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SEEING, AGAINST FASCISM. VERITY SPOTT'S *HOPELESSNESS*

WILLIAM ROWE¹

ABSTRACT

Verity Spott (1987) has expanded the possibilities of radical poetry in the UK. Her main works to date are *Gideon* (Barque Press, 2014), *Click Away Close Door Say* (Contraband Books, 2017), *Hopelessness* (The 87 Press, 2020), *Prayers, Manifestos, Bravery* (Pilot Press, 2020), *The North Road Songbook* (Pilot Press, 2024). This article seeks to show how *Hopelessness* thinks through the connections between psychic pain and the political without following the customary pathways which privilege and fetishize trauma. I propose that in language and form *Hopelessness* pushes against positivistic denial of psychosis as a mode of experience, experience whose validity the dominant language and culture disallow. I see it as a book that makes its way through despair—understood as a response to the current destructiveness of social forces, of which fascist fantasy is a major part—by dismantling re-envisioning what is supposed to be reality. There is humour and satire in Verity Spott's mode of proceeding and, above all, the force of poetic thought.

KEY WORDS: Psychic pain, the political, fascism, denial, psychosis, love, the senses, power, class.

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I

All through *Hopelessness*, tubes, pipes and sometimes also wires protrude from an out-of-sight place: under the ground, under tree-bark, from the stomach, from a “pumping room.” They come into visibility in “a meadow.” The tubes at times are attached to the body through an “incision,” or through the mouth; at times they themselves have a mouth in the form of a “nozzle”; they are also “like hands” (*Hopelessness* 78, 17, 75, 77, 19). Something strange flows inside the tubes, but it is not something mysterious. The tubes are out there, they are its evidence.

In this response to Verity Spott’s book, I take my direction from immersion in the ways the poetry moves; hence, I make repeated entrances into the domain in which the pipes and tubes appear. A series of questions have emerged: if the book repeatedly returns to the appearing of things that are not supposed to be there, what are the consequences? If this terrain is where the work of poetry is carried out, what can be said about that work? What thinking and action does *Hopelessness* require of us? Does it bring psychic pain and the political into conjunction without reducing and collapsing them into each other? Again, what are the consequences?

There’s no “other” dimension to the pipes and tubes; they don’t allow themselves to be interpreted; they don’t stand for something else, they stand before us, but they are not objects. Though they relate to the agency of another person, the identity of that person, though hinted at, is not specified; an action or series of actions which damaged the “I” have occurred: we are given to understand that it’s because of this that the pipes and tubes manifest, but what does that mean?

Yet to say actions have occurred is to start placing the tubes in a narrative time which the book has decided to avoid. The repeated scenes don't belong to a developing drama; they are like non-sequential cuts in a film. Each irruption into visibility carries the whole of something that has been and is still being denied. Their simple thereness makes holes in ordinary reality; they suspend the laws that govern space and time, for instance the logic of cause and effect. If nothing precedes them as their cause, then also nothing can stop being their cause.²

The place where they appear is simultaneously strange and familiar. To cite a passage near the end of the book:

It is a very strange world, like the old one, only closer. Where are you. The meadow.
The tube. The flute. You walk again into the woods and go near to a tree. You peel back the bark and begin to think about looking underneath it. You have a look, and under the bark of the tree is, surprise surprise, tubes. Eighty different tubes. You knew it. He knew it. (*Hopelessness* 108)

What happens if one affords these things a real existence? What of the impulse to circumscribe them, to keep them outside whatever ground upon which the individual self constitutes itself, whatever ultimate rationality one resorts to so as not to shatter and perhaps not return?

When reading is under pressure from the almost automatic impulse to resolve phenomena that don't fit the order of reality, the idea of the "uncanny" can offer itself as a limit that preserves

² I have borrowed this phrasing from César Vallejo's extraordinary prose poem, "I am going to speak about hope": "I am in pain now without explanations. My pain is so deep, that it had no cause nor does it lack cause. What would be its cause? Where is the thing that is so important, that it could cease to be its cause. Nothing is its cause; nothing could have ceased being its cause. For what was this pain born, of itself?" (Eshleman 343). Pain here in Vallejo's poem is destitute of a God, an Other, who could give it a place in space and time: hence the poem is about hope. See Clayton Eshleman's *César Vallejo, The Complete Poetry* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007). The translation here is mine.

strangeness. The proper translation of the title of Freud's well-known essay would be the "unhomely" (*unheimlich*). But Mark Fisher has pointed out that while Freud acknowledges the experience of things that are irreducibly strange, he also brings them back into the familiar, in the sense of the family as delineating the primary structure of the psyche. Fisher proposes that the weird and the eerie are modes of perception that make it possible to rethink the strange, the radically outside, in a less restricted way than Freud does. "The weird is that *which does not belong*," "something strangely familiar" which cannot be reconciled with the "homely"; "we find the eerie," for its part, not in "enclosed and inhabited domestic space" but "in landscapes partially emptied of the human" (Fisher 10-1). Nevertheless, these conceptions do not give the measure of *Hopelessness*, since the scenes in which the tubes or pipes appear seem to be natural landscapes (a meadow, woods); they are not like the radically strange locations, say, of H. P. Lovecraft's "In the Mountains of Madness" or John Carpenter's film *The Thing*. But, equally, these spaces in *Hopelessness* are not landscapes at all; they can't be referred back to a world. Nor can the duality of strange/familiar hold them in place; when the pipes and tubes intrude, they do so without any aura of weirdness. They embody an unresolvable disjunction. They don't belong to the realm of fantasy: they mark a place where fantasy breaks down; they disrupt one's sense of one's own body as a single coherent thing while fantasy on the other hand works as a prop for the self's image of itself. We are left with the strange.

