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Writing at Noon

> *That weavers in particular, together with scholars and writers with whom they had much in common, tended to suffer from melancholy and all the evils associated with it, is understandable given the nature of their work, which forced them to sit bent over, day after day, straining to keep their eyes on the complex patterns they created. It is difficult to imagine the depths of despair into which those can be driven who, even after the end of the working day are engrossed in their intricate designs and who are pursued, into their dreams, by the feeling that they have got hold of the wrong thread.*
>
> *W.G. Sebald:* The Rings of Saturn

Ian Buchanan says in his essay "Deleuze and Cultural Studies":

> …affect, if it is to be both empirical and ethical must be…inherent in the relation between a subject and his or her circumstances. Here we can see the importance of the externality of relations: if we do not wish to hypostatize the world or ontologize the subject by making either one a ground, then the relation in question must be independent of their terms. (Buchanan 490)

An understanding of how Deleuze and Guattari deploy the concept of affect might be made to resonate in the context of the question of daydreams and writing. But the more pressing issue here is the necessity it opens for Buchanan, namely that the matter of experience, the relation between a subject and an object, has to be turned from any ground in the conditions of the subject and/or the object towards answering the problem of relationship itself. Experience has to be refigured and understood prior to and as the condition of any understanding of both the subject who experiences and the object experienced. Buchanan observes elsewhere:

> …"there is no theoretical subjectivity," that is, a subjectivity somehow transcendental to the subject itself… Experience, then, is not something that a person has, or even has happen to one; it is, rather, what one is made of. This means, of course, that experience itself cannot be personal but must be nonpersonal, which, in turn, demands that the very notion of experience must be rethought. (Buchanan 386)

Similarly, there is no "theoretical objectivity," no transcendental object which somehow inclines the world of things towards the experiencing subject and so might be said to predispose or prefigure the experience of the object, to allow it to lie in wait for the subject. Both subject and object are determined in what lies between them, in the

experience itself. The *between* is what constitutes, makes possible, the subject and object in their relationship. And what might usefully be added, though with a certain caution, is that any relationship is, as Buchanan says, *individuating* (Buchanan 386). Each experience, each relation between subject and object is unique, a singularity; there is no transcendentalising of experience either, every assemblage requires its own analysis, its own mapping…but this does not return us to some version of individualism, as if the experience can be claimed at the level of the personal, as if it becomes once more a possession of the subject. Quite the opposite: it is the experience which possesses both subject and object, and arrays them as its terms.

Deleuze's inversion of conventional priorities in thinking experience is founded in Hume's observation that relations are external to their terms which, as Buchanan says, can be extended to the recognition that "relations are also independent of their terms, or transversal, which means they cut across both subjects and objects and have their own movement and necessity" (Buchanan 385). The concept of transversal relations has, in one dimension, profound implications for a wisdom that takes itself as abiding in the teaching of creative writing, namely that one can only write from experience. Instead "any effects produced in some particular way (through homosexuality, drugs, and so on) *can always be produced by other means*" (cited, Buchanan 385); thus Henry Miller's efforts to become drunk on pure water, (note 1) or Deleuze's own position as a nomad with an aversion to travel. In an important sense, the novel, though perhaps not just the novel, founds itself in a doctrine of transversal relations (and so Quixote's "madness" is the madness of the reader of romances, not a mind come unstuck in a movement open to psychological analysis but a mind produced as mad by that other, transversal means: reading. A mind maddened by pure words).

A recognition of transversal relations also reworks the question of writing itself. It is useful, indeed necessary, to construe writing as a relation, that is, as the relationship between writer and text. It is writing that lies between the writer and the text; it is writing which, in this and in effect, arrays both writer and text (and is neither merely what the writer does nor merely the fulfilment that the text anticipates). Writing constitutes the writer/text assemblage but it is also independent of, and needs to be thought prior to and as the condition of both writer and text. It produces writer and text as its terms rather than delineating a path from one to the other. Writing circulates, between writer and the written, distributing both in - which is to say distributing both *as* - their relationship; and in this distribution the written passes as much towards the writer as the writer passes towards the written (the written has its effects, changes the state of the writer just as the writer has his or her effects, determines changes of state in the written). But more importantly, and like Miller's excessive consumption of water, writing is a procedure not simply of the text, but of the text as a different means of experiencing. A means of experiencing that which has not necessarily been experienced by the writer but also, and because this is always a question of words, a means of putting at stake language as the (transversal) mode of experience. Writing is language with its "own movement and necessity": the creation (rather than imitation) of experience in the experiencing of language.

