one subsuming material, causal, and conceptual modes of relation-making. Synecdoche is more specific, but as each implies a pre-existing, rather than a constructed, connection, they may exist in either a purely ontological or purely linguistic realm--thus their compatibility with postmodernism. As opposed to metaphor, metonymy demands no metalinguistic idea unifying the association. The figure of metonymy therefore fits Eichenbaum's theory of "semantic shift," which would have the figure transpire entirely on a literal plane, as well as those theories that situate metonymy within the autonomous realm of language.

Metaphor is at bottom a technique for negotiating juxtaposition, a phenomenon that is commonly the result of lyric discontinuity. Pound's superpositioning sought to exaggerate this inherent tendency. Confronted with the famous haiku-like verse

The apparition of these faces in a crowd

Petals on a wet, black bough. (111)

one employs the perfectly traditional strategy of bi-directional schema transfer. The reader is accorded the privilege of determining the source and the target, or the order in which each element plays its respective roles. Lakoff and Turner would no doubt consider this an derivative example of the 'human beings are leaves' metaphor that date back to *The Iliad*. This giving over of this particular choice results in meaning that is highly individualized and highly contingent. Such poetry forces the reader to re-enact the extended process of familiarization or acclimation to an environment by telescoping it. The most basic lyric technique can command and even force such a metaphorical reading strategy. While Pound sought to market a novel clean-lined modern aesthetic, in reality, he did no more than exaggerate a basic lyric feature that is exemplified in one of the earliest extant poems in modern English:

Oh Western wind, when wilt thou blow,

The small rain down can rain?

Christ, if my love were in my arms

And I in my bed again! (68)

The formatting and the conventions of poems enable the perceiving reader to proceed unfettered by the conventions of prose reading. Tactics of assimilation may range from the conventional bridging of the line break to the assimilation of more

radically discrete entities, for instance, the bringing of a later line to bear on a word. If Ashbery “marries the world” as Lehman writes, metaphor is nothing more than a distillation of a predominant poetic reading strategy, a method for negotiating proximity within a “hyper” culture characterized by the routine obliteration of extensive distance.

It is not simply coincidental that poetry becomes adamantly non-metaphorical at the time all language is regarded as metaphorical as a way of acknowledging the distance of the medium from its referents (Group μ 106-08). As the full extent of the implication of the unmotivated relationship between the sign to the signifier is traced throughout the twentieth century, it becomes progressively more difficult to identify metaphors in poetry and far more common for poetries to eschew them. A metonymic episteme would seem to obviate metaphor. Jonathan Culler goes so far as to call for the abolition of the figure based on his claims that conventional knowledge is required to discern which expressions are intended metaphorically and which are not, and that a reasonably realistic context, unavailable in poetry such as Ashbery’s, is needed to backlight what is at odds with it, making the determination of a passage’s metaphorical status ambiguous at best (“Commentary” 221-22, 224-25). Yet, it is at precisely at this point of extreme ambiguity that the ability to read metaphorically is most rigorously exercised. Within the most impenetrable post-modern linguistic thicket, the metaphorical becomes the most appropriate means of conceiving what cannot be referential as the reader constructs meaning by processing the language in venturing out into a radically defamiliarized environment, choosing which passages he will assimilate and which will remain, for the nonce, uncognized background. The most opaque poetry is that poetry in which words function purely as actors. Although their ambiguity does not hail from their direct

presentation of metaphors, it is nevertheless confronted through a metaphorical technique. Metaphor is present as the method that allows meaning to emerge from a metonymic embeddedness corresponding to the inscrutability of the target domain. The poet and the reader are both Rilke's bees of the invisible, transforming what is not seen into cognitively mellifluous verse.

In his brilliant sounding of lyricity entitled "Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric," Paul de Man pries into the distinction between the tropes metonymy and metaphor, which he considers similar, and the rather different figurative animal anthropomorphism, a difference Nietzsche implicitly overlooks in his martial enumeration of tropes, to claim that lyric exists in the anthropomorphic fixity of the reading strategy Baudelaire's sonnet "Obsession" retrospectively applies to his earlier poem, "Correspondances."