Paul Celan's "Meridian" speech pushes towards the other side of the literary strange—with the example (from Georg Büchner) of automatons and the Medusa's head—towards something

other, something not encompassed, not capable of being contained by inherited forms of strangeness, mythical and literary:³

perhaps [poetry] will succeed here to differentiate between strange and strange, perhaps it is exactly here that the Medusa's head shrinks, perhaps it is exactly here that the automatons break down—for this single short moment? Perhaps here, with the I—with the estranged I set free *here and in this manner*—perhaps here a further Other is set free? (Joris xliii)

Lyrical expression, whose music might have contained the pipes, tubes and wires inside a lyrical I, propels them outside such a holding-place: “in this sweet aubade as you were / shocked gorgeous by a boot to the mouth” (*Hopelessness* 86). The “sweet aubade” pivots at the line-break of “were / shocked” into violent motion. Crude violation stops the erotic sublime of lyrical poetry, not by pulling down something elevated, as in bathos, but by invading and turning inside out the inner life it presupposes. The enjoyment inside “gorgeous” is a dislocating enjoyment, external to any subjectivity that might contain it, outside pleasure-pain:

The tube [is] spinning madly in the distance, unable to be attached now the experts have fled, fumbling glue fingers after it. You tear on your high vis and screech into the street. Death until the empty meadow seethes in chronic calm. Let me die into pieces. The expert zeitgeist chaos valve hums the street to actionable contact, with you. (*Hopelessness* 87)

³ The automata of E T A Hoffmann's stories offer a further example of the uncanny in literature. It's also worth saying that the residue of the uncanny in Walt Disney's figures, the unconscious portion of what animates them, has a strong relation with seeing humans as automata, especially the clockwork ones of the 18c.

The experts—technicians perhaps of the lyric or of the poetry of capitalism—are incapable, can't connect the tube. The "I" accepts and enters its own disintegration. That's the condition for the glue which is also prosody of reality-producing time to be known. It's a spiritual struggle: "the Meadow becomes a station in prayer, an oath to / the silos, abandoned slag heaps, unlistened feelings, / protecting the hobbies of the meadow" (*Hopelessness* 80). Prayer and oath dissolve the reality-glue. But Verity Spott doesn't stop there, at this species of death.

The pipes and tubes must have pushed their way through ordinary perception. If we think of that as consisting of the organised senses, then what the pipes and tubes do is suspend their ordinary functioning. When something else appears, that other thing is not an alternative representation, but a stumbling-block to the possibilities of representation as such in the UK as it currently exists—the chaos produced by "the expert zeitgeist," i.e., quantified life. The pipes and tubes are not supposed to be there, in the same way that psychotic thought presents things that are not "real" yet are instantiations of the real because they speak of what's supposed not to have happened or not to be happening. The thought then comes that this is why Verity Spott links this particular mode of appearing to fascist fantasy: both relate to denial. The difference would be that fascism enjoys denying the reality of death camps or class relations and ultimately of the possibility of destroying capitalism, and psychotic ideation reverses the direction of denial back to what was there before an act of denial occurred. That would be why psychosis holds the possibility of exposing fascist thought and the possibility of becoming revolutionary energy. That proposition, though abstract, feels accurate: to test it, one would need to find the in-betweens, the mediations

that those possibilities pass through. In the terms that *Hopelessness* places before us, the meadow scene and the speaking that it makes possible indicate an individual perpetrator and capitalist society as linked agents of damage.⁴ Crucial here is the relation between psychotic ideation and social murder. But there's no direct, unmediated transfer of capitalist violence into psychosis. The mediation is the violence of denial: social cruelty and social murder denied constitute the psychotic air we breathe.

Behind the pipes and tubes of *Hopelessness*, there's an agency, sometimes spoken of as "he," which insistently refuses to speak, closing down any speaking that might acknowledge an event whose effects continue to irrupt. There's no development: each irruption into visibility carries the whole of what has been and is still being denied: the whole is in each part, there's no narrative. Lacan writes of this situation, "It isn't a matter of phenomenology. It's a matter of understanding, not imagining, what happens for a subject when the question comes to him from where there is no signifier, when it's a hole, a lack, that makes itself felt as such" (203). Psychosis is not confined to the clinic; language is at stake.⁵

⁴ Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* show very thoroughly how getting to the point of conjunction between psychosis and revolutionary energy requires an undoing of conventional psychoanalysis. Question: if psychotic ideation reverses the denial/foreclosure of what has been removed from reality, how, specifically, can we say that it opposes capitalist ideology, the system of capitalist appearance?

⁵ The following is a brief and necessarily incomplete note on psychosis. Psychosis is to be understood as part of the practice of daily social relations. All humans are capable of psychotic experience; in the aftermath of trauma, in extreme lack of sleep and in states induced by psychotropic drugs or caused by social cruelty and isolation, people can experience psychotic mental states whether briefly or not. Early childhood most probably includes experience of a psychotic kind. Its causes in adults especially include childhood abuse and the experience of trauma at any time of life. Psychiatric wards are disproportionately populated by racially discriminated and working-class people: here the tight interrelation between psychoses and capitalist society can be seen. In psychiatric wards psychosis is produced and reproduced as something to be suppressed. Losing their sense of reality is a crucial part of a psychotic person's experience. Hospitalisation reinforces this. The person is effectively removed from social interaction. Engagement with the person suffering from a psychotic episode is ruled out; there's no conversation to be had. The psychotic person is made into one of those humans who need to be removed, as in the fantasies of the extreme Right and fascism. If the internal experience of psychosis can be characterised as an "imprisonment" of the psychotic subject in the imaginary, social cruelty and the violence of racism reinforce that situation. The approach of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (part of the now dominant positivist/behaviourist psychology) is only apparently milder: it treats the thoughts of people experiencing psychosis as bad "cognition," and once again they are removed from the social. The long history of discrimination and wilful ignorance continues. *Hopelessness* calls this "mending the seams of reality," (106) which are also the "seems" that are forced to appear to be. The work of poetry makes the pipes and tubes an anti-reality-principle which opposes the law that regulates phenomena. I am grateful to Sophie Carapetian for her suggestions for this paragraph.

The fragments of dialogue that feature in the final section of *Hopelessness* have the feeling of speech that's occurring outside the register of normal communication. The scene of speaking is set up as a "an empty stage."

The lights are bright and hard, with a sunny disposition. There is total silence, so that when a sound is introduced there is a strange distance to it, and that it has the quality to shock even at a very low volume, that the distance is closer, and that all that is heard is understood.

(Hopelessness 95)

Speech occurs but the exchange that would make a conversation is missing; what would underwrite exchange is missing. The other person is affected, but the meaningful, signifying level of language seems only half present to them. In this condition, where language as signification/meaning has been placed in suspense and the act of interpretation is blocked, the intrusion of pipes and tubes starts to be felt more intimately: "The nozzle that has made my pain is flapping like a gorgeous mouth" (*Hopelessness* 101). Visibility here engenders affect, the un-said makes itself felt in the body. The subject represents to itself attraction and pain as a single image-movement.