What then of the daydream? The question arises not simply because the daydream has a history of association with writing, but because it too is given as a form or condition of experience which, in the course of that history, forms a metaphorics for the taking place, for the *experience* of writing. In considering this, I want to take for granted the possibility of thinking writing as relationship, as *between*, and thus not as whatever might be attached to characteristics of either writer or text, or to characteristics of daydreamer or daydream. But the relevance of reverie cannot be measured without traversing a thinking which measures the relationship between the dreamer and the dream very differently. Daydreaming, as procedure, as between, can only be plumbed from terms and perspectives and descriptions which, in their original framing, seek to locate understanding alongside either dreamer or dream. Nonetheless, if daydreaming can be read as experiencing, as a relationship which constitutes and distributes the

dreamer and the dream, then the tradition according to which the daydream (especially under the sign of melancholy) provides us with a metaphorics for writing might in fact disclose something more fundamental, might disclose, that is, the conditions by which writing belongs more properly to *dreaming*, to the between itself.

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The daydream, Freud thinks, promises an answer to the question about "what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material [from], and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable" (Freud 143). Not that an answer, Freud is quick to add, will "make creative writers of *us*" (Freud 143), disowning any claim to understand or describe writing itself.

The problem for a different us, for an us who might want to speculate on whether a particular understanding of the connection between daydreams and writing might make creative writers of us, is that Freud is never quite settled about his own connection. At first, he attaches writing to the precursor to daydreams: child's play. The child at play behaves like a creative writer "in that he creates a world of his own, or, rather, re-arranges the things of his world in a new way which pleases him" (Freud 143-4). This business of play the child takes entirely seriously. The opposite of play, Freud adds "is not what is serious but what is real" (144) and so the child is not only able to distinguish play from the real but also, and crucially, can link "imagined objects and situations to the tangible and visible things of the real world" (144). This, too, is what the creative writer does: "He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously…while separating it sharply from reality" (144).

If what is created by the child or the writer is a world of phantasy, the process is nonetheless not one of phantasying because of the crucial subsistence and recognition of the real as the context in which play or writing takes place. But as the child grows "he" renounces play and substitutes for it phantasying, "[h]e builds castles in the air and creates what are called *daydreams*" (145). How this shift is constituted, though, is not through relinquishing play in itself, but in giving up "nothing but the link with real objects" (145). The real needs to be avoided or denied entirely in any recovering of the childhood capacity for play. The child, who has perhaps not yet learnt all there is to learn about the real and "his" expected relations to it, appropriates it by keeping it at a distance through play while the adult can only escape it. And once adult phantasy with its abandoning of the real has been introduced, Freud has a change of heart - he had, after all, set out to draw an analogy between writing and daydreams, but now daydreams have been "properly" located, and writing shifts its allegiance to pure escapism.

It does not matter that Freud is able to find this phantasying at work in the handful of texts he goes on to read. He is, finally, more than a little dissatisfied with the path he has found himself on, a path which is both a digression from and a covering over of his first intuition about writing. So the case he has mounted rankles, it is perhaps overly elaborate (it may "prove to be too exiguous a pattern" he says) (145). And he will have to admit that "although I have put the creative writer first in the title of my paper, I have told you far less about him than about phantasies" (152). But these are only screen problems. It is the slide from play to daydreaming which unsettles any conclusion about the creative writer. Freud can say, without noticing the implications, that "a piece of creative writing, like a daydream, is a continuation of, and a substitute for, what was once the play of childhood" (152). But, like the daydream, that sense of continuation is restricted; writing is now fatally marked by the disappearance of the very terms of its comparison with play: its negotiations with the real, the copresence of phantasy object and real object which, for the child and the writer, both delineated play from *and* bound

it to the real. Freud is forced to substitute, we might say, an ambivalence about his conclusion for what might have been a conclusion about ambivalence.