The rather neat fact that synaesthesia is a neurological condition, a minimally understood disorder of modality substitution or analogy making between sensory modalities in the formation of percepts, would seem to promise insight into the cognitive significance of its namesake figure. Synaesthetes most commonly evince the condition *audition colorée*, which causes them to produce a color percept in response to auditory stimuli. In rare cases, the syndrome might manifest differently, for instance as the tasting of shapes (Cytowic). Explanations for its advent range from John Harrison's proposed theory of synesthesia as a universal neonatal predisposition that atrophies in infants at the age of about two to three months with programmed cell death²³ (Harrison 214-19) to the

rather stubborn notion that it is merely a habitual tendency arising from learned association (Harrison 209-210).²⁴

Richard Cytowic points out that cross-modal association is foundational for language comprehension (*Shapes* 96) and particularly reading, the activity in which shapes on a page evoke the qualia of a sound image. Cytowic considers synesthesia to be a limbic system phenomenon within the temporal lobe that is non-pathological but has been outgrown phylogenetically as a conscious occurrence in all but its vestigial sufferers: the phenomenon, he claims, occurs on an unconscious level for non-synesthetes.

The pathology synesthesia is most likely not one but a collection of physical conditions with correspondent etiologies (Harrison 169). The figure of speech carries the aroma of romantic unification, whether it is seen simply to be the harmonizing of the senses or more complexly as a Shelleyan notion of transcendental union. The figure was popular in late nineteenth century within anti-atomistic epistemologies and in relation to psychological theories of beauty as reflective of an emergent wholeness of perception in which "sensation complexes" are greater than the sum of their parts. Mallarmé's wish to "derange" the senses, by means of this and other figures, "to turn them from the proper course," to put out of order, discompose, disconcert, or disturb sensory experience, speaks to the need to invoke a given order in order to reorder it. As de Man points out, the disorder is indeed tropological. Synesthesia embeds a form of tropic substitution, that "of one sense experience by another" (245). What de Man identifies in the two Baudelaire poems he reads are two types of metaphoric action and by extension cognition which *correspond* to epistemological stances. As he admits, metaphor itself may be

anthropomorphic, and so the distinction to be considered is in strict terms not between metaphor and anthropomorphism as such, but between anthropomorphizing and non-anthropomorphizing versions of metaphor.

In a significant portion of this essay, de Man focuses on Baudelaire's tactical conjunction *comme*, riffing on its metamorphosis within the sonnet "Correspondances" from prompt to tropological analogue (the *comme* of simile) to agent of the principle of exemplification, the *comme* of "such as" that confer identity rather than similarity. The shift from the substitutive, analogical figure of synaesthesia is effected in the movement from analogizing substitutive chain of "Correspondances," to the tautological affirmations of identity. The resulting repetition is sterile in its *obsessiveness* embodied in the stutter of the tautology (248-50) that seems to characterize dead metaphor. "The union of the aesthetic with epistemological properties is carried out by the mediation of the metaphor of the self as consciousness of itself, which implies its negation" (256). His point is that "Obsession" naturalizes "Correspondances" by means of an interiorizing brand of anthropomorphism that is the essence of lyric strategy. De Man then addresses the problematic of the metaphoricity of truth through the bidirectional negation of figuration in recognizing a dynamic interplay that could as well describe perceptual metamorphosis:

"Obsession" self-consciously denies and rejects the sensory wealth of

"Correspondances" . . . We read "Obsession" thematically as an interiorization of "Correspondances," and as a negation of the positivity of an outside reality. But it is just as plausible to consider the subject that remains hidden in

"Correspondances." Naturalization, which appears to be a movement from inside

to outside, allows for affective verisimilitude which moves in the opposite direction. In terms of figuration also, it can be said that “Correspondances” is the negation of “Obsession”: the figural stability of “Obsession” is denied in “Correspondances” (257).