But to say that *Hopelessness* makes the invisible visible would be insufficient. The pipes, tubes and wires appear; the question is what are they doing? *Hopelessness* is marked by the force of Sean Bonney's work. His refusal of representations that can become co-opted by the system of reality takes him to the point at which making the invisible visible is not sufficient to the task of poetry:

we don't have any kind of monopoly on harmonic invisibility, and all of those occultist systems that some of us love so much have always been bourgeois through

and through. That is it's not a question of gentrification, but that the whole process has always started from the invisible spot where your feet are tapping whatever fetishized rhythms right into the star encrusted ground. (33-34)

The point is what are you doing? And if you abandon all forms of expression that replicate the music of the system of reality, its continued operation, what actions are possible?

At the threshold where the tubes become more visible within the particular lighting of the scene, they also suppress "vision": "Hopelessness inside the life set out without a vision, / stretched into the partnership of tubes" (*Hopelessness* 102). A current moves through them at an extreme frequency: "my practice is going / down the erratic tube at four million kHz" (*Hopelessness* 102). The frequency that impedes reception is that of "spite," and spite names estate agents and corporations: "the spite I am made in the contra- / diction at Fox & Sons the contradiction at Proctor and Gamble" (*Hopelessness* 102). Dream might hold speed-of-light affect inside a subjective image: "this would in the field of our dreams scream over the elastic sky" (*Hopelessness* 103). But, in an opposite turn, that form of self-expression would, "like it or not, verbalise my dishonesty" (*Hopelessness* 103). The wording pivots several times on "contradiction," a word and thought that instantiate unrest. The meadow cannot rest inside any given meaning: "the contradiction again in the clarified soil, the grain, those fucking hopeless Pagans, the regressive search for meadows" (*Hopelessness* 103). Fascist neo-paganism married to genetic engineering of humans breaks into the field of apprehension: "lay me down and tenderly / artificially rip out all my chromosomes" (*Hopelessness* 103). But destruction of genetic code can also become an ephemeral figure of emancipation from gender. The struggle to

reach true appearance produces contradiction; there's no form in which it can rest. If dreaming was the primary method of Surrealism, Verity Spott passes through the work of dream into something else:

the field inside the dream, where I climbed into the ground
through layers of wires and posts, down into the soil
to find your still living body . . .
and we began to climb up
through layers of pipes and posts,
to move into the light of the field. (*Hopelessness* 5)

The things perceived are not instances of distortions which ultimately can be translated back into what they distort, as is the case, say, with Dalí's work.

Speech frees itself into a different form of expression; this happens inside love:
Don't tell me what to do or else to let me loose and
smelt my speech
into the open liquid tubes, like new like love is free to
life;
And speech, smashed out for choice, by nought
to fuck up all the life that makes you wonder
what is left but speech made free for you to compost
under. (*Hopelessness* 102)

“Smelt my speech”: a demand for speech to actually enter the tubes, actively, “for choice,” and in the process be “smashed out,” exit from itself changed and made free. Expression begins to break away from tangled affect into love as a beyond, as death is also, of what Freud called “the pleasure principle,” the binding of the body by the alternation of pleasure and pain. Love comes into speech inside and against the contraction of the tubes, against language that rhymes the pleasure it takes in submission to order.

Against being subsumed into dead being, into not-speaking (“Gone into the silent mud” [*Hopelessness* 64]), the “I” insists on being its own continuance—“And so I on I on and on” (*Hopelessness* 65)—inside and against a repeating iambic rhythm which is both the medium through which it asserts itself and a distillation of empty regulated time, the time of iambic rhythm being that of conventional poetry, and of the reality it supports. The damage and the various deaths that have threatened the “I” have coagulated in this viscous opaque medium, the “I” itself “sunk in cloying mud far down is gone or dragged back out not see” (*Hopelessness* 65). As “on” moves against the world of inert objects, it’s the action of a non-individuated subject, and as such is lovely: “And so I on I on to meet and dance and sweat and pop to when must on for out I go and on and live and laugh and love I love I laugh I live I on for on to live” (*Hopelessness* 65). The I who writes and the I written of interpenetrate in the iambic propulsion; the pulse repeats itself and becomes its own object: “I on for on to live” makes “on” itself a subject, so that the energy of this writing folds onto itself. Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of “desiring production,” i.e., of desire not captured by any operation of repression but self-producing, might seem at first an accurate description of what’s

happening here, but as we will see there are negative forces which threaten the “on” with extinction of its own capacity for movement and these forces cannot simply be subsumed into an unending vital flow which takes every obstruction into itself—an idea which might be co-optable by neoliberal capitalism.

“Though at first on,” as word and action, is an affirmation and an insistence on continuance (“I love I laugh I live” [*Hopelessness* 65]), it’s in this section that the chance for change gets shut down to a nothing: “on to suck like ground I forceless on to chant the names incant the naught” (*Hopelessness* 65). “On” is not simply a positive proposition that wills itself to stand its ground; it speaks inside a system whose function is to neutralise it. Is there a way out? Is to “incant the naught” also perhaps an act of destruction that makes a clearing? Inherent to this section is an entanglement of affirmative and negative language-actions at the smallest level of syntax, such as “I forceless on.” The immediate sensation is of being continually undermined and nevertheless insisting on not giving up. Yet if one takes this “no” as simply expressing a refusal to give in, positive and negative would confront each other without change, a deadlock that can manifest as the only possibility in a period when political change has been shut down; when the thing to be overcome continually reabsorbs my, and perhaps your, no.

In this situation Verity Spott enters all the way into the insufficiency of her own no. This makes a complexity of local movement inside each phrase: “as if to broken no inside but not you, ever here no will no not so when not ever here so not now gone...” (*Hopelessness* 66). It’s impossible to disentangle the movement of the negative within the negative (“no inside but not you”) from its

own failure (“broken no”), since the first no, in its very movement, fails to find its object (“not you”). Neither side occupies a stable position—this is the opposite of the adversarial rigidity of the law where there has to be judgement, yes or no.

Instead of stopping at a positive stance, Verity Spott goes all the way into the negative; her affirmations of refusal fall through their insufficiency, will fails, “sunk in cloying mud” (65).⁶ And as the noes continue to fall through themselves, the place of speaking sinks further into the subsoil, the place where the unfindable author of damage was located. Since words are not holding a place, logic ceases to operate: “will go in cancelled logic no or no and either no” (66). The either/or, whose most basic operation is yes/no as simple opposites, breaks since “either” is already “no” and also comes after the “or.” The grip and procedure of logic—its nightmarish principle of non-contradiction—recedes: logic as control, control abandoned.