To put it another way, the problem with "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" is not that it is Freudian, but that it is not Freudian enough. If the wish which grounds the daydream marks the stirring of the pleasure principle, Freud is not yet in a position to notice the full consequences of the fact that the wish is also the sign of dissatisfaction ("We may lay it down" he says, "that a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one") (146). And so we might need a different understanding of the daydream which recovers that complex relation of copresence between phantasy and real objects. One such understanding occurs in a movement which, perhaps strangely, returns us to Freud's place in Giorgio Agamben's short history of melancholy in *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*. But this time it will be a Freud more attuned to the ambiguity and paradox suggested by child's play.

Agamben identifies two strands of thought which converge in the Middle Ages to develop a particular assemblage in which reverie, melancholy and writing can be seen as synonyms. The first strand is unthreaded from the writings of the medieval church fathers on sloth. Sloth, which is not at all like the "bourgeois travesty" of laziness (Agamben 1993a: 9) which it subsequently becomes, is a response to the temptations of the "noonday demon" who assails, in particular, religious men "when the sun reached its highest point over the horizon" (Agamben 1993a: 3). Sloth becomes a condition in which the sinner is defined by an ambiguous relationship to his divine destiny, the salvation of his soul. It is not that the slothful gives up a hope of salvation, rather the very prospect of salvation convinces him that it is unobtainable. The slothful meditation is a double movement, in which hope of salvation is both recognised and refused; it is a play of presence and absence, and the more one recognises the possibility of salvation the more desperately distant it seems. (note 2)

But sloth is only one face of the sin which manifests with the sun at its zenith, since it also emerges as sadness (*tristitia*) and melancholy too might be said to function according to the same ambiguous relationship to its object of desire. Agamben refuses to rest with that simple inference, and traces the place of melancholy in a version of classical humoral theory which descends from Aristotle. For Aristotle, the black bile that circulates melancholia has a double polarity: cold, it produces the sluggish and stupid; hot, "the mad, good-natured or amorous, and easily moved to passion and desire…" (1993a: 12). As a result, melancholy comes to be regarded in medieval thought as displaying a contradictory attitude in which the melancholic is not only inclined towards madness, passion, desire, but also towards "interior withdrawal and contemplative knowledge" (12) and is thus a secular version of the paradoxical conditions which beset the slothful churchman.

A further term needs to be introduced to this convergence because Aristotle also poses a "doctrine of genius…joined indissolubly to that of the melancholic humor", poses, that is, the proposition "that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry, or the arts are melancholic…" (12). And so Agamben can trace the development of a constellation of linked terms - sloth, melancholy, contemplative reverie and creative genius - in which each is a manifestation of the same procedure of withdrawal, a withdrawal which, paradoxically, only makes the object of desire more present.

Melancholy resurfaces in Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" which, according to Agamben, does not so much strike a new theory as continue the medieval understanding of the condition as "the withdrawal from the object and the withdrawal into itself of the contemplative tendency" (1993a: 19). Mourning is a direct substitution, it responds to "proof of the fact that the loved one has ceased to exist, [by] fixating itself on every memory and object formerly linked to the loved object" (19). Melancholy might seek the same path, but it can only do so problematically, because, as Freud discovers, it is not really possible to identify a lost object (all Freud can do is

speak of "an 'unknown loss' or of an 'object-loss that escapes consciousness.'") (1993a: 20). Melancholy is "the paradox of an intention to mourn that precedes and anticipates the lost object" (20), it is not so much the "reaction to the loss of the love object as the imaginative capacity to make an unobtainable object appear as if lost" (20). At work here is a process crucially similar to the one Freud also identifies in his theory of the fetish, a theory which is ultimately of more significance to Agamben because of how it helps isolate the question of relations between language and objects. The fetish is a matter of attachment of desire to an object as a substitute which forecloses on the recognition of that which the (male) fetishist fears, the absence of the female (that is, the mother's) penis. It is a substitute for what does not exist. And, as Agamben says:

> In the case of the fetishist *Verleugnung* (disavowal), in the conflict between the perception of reality (which forces the child to renounce his phantasy) and his desire (which drives him to deny its perception), the child does neither one thing nor the other (or, rather, does both things simultaneously, repudiating, on the one hand, the evidence of his perceptions, and recognizing reality, on the other hand, through the assumption of a perverse symptom). Similarly, in melancholia the object is neither appropriated nor lost, but both possessed and lost at the same time. (1993a: 21)