“[‘Obsession’] is a figural affirmation that claims to overcome the deadly negative power invested in the figure” (247), the figure of synesthesia in particular. Synaesthesia is then a negation of the centralizing tendencies of lyric figuration, the pull back into environmental unity. Representation is unavoidably a negation of “sensory plenitude” (258-59). “The lyric depends entirely for its existence on the denial of phenomenality as the surest means to recover what it denies” (259). Trope is its method, and anthropomorphic trope best affords self-recuperation. Anthropomorphism permits the illusion that it is the trope that stabilizes tropicity; it “seems to be the illusionary resuscitation of the natural breath of language, frozen into stone by the semantic power of the trope” (247). Lyric is the defensive posture that, as the exercise of mind in Stevens’s description, is the only posture one can adopt if one is to “defend against” oneself. It is this lyrical “process of translation or ‘transport’ that incessantly circulates between the two texts” (262). The sonnets are exemplary as the sorts of texts that are present within all texts: they demonstrate the reason lyrics are paradigmatic reading strategies (261).

In acknowledging the basis of the epistemological in the aesthetic, de Man explicates the problem of lyric, securing its roots within perception in a gesture that harkens back to Nietzsche. I would like to suggest that anthropomorphism, in its overt mention of a human center, is only the most referential of tropes that anthropomorphize. Synesthesia, in the non-pathological sense, is prior to metaphor, prior to memory, and

therefore pre-perceptual. It serves both an ordering and a disordering function that must exist prior to apprehension. Although Cytowic locates the pathology within the mechanism of the limbic system (167-68), neurologically, sensory information must be integrated prior to limbic system engagement, a fact that does not preclude its disintegration there. According to Freeman's theory, the merger of the waveform occurs in the entorhinal cortex as a pre-condition to limbic system access; it unifies the input of the perceptual modalities to perceive object as object, as a separate object and allow for affective response and eventually circumspect action following its initial articulation of features. The emergence of the "I" de Man recognizes as the concurrent vectors of internalization and externalization, depends upon the reunification of the other, the subordination of its features, its lips, and eyes and skin, to a whole that is the object of the transaction that produces the "I". That whole might be uniquely ordered, as it is for synesthetes, but it must correspond to the consistent, internal sense of order of the perceiver.

The poem "Correspondances" is then the colder, the "more marmoreal" of the set of poems designated by de Man because it precedes the unified percept and the emotional response it prods. As the synesthetic mind parses sensory information "abnormally," the alternative unity it posits points to further potential unities that are lost as the image is determined. It is possible to interpret synesthesia as an expression of the embedded mind where embeddedness is conceived probabilistically and represented in terms evoked alternate realities. The afferent tendency of the brain is toward integration following initial selection and segregation at the point of contact with the exterior. The gesture back toward embeddedness depends upon the aberrant and occasional nature of the figure.

True synesthetes, whose disorder is constant *and* consistent, grow accustomed to, dependent upon, and even enamored of their idiosyncratic faculty. The regularity of their discombobulated percept enables functioning and raises the question of how it is possible to identify, rather than merely equate (by positing a tautology) qualitative “correspondences” between minds.

“Correspondences” probes the origin of originality, because it begs closure, the resolution of the emotionally-charged action. Each Baudelaire sonnet is a meta-poem of poetic genesis: in tandem they acknowledge that the poetic source is dual inhering on each side of the organismic border and posit trope as the dynamic of reconciliation. Where de Man makes a misstep is in the appropriation of only the latter of the two strategies to lyric. Both are lyrical and without the play he classifies as deconstructive, one is left with the inarticulate condition of the former, or the autobiographical predicament of the latter. Lyric negotiates and indeed constructs the territory between these two polarities.

Such a bounded negotiation is discernible within the boat-stealing episode. The boy Wordsworth enjoys a certain satisfaction in the synaesthetic registration of the echoing circles, yet his aborted experience leaves him without an image, breaching the continuum between memory and desire. His enterprise is abandoned precisely at this moment of integrative failure. Wordsworth aborts the enterprise as he will, as Wilner points out, the indefinitely postponed epic to which *The Prelude* is preliminary, at the point of object identification, and retracts his action into the landscape, ensuring the possibility of its re-issuance and providing him with fodder for thought as well as the impetus to revisit that moment as seminal and thereby remain within a quintessentially

lyrical space without risking the dangerous misstep of alighting on a biographical embankment.