However, it’s not a blind unthinking impulse that pushes “on” to persist; a specific thinking prevents the writing from simply reproducing the stand-off between the will to change and what opposes it, the system of reality. Even where there seems to be stasis, “where change that is not comes and splits our stupid heads back off,” (*Hopelessness* 67) there’s a critical turn, a questioning of the thinking that belongs to this situation of defeat, which is no longer simply defeat when a particular energy is brought to bear. Verity Spott brings into the struggle thinking that reflects its own trajectory, “not to think it not go back but back and back” (*Hopelessness* 67). Here there’s an initial no (“not to think it”) which continues in “not go back,” an affirmation of persisting in present

⁶ “On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on.” This is the beginning of Beckett’s “Worstward Ho,” which includes the well-known “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better” (Beckett).

time, dependent on what it negates (to “go back”); but then “but back” negates the preceding thought, at which point there’s simply a yes/no, an indeterminate negation stuck inside itself. But this is in turn negated by a further “back”: not simply “back” but a “back” which goes further, “back and back,” before, to a place prior to all determinations, which is also after all determinations and which equally figures in the book as substrate or subsoil, but a subsoil which disturbs the emplacement of sense. “Cancel back to infinite the breaking chord you hand lift from the sinking leaking bone of sky” (*Hopelessness* 67). This “back” exists at a cessation of dialectics, a place of resurrection: “come out your graves you leaking spirits aching in our hopeless throats” (*Hopelessness* 68).⁷ The point here is to discover the metaphysics of the situation, not simply those representations that would be permitted by a realist account. There’s a co-presence of the two levels: the corporeal and sensuous, the metaphysical and suprasensible.

For three and a half pages set out as dense prose, iambs—the most conventional rhythm of verse in English—turn against themselves, and the comforting blindness that they produce in our time—the feeling of yes, we’ve been here before, the blind eye of liberal ideology continues but things are still alright—is turned against itself to produce the sharpest collisions between the forces that keep the existing nightmarish boundaries of living in their place and the drive that must overturn them. The forces are both form and content, outside and inside. There’s no hiding.⁸

⁷ Negation, as movement of thought and of material reality, is a characteristic of dialectics. In *The Persistence of the Negative, A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), Benjamin Noys has argued that some of the most influential bodies of theory which arose in the mid 1970s, such as the work of Deleuze, have prioritized affirmation over negation and that the result has been a lessening of the capacity for opposing neoliberal capitalism. Thus, the idea of “flow” in Deleuze might be understood, in part, as a mechanism of capitalism. *Happiness* does not stop at affirmation; instead, it persists in the negative. But the thought-work of *Happiness* is not a continuation of theory by other means. Its suspension of the controls of logic opens the gates to unconscious thought and to unconscious political penetrations and aberrations of the body. By going all the way into damage, *Happiness* gives it definite form and reveals its limits.

⁸ There’s a critical relation between *Hopelessness* and “We Unhappy Few,” a text that appeared in *Endnotes 5*. *Happiness* makes an incision in the protective shell of the subject expression “we” that, in spite of its perspicacious critique of the inner dynamics of the group, the *Endnotes* text fails to place sufficiently within its relation to the political outside; an index of the situation of radical left politics in our time.

Mere continuance, in which the I is lived by time (held in mere temporal succession including that of words) and “not set on fire,” risks turning into a dead remainder: “burnt to plastics,” “convulsed,” “corpse you back,” “stained up sick.”

On, insistent choice but nothing shrouded base to live on off; scoured and hit and burnt to plastics on convulsed not set on fire; leakproof skin of burning mermaids on would shot or corpse you back. To how inert I blank the pivot loss of self is stained up sick would tackle workplace false and on in scaline fucking air to seed the tense of sun that peels the back-skin shut (65)

Even to allow the self to become “convulsed,” a key word for Surrealism’s fascination with madness, leaves a remainder, instead of the fire desired. But Verity Spott refuses the logic of either/or which would offer a neat, fixed, false separation of what’s alive and what’s dead. The contraries leak into each other. As they do so, the forces in play acquire definite shape; this in turn sharpens their conflict, breaks down their temporary shapes, and produces further movement. The mythical character of the mermaids offers a leakproof container, perfect containment inside a given, inherited body (“leakproof skin,” “back-skin”); the mermaids are on the side of death; the force of the “I,” its will to lay bare the metaphysics of its situation, will not stop there. The “scaline fucking air” takes into itself the energy of Sean Bonney’s “Second Letter on Harmony,” which demolishes harmony as a value because it’s “a hierarchy built on scalar realities that justifies social conditions on earth” (33). “Scalar”: fixed social hierarchy and the fixed order of notes in the classic musical scale; the “scaline” air of *Happiness* is part of a dense set of forces that shut down change, such as when “the

pivot loss of self is stained up sick," (*Hopelessness* 65) forces which put existing order back in place, at the exact point at which it might have changed. Our time of counter-revolution.

How does the chance for change get shut down? What is the fulcrum? The struggle of "on" gathers itself into a final call to the dead to rise up: "come out your graves / you leaking spirits aching in our hopeless throats the sky / that screams the sea back down to stain the emptied shore" (*Hopelessness* 68). How many times have poets invoked the dead in recent years?⁹ The call, the spell is deadlocked; two directions of energy are deadlocked: "would tackle workplace false" and "scaline fucking air" express the will to resistance, but they make a "pivot" on which the very force of will produces capture ("back skin shut," reintroducing the symbolic foreskin?) by what it wills against. The "pivot loss of self" goes in two directions, towards positive self-annihilation as transition into new form and towards capture of self inside a totalising system of space and time. Opposite forces turn into each other in deathly grip; fascism knows how death inheres in this situation; the section closes.