Reverie, as the procedure, that is, as the experience of the melancholic or slothful thinker, Agamben has already named as the taking place of a similarly paradoxical double movement of appropriation and loss. And the daydream, which Freud thinks of as phantasying, then, would not be a simple escape from the real but an escape which still necessarily holds to the real. The daydream, rather than what comes to replace the child's serious play, perpetuates it. In seeking to make the world an absence, the daydream makes it present as absence. The daydream, after all, is an intermediate state. As the theology of sloth insists, it is a noonday phenomenon. A cusp in time, or a gap, a moment of transition, midday is, like midnight, associated with the walking of ghosts and other unearthly phenomena and it is when the human mind becomes possessed of phantasms, illusions, strange desires (whether provoked by demons or otherwise). (note 3) Reading through Agamben's constellation of terms and, taking Freud up on his suggestion of a link between writing and reverie, would also be to notice that writing itself falls under the sign, if not always the stroke, of noon. (note 4)

Gaston Bachelard's poetics of reverie is no straightforward recuperation of the conventional attributes of melancholy. Reverie is a world of peace, of happiness, of beauty. If it descends in any way from the ensemble mapped by Agamben it is perhaps in coopting the "good-natured" and "amorous" inclinations of Aristotle's black bile. "Even if [reverie] is tinged with melancholy" Bachelard observes, "that melancholy is restful, it is an engaging melancholy which gives a continuity to our repose" (Bachelard 64). Bachelard, in this, introduces a double polarity of his own. Thus, if Victor Hugo can be summoned as an example of how the "dreamer and his reverie enter totally into the substance of happiness" (Bachelard 12), Bachelard nonetheless continues by quoting a Hugo who says: "For a long time, I remained motionless, letting myself be penetrated gently by this unspeakable ensemble, by the serenity of the sky and the melancholy of the moment" (cited, Bachelard 12). Melancholy, as a provocation of reverie, is, for Bachelard, what is withdrawn from but it is also, as the "moment," what cannot be lost. Yet reverie maintains too the specifics of that double polarity noticed by Agamben: it is a withdrawal from the world into contemplation but one which, paradoxically, draws the absent world closer so that "the object, the modest object emerges to play its role in the world, in a word which dreams little as well as big" (36). Reverie, he adds, "sacralizes its object."

Importantly, this withdrawal is a withdrawal *into language*; a withdrawal in which the dreamer will come to be spoken by language, spoken as an other. It also constitutes the

circumstances of the particular dreamer Bachelard has in mind: the word dreamer, the writer. Bachelard attempts to distinguish what he calls the *cogito* of the dreamer (a *cogito* which can be identified in the reverie though not in the nocturnal dream where the subject who dreams is lost in the dream). But it is no simple *cogito*: its condition is that we "no longer divide ourselves into observer and observed" (Bachelard 45) The subject is not referrable to questions of the ego, to notions of the self. The *cogito* of the dreamer is the withdrawal of a consciousness from a world, but from a world which the dreamer draws with him or her into the dissolution of subject-object boundaries, into relationship itself. Bachelard's dreamer is not "I" but, as he says "non-I".

To dream this way is to let language take over, to become immersed in language, to be displaced into language, to recognise that language *is* the experiencing which distributes writer in relation to the absent world (that is, to the world reclaimed as the written). Words are no longer simply used, but are the stuff on which the writer dreams. And the dreamer "is completely dissolved [*fondu*] in his reverie", Bachelard says, "his reverie is his silent life" (45). The word dreamer defers to a shadow being, to the non-I (the dreamer's absence-presence in language):

> There are reveries when I am less than myself. Then the shadow is a rich being. It is a more penetrating psychologist than the psychologist of everyday life. This shadow knows the being which doubles the being of the dreamer through reverie. The shadow, the double of our being, knows the "psychology of depths" in our reveries. And thus it is that the being projected by reverie - for our I-dreamer is a projected being - is double… (Bachelard 80).