With typical reach, de Man notes in the transportational meaning of “correspondance” (a “transfer”) the continuity of action that arises pursuant to displacement: “for the transfer indeed merges two different displacements into one single system of motion and circulation, with corresponding economic and metaphysical benefits (251). The two displacements, in the form of embarkations or boardings, are the lyric initiation and the displacing activity of perception, the breach and the subsequent breaching are unified in the intention to reach a destination. The failure of action in the perceptual negotiation of a landscape that is as much “ladscape” then gives rise to a profound solitude that inspires the pursuit of successful action that for the poet is recapitulated as the Aristotelean skill of metaphor-making. If, as Norbert Weiner observes, “The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance,” it is an equally viable claim that the price of eternal vigilance is to live within and through the unceasing activity of metaphor.

¹ All quotations are taken from the 1805 version of *The Prelude*.

² Wordsworth intended to compose an epic-length poem, *The Recluse*, which was to chart his career as a mature poet.

³ See Hesse, Richards, and MacCormac.

⁴ The non-cognitive camp is split between the belief that the meaning of metaphor is confined to the literal meanings of its constituent terms and the position that it is merely a feint of embellishment with all the occlusive sway of rhetoric. See the Davidson/Black debate.

⁵ Functionalism operates on the assumption of functional equivalence. Any model of the mind (and particularly the model of mind as a computer) is valid so long as it is functionally equivalent to its referent, that is, so long as it produces the same results. The similarity of the underlying systemic operation is not at issue, and therefore, a model of the mind need not be based on knowledge of the actual workings of the mind.

⁶ This equation or analogizing of the sensory systems is valid up to a point. See, for example, LeDoux, who stresses the individuality of each system and the problematic of generalizing a faculty called perception. On the other hand, Freeman's work lends support to that gesture, finding a commonality in the chaotic activity of each. In order to mine the rather involved processes of perception, it is necessary for the sake of simplicity to commit the analytic and to some extent arbitrary act of isolating one of the sense modalities pending an account of sensory integration.

⁷ The limbic system is for some controversially a system. It is an assemblage of interrelated regions of the brain participating in the representation of emotion and consisting of the limbic lobe--a ring of primary cortical tissue that includes the cingulate gyrus, the parahippocampal gyrus, and the hippocampal formation--and the subcortical regions it abuts, including part of the hypothalamus (which activates the autonomic nervous system responses involved in emotion), the septal area, the nucleus accumbens and the amygdala. The amygdala and the hippocampus are implicated in implicit and explicit memory respectively.

⁸ Three primary factors affect the gain: The first is the priming of the bulbar neurons by neuromodulators, the class of brain chemicals that alter neuronal sensitivity by inducing a state of arousal. A second form of priming is occasioned by the simple repetition of input: an already-excited neuron is excited further, exponentially increasing the ratio of output to input. Third, gain tends to increase at synapses that excite one another preferentially in a phenomenon called pair bonding. Learning creates affinities among neurons, which then form cooperative assemblies. Input produces greater output at the favored synapses than it would otherwise, and the increased output is re-entered as input. The elevated

level induces the nerve assembly to prompt the pervasive AM pattern activity (“Physiology” 81-82). When the gain increases sufficiently, the bulb is destabilized and the oscillation “explodes” (*Brains* 74).

⁹ Again, a popular formulation of Hebb’s rule is “Neurons that fire together wire together.”

¹⁰ Although each uses deterministic chaos or complexity theory to explain the integrative directionality of cognition, the objects of their measurements are different. Edelman defines complexity in terms of the degree to which interconnected neural networks are differentiated and the amount of information processed relative to the information available from the environment. Freeman measures the chaotic activity of the wave oscillation of the synchronous firings of groups of neurons.

¹¹ This characteristic extends to the other sensory modalities. For example, in vision there is no constant correlation between a particular wavelength received and a color perceived. The brain rather identifies color by its context so that it can regularize perception, even though the external, physical constitution of the color changes. See Edward Land, “The Retinex Theory of Colour Vision.”

¹² Richards explicitly roots metaphor in perception but does not develop this claim (109).