II

What does it mean that it's impossible to find the form of a hurt? What's the situation when there's an injury to the self that cannot be seen, a hurt whose form of appearance and utterance cannot be found, represented, but which continually comes back? The question runs throughout *Hopelessness*. "Wound" is a common expression for inner pain, but this word too quickly lures one into a false, metaphorical, concreteness. And the over-used term "trauma" has become empty of

⁹ Bonney cites Ernst Bloch's and Lorca's invocations of the dead: "For Ernst Bloch, the revolution was the crossroads where the dead come to meet. For Lorca, music was the scream of dead generations - the language of the dead' but their words are nullified by 'our system,' which causes us to be 'held helplessly within it as fixed subjects, or rather as objects, even cadavers, of an alien music' (35).

specific content.¹⁰ In the conventional meaning of conceptual thought but also of literary form, the tubes would not themselves be a site of formal definition, but would merely be taken as objects of some other formal work of shaping, implemented outside their purview. But they are not objects. They are a place where the I sees its possible dissolution and where it struggles to continue living. There's a struggle with a void: the tubes are hollow containers (or, as wires, transmitters) of something not known. At this point, *Hopelessness* does not give ground to fear. It could have fallen back into protectively snapping the tubes back inside symbols that underwrite normal seeing but, as Verity Spott writes, "My subjectivity. You asked me what it is: If there is a fire, I / will not use the fire escape" (*Hopelessness* 102). The "I" has chosen not to avoid its possible destruction. Along the slope of that choice, one which dislodges the ego, the senses also are dislodged; a different seeing occurs.

Looking through the eyes of a cricket alters the senses, voids normal seeing:

as with the air the crickets
somewhere you have never been
are staring in a way you have never stared,
all five of the eyes fixed points connected
to the optic globes of brain gazing in love
at the femur with its coarse hairs each
a dapple of complex hooks you have never felt

¹⁰ For a discussion of current torsions of the concept of trauma, see Danny Hayward's *Wound Building* (Santa Barbara: Punctum, 2021), especially pp. 26, 31, 68, 88.

as this in the meadow, the mantis, not ideal (*Hopelessness* 78)

The gaze of love embodies an impossible but real seeing, an absolute thisness at the level of the most minute, delicate and unseen detail. Such seeing ungrounds familiar space, as when the imaginary body, the body-image, is cast away painfully, like a skin. This turns the place of the tubes, “a place you’ve never been,” where “the eye has quit,” all the way through itself into its opposite, a seeing with the heart, “feeling your heart in your chest” (*Hopelessness* 77).¹¹

The pipes, tubes and wires have their being, come into appearance, between life and death, and my commentary risks giving them a falsely concrete meaning. An account of what’s occurring necessarily requires a conception of time and space on which to base itself. To do that it would need to organise the senses. But the possibility of spatial orientation has been scrambled. The senses that would afford the capacity to locate oneself in space, here touch and hearing, have been scrambled. A fennec, an animal whose exceptionally acute hearing allows it to orient itself in the desert, “stumbles in the war. Her hands and feel scrambled like coffins” (*Hopelessness* 77).

At a critical point, *Hopelessness* dismantles the notion of a grounding of thought:

There is grass, beneath grass, soil, beneath soil,
nozzle, tube, wire, rubber, pulverised categories pulped into
meanings pushed into tubes, pushed into their wound,
cleaned and sent back. You tell the meadow “I did the things
that girls did, that. . . something. . . I can, or will. . . will never

¹¹ “I looked at nothing / With other light and guide, / Than that which was burning in my heart. // ... / The air ... / Suspended all my senses.” St. John of the Cross. *Poems*. Trans. Roy Campbell. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960. 27-29. The (literal) translation here is mine.

forget, arrested? In space?" Constantly warring to recount,
stumbling into the wide open field. . . (*Hopelessness* 77)

The purchase of speech, the traction of words upon an event, comes up against a struggle to “recount.” Underneath that, physically and in thought, categories have become “pulverised ... pulped.” Here categories are to be understood as proposing a necessary prior condition for any knowledge, making a stable place where something, rather than nothing, can exist. For classical philosophy, “through them alone is experience possible” (Thomasson). The subject of *Hopelessness* pushes categories back into a wound which is “their wound”: a place where the building blocks of seemingly concrete meaning break up, pulped like paper so that something else can be uttered, something which the category of gender disallows. The wound is prior to perception; categories organise the senses; “let go of your old categories” (James). A reader asks themselves, is it love that can hold a place for that wound, generate a time in which it can be placed, alter it?

For this book, the question of what can come into appearance is not a matter of individual perception but of the formation of the senses inside the political. If the pipes and tubes are most visible at the threshold where hopelessness and hope are in maximum entanglement and opposition to each other, understood historically this situation is intensified by increasingly invisibilised conflict of social classes since 2008. These are brought into focus by a song whose words and cadences dance through the whole book:

Who will be the lady,

Who will be the lord,

When we are ruled

By the love of another? Tell me,

Who will be the lady,

Who will be the lord,

In the light that is coming

In the morning.

The song in its full version speaks of John Ball (“Sing John Ball and tell it to them all”), a priest who played a significant role in the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381.¹² The song’s insistent question—“Who?”—hinges on the desire for an end to class society and the suffering that forms that desire. It is not difficult to speak of an end to class society, but to make that a real thought means taking on specific historical pain and its relation with individual pain.

In *Hopelessness*, the question “Who?” relates to the perpetrator of hurt:

edge and riddled who is this, who is coming. ...

what comes when slow death spits and dies away

...

Salt will be your eyes. Spite your pretty garter....

... but I have never seen a flame. Just this distance to the edge,

a slow and thoughtless taking; of life away, how I have never seen

a flame at all and yet burning in my chest is nothing yet

¹² The author of the lyrics is the British poet Sydney Carter. The Melrose Quartet perform the song at [youtube.com/watch?v=8eWu1gMVSN8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eWu1gMVSN8). Accessed 11th October 2024

so to still have never seen who is this who is coming down

into the ground

who is coming who is you, flat, who and though I have

never seen a flame

...