Bachelard regards this process as a matter of projection and, later, he will also say that reverie is the path to the work (160), marking an inclination to recoup reverie to the subject who dreams. Yet the double, the I-dreamer, perhaps carries him too far to make that reappropriation simple. The I-dreamer, my presence in language which is, necessarily, my absence from my self cannot be determined as the subjective state of the word dreamer, the writer, but as the state of writing. Bachelard says:

> Thus we believe that one can know states which are ontologically below being and above nothingness. In these states the contradiction between being and non-being fades away. A sub-being (*moins-être*) is trying itself out as being. This antecedence of being does not yet have the responsibility of being. Neither does it have the solidity of the constituted being which believes itself capable of confronting a non-being. In such a state of mind, one feels clearly that logical opposition, with its too bright light, erases all possibility of penumbral ontology. (Bachelard 111)

Only his insistence on a phenomenological context allows Bachelard to stage this through *knowing* the state below being and above nothingness. But what opens with the expectation of knowledge ends with only the "feeling" that logical opposition will not do. One is not outside this world of shadows, but another shadow within. The "I" is no longer discernible from the "non-I", from its I-dreamer, from its being in language: "The I no longer opposes itself to the world. In reverie there is no more non-I. In reverie, the *no* no longer has any function: everything is welcome." (167); that is, the "I" is "subsumed" by the "non-I" (13). The "I" only finds itself, in Hegelian fashion, by discerning itself from the world. But it cannot separate itself so readily from the daydream, from word dreaming. The writer has already become a term, so to speak, of writing. In the moment of writing, the writer cannot stand aside from the writing, in a relation of observer and observed, but is necessarily taken over by it, dissolved in it. When there is a text, an object, a thing in this world against which the writer might oppose him- or herself, that separation might again take place. But this is not the writer writing.

Why it is useful to oblige Bachelard to disclose here an understanding of reverie not as a preface to writing, but as the condition of writing itself is because of several inescapable resonances it has with other efforts to theorise writing. Hélène Cixous, for example, wants to uncover an idea of writing without the subject, that is, the "Book Without an Author" (Cixous 109). Nor is this merely conceptual, because Cixous can also disclaim authorship after the event of writing:

> I felt great uneasiness when people talked to me about the texts 'I' had written. They think it is me, but I only copy the other, it is dictated; and I don't know who the other is (Cixous 102-3).

In this, Cixous is effectively reprising Maurice Blanchot's recognition of the desubjectifying of the writer by writing: for Blanchot "[t]he work is not concerned with or for the writer, even though the writer is necessarily concerned (occupied, obsessed) with it. Writing, as a limit-experience, is a movement without an object, and without reciprocity or transitivity" (Shaviro 117) - writing, that is, as pure relation. Whether Blanchot is more demanding than Bachelard is of less relevance than the common ground. This is how Thomas Wall summarises the case put in Blanchot's "The Essential Solitude":

> To write is to be "possessed" by anonymity, to be seized by it and infinitesimally retarded. This "milieu" is absolute because it does not refer to any place in the world. It ab-solves itself from the real, and is an absence of inside or outside. To write is to lose oneself in this region where there is nothing to be revealed, expressed, meant, or show, because nothing is even hidden. It is the region of ambiguity, abandoned by references, emptied of subject and object - where all is such as it is. Irreparably so. (Wall 116-7)

Not that anything is abolished here, least of all the world, but it is, with Agamben's sense of enigma, where the world and the writer enter language as absences, as terms, that is, without presupposed self-identity and which writing distributes.

And there are other resonances. Bachelard also recasts the question of sub-being, of the impossibility of a contradiction between being and non-being, with a metaphorics of space:

> The dreamer's being is a diffuse being. But on the other hand, this diffuse being is the being of a diffusion. It escapes the punctualization of the *hic* and of the *nunc*. The dreamer's being invades what it touches, diffuses into the world. Thanks to shadows, the intermediary region which separates man from the world is a full region, of a light density fullness. This intermediary region deadens the dialectic between being and non-being. The imagination does not know non-being. (Bachelard 167)

This "intermediary region" carries us towards Cixous' *dépays* (uncountry):

> I want the word *dépays* (uncountry); I'm sorry we don't have it, since the uncountry is not supposed to exist. Only pays (country) and *dépaysement* exist. I like beings who belong to removal (*dépaysement*). People like Genet or Clarice are inhabitants of the uncountry, of the uncountry, of the country hidden in the country, or lost in the country, of the other country, the country below, the country underneath. (Cixous 131)

Moreover, Bachelard's refusal of contradiction as the geography of the intermediary region brings us close to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the plane of composition. If, for Bachelard, such a plane is constituted as falling between "man" and the world,

Deleuze and Guattari pose it between language and the world, between word and thing. For them, it is a region characterised, precisely, by the refusal of contradiction, by inclusive disjunction (which is the formula of the rhizome: AND…AND…AND…) and thus it is a zone of indiscernibility where, in short, words become things, things become words. And Bachelard identifies much the same effect:

> The poet's room is full of words, words which move about in the shadows. Sometimes the words are unfaithful to the things. They try to establish oneiric synonymies between things. (Bachelard 49)

This is the procedure of word dreaming, of writing itself, as the entry into the intermediary region, a procedure which, he goes on, is marked by words which are "*shells of speech (coquilles de parole)*" (Bachelard 49). Words behave, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, as asignifying signs - which would be such *shells* of speech - and for them it is according to the movement of the asignifying sign (which is both word and thing, no longer a word designating, that is, faithful to a thing) that writing takes place.

To pursue this in Deleuze and Guattari would require the space to unravel the various complexities and difficulties of their case. In the immediate context, we can return to Agamben, who discloses a similar kind of proceeding and one which is more succinct. In this, all that might need to be known beyond what has already been touched on is where Agamben's line of thought carries to. For him, the western experience of language is constituted on the necessity of a silence, the withdrawal of the voice. That is, in order to found an idea of meaning, western metaphysics institutes a necessary gulf between language as meaning (signification) and language as indication (denotation). The thing indicated by the word, and the word's relationship to it must, in effect, disappear in order for language to be transacted at the incorporeal, or the transcendental level of meaning and idea. *Language and Death* traces the tradition of this way of thinking the experience of language (a tradition which is inherited not just by philosophy but more generally in western culture). (Note 5) *Stanzas*, on the other hand, attempts to uncover an alternative tradition in which the silence is filled in, in which, that is, language is experienced as *both* indication and meaning, relation to the thing and the idea at the same time (which Agamben calls being in language).

The issue might need to be forced a little here since what Agamben distinguishes remains for him more a question of potential, achieved only fitfully. But writing can be characterised as a double movement; it is an operation of the word as both and at the same time meaning *and* indication, signification of the idea *and* denotation of the object; it refuses the passage from one to the other, the substitution of object by idea, of presence by absence, of corporeality by abstraction, and holds both (against the tradition of the western experience of language) in an inclusive disjunction. Which is to say that writing is neither signification nor denotation, but the cusp, the surface between them, a cusp which the western understanding of language would want to see hollowed out but which must instead be taken as more than full; as a zone, in Deleuze and Guattari's term, of indiscernibility between the word as idea and the word as thing. "It seems," Blanchot says, "that emptiness is never empty enough" (cited Shaviro 21), and indeed Bachelard has already said of the "intermediary region" that it is a "full region, of light density fullness". And it would seem, too, necessary to resurrect but revise the belief that imagination is the procedure of producing something where "nothing" is supposed to be. The empty place of the between is not empty, but placeless - the *topos outopos* for Agamben or, as Blanchot puts it, the *lieu sans lieu* (cited Shaviro 131). The place of writing is the site of a mode of language, the site of a paradoxical or enigmatic functioning of the word as thing *and* as idea, as corporeal *and* incorporeal. And the negotiations of the imagination produced by writing are not with nothing but, rather, with too much.

In a crucial passage in *The Coming Community*, Agamben says:

> The being-such of each thing is the idea. It is as if the form, the knowability, the features of every entity were detached from it, not as another thing but as an intentio, an angel, an image. The mode of being of this intentio is neither a simple existence nor a transcendence; it is a paraexistence or paratranscendence that dwells beside the thing (in all the sense of the prefix "para-"), so close that it almost merges with it, giving it a halo. (Agamben 1993b: 100-1).

The thing, the object, is both itself and the expression of itself - itself and its own transcendence (a phenomenon Deleuze calls the event). And it is the capacity of language to express this too, to constitute the word as both thing and idea of the thing, notwithstanding the covering over of this capacity by the western tradition. So it is the ability of writing to rediscover the "halogenic", to catch up the object as both thing and idea, that is to experience language in its double polarity as thing and idea.