¹³ The substitutive view of metaphor is espoused primarily by Roman Jakobson.

¹⁴ Group μ ’s theory is at the center of this debate, See also Derrida’s “White Mythology.”

¹⁵ Chaotic attractors are significant at every stage in this process because, as part of their expanding phase, they lend the capacity to rapidly generate endlessly new activity patterns or potential complexes of meaning, thereby creating information (Nicolis and Tsuda 216). Their flexibility derives from an unpredictability due to sensitive dependence on initial conditions (here the stimulus) and sensitive dependence on control parameters (220). Unpredictability is infused throughout the imaginative process as the potential for novelty. The uncertainty amplified in chaotic activity is a key factor in engendering meaningful originality while maintaining consistency when necessary (219-20). Systems need both large dynamical storage capacity and good compressibility, and chaotic attractors satisfy this requirement (220).

¹⁶ When a new hypothesis is unnecessary, a limit cycle, a non-chaotic attractor representing periodic motion, is sufficient to revive a memory. Given a perfect match, identification involves no new creative effort. Habit does not require chaos as it requires no expanding phase: a non-chaotic attractor is sufficient. “[S]teady states and limit cycles provide only for the contracting phase and are useful only as classifiers provided that the processor has already been given, or has created, the set of alternative responses . . .” (Nicolis and Tsuda 216).

¹⁷ The metaphor of the basin conceptualizes the idea of attraction in gravitational terms. A basin is defined as “the set of points that evolve to an attractor” (Crutchfield et al. 50). Input is less likely to escape and more likely to be drawn into or “attracted to a pattern the “deeper” its basin.

¹⁸ If the layering of metaphor onto perception seems in any way arbitrary, it should be noted that Lakoff et al. see metaphor as a concretizing function, one that makes the abstract graspable (Lakoff and Johnson 107). A concretizing function cannot be fully conceptual, that is, exclusive of a perceptual basis. It is the function of concretizing, of making information that is inapprehensible as it is, apprehensible, that metaphor and perception share. Seeing the invisible in terms of the visible is a function of poetry as Rilke's bees of the invisible transform what is not seen into mellifluous verse, where invisibility becomes a metaphor for the formlessness. In cases where metaphor brings two perceptually available entities into relationship, which Lakoff and Johnson deem possible, one is always relatively less apprehensible within context.

¹⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget also prioritize action in relation to perception in their respective works *The Phenomenology of Perception*, “Psychological Doctrine in Philosophical Teaching,” and *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*.

²⁰ Quantum mechanics provides for a fundamental level of uncertainty with respect to measurement. It is not resolvable through further knowledge (Crutchfield et al. 46, 49).

²¹ As neurodynamics exemplifies, the relationship between these co-implicated sources of perception in the physical sense of impinging sensation and memory in the form of neural attractors is one of a mutual and co-extensive construction derivative of a larger relationship between organism and environment. Susan Oyama meticulously dismantles the logic of giving priority or discrete status to either nature or nurture in her landmark text *The Ontogeny of Information*. She further exposes the grounding of this dichotomy in the Western separation of form and matter. The holistic, ecological thinking she clarifies was only recently taken to heart within the hard sciences, due most likely, to the diversion of resources funneled into the development of cognitivism's computer model of the mind.

²² Evidence that sensory and motor information are, in fact, indistinguishable within the cortex continues to accumulate. Indeed, a rather neat way that the final irresolvability of the two is exemplified is in the recent discovery of “mirror neurons,” neurons in the post-parietal cortex that fire both when an action is undertaken and when the same action is observed.

²³ Programmed cell death is explained in Edelman's now widely-accepted theory of neural Darwinism, the idea that the brain generates excessive neurons with the potential for connections that are “pruned” shortly after birth as a result of disuse. Neural Darwinism is based on Edelman's earlier work in immunology. See *Neural Darwinism*.

²⁴ Other theories include the “sensory leakage” or cross-wiring theory of Jacobs et al., which is supported by minimal evidence, and the proposal by Graziano et al. that there are neurons sensitive to stimulation by more than one modality (Harrison 211).

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