I have the eyes to know when I can see,

but they don't, they won't, these cancelled swells. (89-90)

The two questions, the two whos (that of the ballad and that of *Hopelessness*), cross over into each other, not via abstract equivalence but through the cancelling of what the book calls “apparition” (“the apparition has spoken ... The little apparition I find here shaking covered in the earth / and the damp” [*Hopelessness* 90]), a word that here welds vision, religious or ghostly, to non-appearance. The essence, here, is something that is not permitted to manifest, but which nevertheless won't go away,¹³ whether that be the real possibility of the cessation of class society or the real embodiment of damage to a child. What is the definite form of the other who caused un-named pain? Whether we say “don't mourn, organise” or the reverse, *Hopelessness* breaks with that either/or, and places suffering and revolutionary energy in full interchange. Verity Spott does not dissolve the first into the second, as in “your emotional pain is irrelevant to politics,” which would be a repressive and idealist move; nor does she dissolve the second into the first, as in attempts to ground political discourse in “trauma”; they remain separate, each in its own terms unresolved, but capable of

¹³ Hegel: essence always appears. Marx: behind the appearance of the commodity, its metaphysics. Psychosis: “whatever is refused in the symbolic order ... reappears in the real” (Lacan 13).

encounter. The light-source here is both hope for social revolution and what might make see-able the “you” who is the cause of “thoughtless taking; of life away,” a phrase that breaks, suspended by punctuation, where the body catches its breath. But there is no image at this point. Emotional pain and political desire break against each other, inside the smallest lapse of time. There’s Deleuze and Guattari’s confidence that revolution and psychic reality “will become parts and cogs of one another ... so many local fires patiently kindled for a generalized explosion”¹⁴ is an imaginary confluence; it excludes psychic pain. For Verity Spott the not-seeing, the negative (“never seen / a flame at all”; “to still have never seen who is this”) which is “burning in my chest.”¹⁵ Here is Raúl Zurita’s traversal of psychic pain inside and against fascism (the dictatorship of Pinochet):

LOS CAMPOS DEL DESAMPARO

eli

eli

y dolor

(Zurita 78)

The poem here is blind, perhaps prior to the eyes' refusal to see.¹⁶ The call to God, ultimate guarantor of the truth of what we perceive, is situated at the base of Descartes' axes of time and space, absent (Jesus' cry to the Father not answered) as we move down the page to pain as the excess that exists outside the spatial controls of power. Though there's no image, one can actually feel space here as a resistant thickness prior to image. The alteration that occurs at the "end" of the page is non-commensurable. In Verity Spott's work, as I will argue, the absence of a guarantor of reality similarly leaves an excess which is an alteration.

"Pretty garter" cites standard erotic literature, Casanova's memoirs for instance: "I like my pretty garters exceedingly; I will never have another pair, and I ... An innocent young girl, who, in spite of her fifteen years, has not loved yet..." Seductiveness, a fantasy of power, melds with the tubes' description elsewhere as "gorgeous," but "spite" goes into the place of the "pretty garter" and ruins its mechanism, its fleeting apparition. No revelation takes place. This agonised moment where a person comes to the edge of seeing something that has fundamentally determined their life and yet cannot see it because seeing has been "cancelled": pain here does not belong to an individuated subject but is an excess, prior to individuation, as are social relations of power. A breach in reality occurs, towards a commonality of suffering, just as "Sing John Ball and tell it to them all" calls a multitude into being inside what's as yet a non-place.

¹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari in *Antioedipus* propose that psychosis is not a hole or a lack but a process of production. Their term is "desiring-production" which they conceive as "machinic"; the tubes in *Hoplessness* are also "machines" (86). The claim of *Antioedipus* is not simply that Freud "oedipalizes," i.e., familiarises desire, but that in order to think the potentialities of art and literature, it's necessary to connect them not only with the psychotic process but also with the process of revolution: "What is at stake is not merely art or literature. For either the artistic machine, the [psycho-]analytical machine, and the revolutionary machine will remain in extrinsic relationships that make them function in the deadening framework of the system of social and psychic repression, or they will become parts and cogs of one another in the flow that feeds one and the same desiring-machine, so many local fires patiently kindled for a generalized explosion" (158).

¹⁵ See Benjamin Noys's critique of Deleuze in *The Persistence of the Negative*, 51-79.

¹⁶ Mario Montalbetti, in *La ceguera del poema* (N Direcciones, 2018) argues that poems are essentially blind.

In present time, there's no future, only disjuncture; the world of objects that could support and hold a subject in recognisable space, has been overturned:

I have never spoken have the eyes to see it when I see
a flame, who is coming, agitated mouth
with the eyes so she may speak. It. It. It who is so closed the
beach rears up
in nightmares and folds back to the air, there's some light
but it is lifeless never speaking (*Hopelessness* 90)

The un-named sweeps through the iteration of "it," which is also the ungendered. The non-naming that eradicates appearing causes the land to rear up. This is not a case of the imaginary as a distortion of reality, as with Surrealism, but of an actual reality that has been denied, of a thing that's not supposed to be there manifesting in the imaginary. A strong force that has no image has convulsed space and removed the possibility of grounding this thing:

You lift up an inch of turf and glare in. It flickers like an air,
there across the edge from us, up to the spiteful fucking air,
there like a flame above the swirling sand. There is no flame
to my eyes who is this who is coming ...

who is this

who is coming. (*Hopelessness* 88)

“Who is this who” speaks of a referent, a person, and at the same time receives no answer: the answer is a question, speech without a ground.

The other is not judged as perpetrator, not given the concreteness of a person accused. They are a body without appearance; there’s no court that can summon and rule over appearances, no process of law that decides what’s there. In Dante’s Hell, the bodies of the accused have been given the form of their crimes: there’s a higher instance of seeing, supported by divine judgement. In who’s sight, in *Hopelessness*, might the other—but also the self—acquire form? A sentence in italics opens the book: “*Who will wipe this blood off us.*” It’s a citation of Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*, where the fuller declaration is: “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? ... who will wipe this blood off us?” (120). Echoes of an absent God, but without Nietzsche’s rhetoric, can be heard in *Hopelessness*.

Who is it who stands completely still
and shows that we are here
alone they are all around, that the eyes
have decided to have never seen
a flame, to have never spoken (92)

This “who,” which the eyes have “decided” never to have seen, is in the same place as the “flame,” *denial and social revolution in the same place*. In a further turn, the other that doesn’t show themselves but is “all around” forms an absence whose temporal and spatial coordinates (“all around”) might be held by God. But at the beginning of *Hopelessness* it was said that God is dead. For Verity Spott,

unlike Nietzsche, there's no blood of guilt to hold the absence. The syntax has swung round gently but dizzily on the words "still" and "alone": the other is still there and "still," unmoving like God; "alone" speaks of a "we" but also indicates that the only one who is "all around," all-seeing, is a vacated place. Subjectivity falls into a vortex where nothing can uphold a subject.

But Verity Spott is not willing to stop at that void, take it as a given, dally with that type of nihilism. To push beyond that limit requires descending beneath the ground, into "a grave filled with water." The book had begun there:

A body is pulled from the world.

My body. Your bodies. Ankle deep

in a grave filled with water.

... We can say nothing.

We feel nothing. We are singing because we are dead. (*Hopelessness* 1)

As the body enters this domain there's no pain, no impulse of defence, but a softness, an immersion: "Softly, some obliteration slipped into the air."¹⁷ Radical disjunction of the perceived world occurs with gentleness; gentleness makes an opening to undefended vulnerability; softness to disassembled psychological violence; something has begun to appear, a result of these decisions.

The absence of temporal development means there are serial re-entries into the place of the grave, a repeated refusal to allow it to close over into resolution (so-called "moving on," a favourite expression of Tony Blair). In the section titled "Prelude,"

I stand chest deep in your grave, my eyes gently scream

¹⁷ Prefatory page, not numbered.

in the rain. Why were the ground why were the chest

why were the indicants of the field ...

we are falling and moaning,

smiling and sharing, a prelude to taking you into the earth.

I am stood in your grave neck deep (*Hopelessness* 9)

In the absence of a ground or guarantor of reality in a so-called “post-truth” society, does *Hopelessness* opt for a re-foundation? No, not in the sense of a restoration, or nostalgia for pre-capitalist society or brutal return to paganism. Yes, in the sense that it affirms something in excess of the void, but only as something that can begin to happen in poetry. The “I” allows an event to recur; but to contain that event in chronological time would put a stop to the afterwardsness of its motion, motion that alters the past. Allowing unconstrained recurrence makes a place where the pipes, tubes, and wires can make a passage to definite form and therefore the possibility of change. The passage is not simple.

Though the meadow where it appears might seem to resemble a dream-scape, the ‘gaping tube’ does not bear the signature of dreaming. It does not distort a reality previously seen; the condition of its emergence is a domain drained of colour and of life:

Our kind voices reach up to incredible colour

in the air, in the water, the bulb and the gaping tube,

... creaking into the dead grey light

on the water, the light of your life pouring out

to the haunted and empty shore. (10)

The bulb and the tube do not offer absorption into a sensual object; they have drained the sensual body. At the same time, the pipes and tubes enter the body, especially the stomach, through incision, or are forced into the mouth. They have spatial density, i.e., they take up space, but they can't be interpreted back into a known reality.

A descent has occurred, "down into the soil / to find your still living body" (*Hopelessness* 5).

The things seen in the meadow are incompatible with nature as landscape. In this respect they belong to the realm of allegory as Walter Benjamin characterises it: "allegory ... immerses itself in the depths which separate visual being from meaning" (165). *Hopelessness* dwells in that disjuncture.¹⁸

The pipes, tubes and wires hold the being-there of something which has been excluded from discourse:

I sensed a corpse in the woods;

a thing that may not be said.

I rot and calibrate.

I rot and calibrate, the vision.

...

¹⁸ William Blake makes a separation of vision, as true seeing, from allegory, which for him is a form of memory. "Fable or Allegory are a totally distinct & inferior kind of Poetry. Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists." Is *Hopelessness* both vision and allegory? Thanks to Danny Hayward for drawing my attention to the Blake passage (Blake, William. "A Vision of the Last Judgment." *Blake's Poetry and Designs*. Eds. Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant. Norton, 2007, 433).

so let me arrange the things. A sky and a piping. (*Hopelessness* 46)

The ballad rhythm of the first two lines resembles the cadence of “the light that is coming,” but instead of being completed by “in the morning” the song-like rhythm is destroyed by a totally different measure: “I rot and calibrate.” The spreading rhythm of “calibrate” is pinned down by the heavy monosyllable “rot.” The act of composition, of arranging, has decomposition at its centre. Here, on a small scale, the overall movement of the book shows itself. The tubes are an external index of a material that passes through them, variously spoken of as blood, as the author of damage, and as “chthonic dust,” with which “a chthonic mouth fills my mouth” (*Hopelessness* 83). The material is a death-substance but also a life-substance.

Hopelessness speaks of the tubes as things existing in separation from a known world, “somewhere you have never been,” (60) but their essence is political.

Shut the fuck up about your pain. There is no pain.

/

If I hear one word from you about your ‘pain’.

/

(you are a snowflake) (24)

Stop to think about this conjunction: pain denied, pain that has no place to be, converges, as it comes into thought, with repressive violence. The struggle to understand how the two are knotted together is at the core of modern political thought: see Freud, Reich, Adorno, Lacan, Deleuze and

Guattari, Laclau. It's not a question of simple equivalence between inner suffering and the productions of the external system. That would be a collapse into false equivalence, a short circuit, resting upon the individuated self and its tendency to project, in an essentially metaphoric way, its emotions onto what's external.¹⁹ The conception of psychological projection has itself been corrupted by a prior separation of external and internal spheres, yet the separation has occurred historically. The tubes repulse that circuit, the individualistic reduction performed by projection; they register a "cultural loss," a social wound which has wrapped itself around the subject.

Look, innate rota; so what is that
cultural loss we are rolled up in
Angels, deference, bodies, soils, salts, wires, tubes
to see what saying is
brave hearted shit for tongue
beats you over and over the stars
which hail the night who wakes
to pay £54.40 crunched to the
British floor of the British speck
with its British conditioning (air) (*Hopelessness* 18)

¹⁹ *Hopelessness* and "We unhappy few," along with Sean Bonney's *Our Death*, are possibly the most rigorous investigations of the relation between interior life and politics in the current period. Verity Spott goes furthest in investigating the knottings, the entanglements of the two. I am grateful to Rob Kiely for suggesting this line of thought.

A real speaking of what's unacknowledged turns the tongue—organ and language—into shit, money, language inside capitalist equivalence. “Angels” have been co-opted. What can be heard, in this situation, is fascist speech:

Diane Abbot is a snowflake smashed
to a clot of loss CN Lester is a snowflake
Water is a snowflake. Toilet is a snowflake
Air is a snowflake.
Care is a snowflake.

Something in this world that seems to fall open. (*Hopelessness* 18)

These lines suck the air out of the mouths of fascists and cause it to carry the truth of what they want.²⁰

But *Hopelessness* does not invoke the power of death against the enemy. Verity Spott's *Gideon* had included death-lists,²¹ as a type of counter-spell and ultimate recourse against imposed speechlessness; but it acknowledges critically how feeling that moves in that direction yields spite. When *Hopelessness* articulates the unsaid in fascist speech, it draws its energy from a double reversal of denial: first, the fascist's denial that they want destruction of collective survival, and second the more general and underlying denial which believes there's no alternative to capitalism.

The book speaks from inside a struggle to wrench apart two potentialities that hold each other in dire embrace:

²⁰ For an account of Verity's satirical mode in *Hopelessness*, see Robert Kiely's essay, “Really Existing Satire”. *The Cambridge Literary Review*. Web. www.cambridgeliteraryreview.wordpress.com/kiely-really-existing-satire/.

²¹ Verity Spott, *Gideon* (London: Barque Press, 2014).

Says: Every single hole is just too deep to fill; echoes of a life set out, but free; completely empty. Hopelessness inside the life set out but empty headed, stretched into the partisans of day that made permissiveness, don't tell me what to do or else to let me loose and break my speech into the open light, like death made free like life and speech, measured out by choice, by rote to dredge up all the fuel that makes you blunder what the free in what the free in speech like death has torn you out from under (*Hopelessness* 83-84)

A voice that wants mere emptiness—that would collapse back the hole that's been made in reality, would re-initiate suppression and denial. After the word “permissiveness,” the voice turns in an opposite direction. But there's no signal that another voice is entering; it's the same voice working against itself. If “permissiveness” leaves in place the law it transgresses, what follows wishes to break free, which means “to break my speech.” “Makes you blunder” and “out from under” mirror each other's shape, but there's an opposite sense in each: the first speaks of the decay of speaking though routine, the second refers to speaking which is an act of emancipation through which “Death made free,” death lived, is no longer the property and instrument of power. The entanglement of the two is a continuum of living.

In another passage the shocking sight of a dead person (“the body had its arm hang off dragged / from the wreckage of the car”) gives place to thinking absence as “pure being.”

What would Gone have thought. Gone would shake
their head. Gone in absence is better. Gone is cured:

Not here. Gone beyond action, to pure being:

Is brave. Gone is finished. But being in Gone is more than

action: the action of being Gone is being gone.

The tube whimpers from under the ground,

troubles the soil and pokes through.

You stare down into the tube,

past the headstone, past the gate, past the empty tanks.

The tube follows your gaze, knows you down to the root. (*Hopelessness* 82)

“Gone” burrows down into itself, goes all the way into absence; the tube comes back, “from under the ground.” This is not the willed void of nihilism. Abolition of the world of phenomena obliterates the categories, such as time and space, that keep that world in place, protecting us from the real. The passage from shock to being, from loss to a complete thinking of absence, unties the knot of feeling that holds melancholia/depression in place.

Keston Sutherland has proposed that the idea of “affect storms” might be a good way of describing and thinking about Verity Spott’s *Gideon*. The term allows us to conceive situations where intense emotion, typically arising from traumatic events but not identical to them, threatens to overwhelm the person, with an intensity which we are unable to “bind” through representations. This can be an emotional experience so overwhelming that the person thinks they’re going to die. The subject is typically speechless, and an interruption or distortion of the senses may occur. But such events are also accompanied by an opposite movement, the drive to representation, which in

Gideon, for example, is brought into a chosen action of naming. Though my summary is a good deal less complex than Keston's account of "affect storms," perhaps it can offer a way of approaching how *Hopelessness* brings overwhelming emotion towards representation and definite form.

We pass through eleven lines of names for the "meadow," none of which give it a representation that sticks: "gluey and agitated meadow you are questioned" (*Hopelessness* 104). Then someone asks the subject "What was the first time you felt humiliated?" (*Hopelessness* 104). The question might be coming from a management representative, a police officer or a therapist: all of these converge at a point where the person is to be defined, assigned their place in the social, interpellated (i.e. made into a "you" by an agency that ultimately speaks from the place of the State, which has appropriated the voice of God). The interrogation is directed towards a location that has a multiplicity of names/representations, none of them capable of holding it in place. It is also, though, a location where speechless hurt is given form: the two opposite drives or pressures described by Keston (unbound intensity, representation) become identical. The interviewed subject replies:

I felt this:

I am certain the person on the other side of the gauge

galvanized steel chain link fabric fence is dead.

An actual ghost. ...

That I am entirely forgotten to that moment,

even to the person who came and took me off the fence. (104)

We can feel a particular force in the words that describe the metal fence, the painful cutting action of the a/i/ee sounds, its “fabric” or production of meaning, its anchoring in repetition, like a flashback, but also its material: words, time-lapse, passed through. The result is that the agents of hurt no longer inhabit time. The sounds that were previously incised in the body are laid to rest in the sound and sense of “dead.” The emotion attaching to the event is freed from the meanings that bound it to irreversible time. The emotion is freed not through release as a storm but by being placed in an I that now in present time is “entirely forgotten” to/by “that moment” and to the other person involved in it. Verity Spott’s text resists the paraphrase I am trying to make of it. I think this is because “that moment” has ceased to have a continuance of meaning—has lost its symbolic support, which the sedimentation of social value in the language would otherwise prolong.

The interrogator continues to insist with their questions, finally asking “Did you feel you had failed?” (*Hopelessness* 105), an attribution of failure which wants to issue an injunction: *be* a failure. The questioned subject responds not by denying the attribution but by entering it, accepting its meaning, and making an exit from the binding it seeks.

Yes. I felt I had failed, felt humiliated.

Feeling like you felt you had failed and you felt humiliated
is the first step towards not thinking you thought you had failed
and that you felt humiliated. I think it went ... “
Memories arrested in space ...” that ...
something I will never forget ... (105)

There's no suppression of memory,²² but in the lines that follow the alteration that has happened becomes embodied in the image-movement of a horse ("her nostrils flared her tail swished"), which becomes "A maiden of the hallowed ground, / a serf of wire and tube. Her hooves to glue. Her mane to flame." In the field "a man trembled in patriot fantasy, / his once giggling lips taken to incandescent / screams, far beyond reconcile." "Hallowed ground" and "flame" have the fullness of symbolic representation that the poetry had been wishing for; yet they arise in the same place as the wires and tubes, within the "glue" which carries their binding, which is also a dead product the hooves might be reduced to. We find ourselves facing irreconcilable oppositions, but it's now possible to move through them, with renewed life-force.

²² "Memories Arrested in Space" is the title of a poem-biography of Jackson Pollock; a way of speaking about the course of drops of paint over the canvas. Grey, Martin. *Jackson Pollock: Memories Arrested in Space*. Santa Monica Press, 2003.

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