By another name, the name Bachelard gives, the halo is the shadow. Writing is a penumbral ontology. And we would do well to remember that the penumbra is the lighter, outer region of the shadow, the halo, indeed, of the shadow. And so, an ontology of paraexistences. The dream, the reverie that is, is the dream of things as they are...he penumbra of things as they are. In Bachelard's words: "We dream of everything that it could have been; we dream at the frontiers between history and legend" (Bachelard 101). Word dreaming "sacralizes" the object, recognises it both as itself and as halo of itself. "One has never seen the world well" he says elsewhere "if he has not dreamed what he is seeing" (173). There is no room for exclusive disjunction (there is no "no" in the dream, in word dreaming), no room for a separation between meaning and denotation, between the corporeality of things and the incorporeality of the idea, no room for the dialectic between being and non-being. It might all be articulated in a different language, but Bachelard sounds an intriguing pre-echo to Agamben. If, in order to hear him, we need to set aside the question of the subject who dreams, this would be to do no more than remember how the subject who dreams escapes into language, escapes that is to a place between thing and word (36) and is thus subsumed by a "non-I" - subsumed, we might say, by language itself since Bachelard can also observe that the "being of the dreamer of reverie is constituted by the images he conjures up" (152).

Bachelard also says:

> The *cogito* is conquered through an object of the world, an object which, all by itself, represents the world. The imagined detail is a sharp point which penetrates the dreamer; it excites him in a concrete meditation. Its being is at the same time being of the image and being of adherence to the image which is astonishing. The image brings us an illustration of our astonishment. Perceptible registers correspond to each other. They complement each other. In a reverie which is dreaming on a simple object, we know a polyvalence of our dreaming being. (Bachelard 153-4).

It is an encounter with the object precisely in withdrawing from it - like Kafka's doors which open onto a scene somewhere else - a withdrawal which in fact makes the absent object more insistently, more astonishingly present. (note 6) And this "simple object" dreaming is a precursor to what Bachelard calls world dreaming, where the poet "obliges the world to become…the *World of the word*" (Bachelard 186) and in which signifying language is abandoned for "poetic language". Poetic language is not merely the reversion of the direction Agamben identifies in the western experience of language, substituting a language of indication or denotation for a language of meaning. Again, there is a doubling: "A word dreamer recognizes in a man's word applied to the things of the world a sort of oneiric etymology" Bachelard says (189). Word dreaming is the opening onto the recognition of Agamben's being such, the idea that the thing expresses

of itself...we pass, Bachelard adds, "from a human vocabulary to a vocabulary of things. The two human and cosmic tonalities reinforce each other" (189). The human dimension of language - its leaning towards signification - might be passed from, but it is not disposed of...the word itself subsists, but its reference to the thing becomes the possibility of a third domain, a domain between, the possibility of speaking, in effect, *as* the thing. An enigmatic condition, of course, but to speak as the thing is not only to speak the thing but the idea it expresses. It is a condition which cannot abandon the human (it is still words) but nor can it, any longer, abandon the thing to ordinary signification. And the methodology of this condition, this interaction between the corporeal of things and the incorporeal of ideas, can be gleaned from something Bachelard raises elsewhere. Noticing much the same effect as Agamben does (though it is cast in terms of image and concept rather than indication and signification), Bachelard says: "Between the concept and the image there is no synthesis" (51). And yet, amongst the alchemists we find:

> …good examples of *complex* convictions, convictions which assemble syntheses of thoughts and conglomerations of images. Thanks to his complex convictions…the alchemist believes he is seizing the soul of the world, participating in the soul of the world. Thus, from the world to the man, alchemy is a problem of souls. (Bachelard 77). (note 7)

If there is no synthesis, precisely, between concepts and images, between signification and denotation, there is nonetheless the between itself, not as emptiness, not as rupture, but a place, a procedure of assembling. And the assemblage is, as Deleuze and Guattari would also insist, necessarily com-plex: *folded with*. Complex; and so, too, a problem. A problem of halos. A problem of shadows. A problem of words.

* * *

One thing more might yet be done, and that is - unlike the usual trajectory of the reverie - to return to the beginning, to the idea of transversal relations. Because if there is an affirmation of Deleuze's reading of Hume's doctrine of relations external to their terms, and thus of its relevance to writing, then it may well be in the way the very different conditions of two investigations can still articulate the same recognition (as Deleuze would no doubt be quick to observe, not merely the similarity in findings but the difference in procedures would endorse the point). And so it is important to recognise that Bachelard reaches his own version of transversal relations. To dream things as they are (to dream what one sees), and thus to make the "being such" of things an expressed of language, opens up different domains of potential experiencing beyond those already sedimented according to the social practices and dimensions of a language (Bachelard poses this as an escape from signification, but Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the incorporeal transformation would also be useful here). (note 8) It opens up, that is, and as already noted, language as a doubling: the word as both thing and idea of the thing. And if writing is the experience of this doubling of language, it is also, as Agamben puts it, the experience of *being in language*. Writing (as procedure) is not the recording of experience outside or yet to be revealed in language; it is not experience reproduced or doubled through language (representation) but the experiencing of language itself and in its double register (the presence/absence of being in language). Blanchot says of narrative:

> …the language of fiction…plays a specific role, to the extent that instead of referring us to the reality of existence, it brings us into contact with a fictional world and, for that reason, is indispensable not in order to become the sign of beings and objects already absent, but rather to become the means of making them present for us, of letting

> them feel and letting them live for us through words…the events, the characters and the dialogues of this world of fiction we call the novel are necessarily impregnated with the particular nature of the words on which their reality is based; and that in order to be understood and made real, they need a language capable not so much of signifying them as of presenting them to us, of making them directly visible and comprehensible in its own verbal consistency. (Blanchot 1995: 66-7).

And to experience being not in itself but as being in language, as Blanchot's fictional world, or Bachelard's word dreaming, is the possibility of experiencing the same thing, of experiencing being, but through the transversal experience of words. That is, it is the possibility of experience similar to ontological experience but produced by other means. Experiencing some drug, say, but by another means altogether: by the experience of language itself, since Deleuze and Guattari raise this among the possibilities for transversal relations. But Bachelard has already arrived here, by his different route, and so he can say:

> It is in order to write that so many poets have tried to live the reveries of opium. But who will tell us the respective roles of experience and art? On the subject of Edgar Allan Poe, Edmond Jaloux makes a penetrating remark. Edgar Allan Poe's opium is an imagined opium. Imagined before, reimagined after, but never written during. Who will show us the difference between experienced opium and magnified opium. (Bachelard 169-70)

"And what is a beautiful poem if not a touched up madness?" Bachelard will go on to ask, sounding even more like Deleuze and Guattari, "A little poetic order imposed upon aberrant images? The maintenance of an intelligent sobriety in the utilization - intensive all the same - of imaginary drugs. Reveries, mad reveries, lead life" (Bachelard 170). The book, the possibility of writing, is perhaps not given to us as the duplication of life at all but as our imagining, our dreaming of life, as the duplication that language makes of itself.

Notes

Note 1 See, for example:

To succeed in getting high, but by abstention, "to take and abstain, especially to abstain," I am a drinker of water (Michaux). To reach the point where "to get high or not to get high" is no longer the question, but rather whether drugs have sufficiently changed the general conditions of space and time perception so that nonusers can succeed in passing through the holes in the world and following the lines of flight at the very place where means other than drugs become necessary. Drugs do not guarantee immanence; rather the immanence of drugs allows one to forgo them. (Deleuze and Guattari 286) Return to article

Note 2 See, for example:

The ambiguous negative value of acedia becomes in this manner the dialectical leavening capable of reversing privation as possession. Since its desire remains fixed in that which has rendered itself inaccessible, acedia is not only a flight from but also a flight towards, which communicates with its object in the form of negation and lack. As in those illusory figures that can be interpreted now in one way, now in another, all of its features thus describe in its concavity the fullness of that from which it is turned away, and every gesture that it completes in its flight is a testimonial to the endurance of the link that binds it to its object. (Agamben 1993a: 7). Return to article

Note 3 De Quincey, for example, distinguishes his reveries from his dreams as "noon-day visions" (De Quincey 1897: 221). Cixous, too, has the tradition in mind in her dealings with Genet's recollections of Poland (in *The Thief's Journal*) where noon is made circulate, and with more than metaphoric force, in the context of the crossings of borders. Return to article

Note 4 The "constellation" of linked terms which Agamben's research uncovers is, of course, easily enough taken for granted. See, for example, Susan Sontag's essay on Walter Benjamin, "Under the Sign of Saturn". Benjamin, as Sontag notes, rejected psychological labels and reclaimed "melancholy" to describe his own sadness (Sontag 386). And if we take Benjamin as falling within Aristotle's compass for the man of "genius" - which is perhaps more than implicit in Sontag's treatment - our attention can soon enough fall on Sontag's description of his leaning towards the figure of the flâneur:

> To the nascent melancholic, in school and on walks with his mother, "solitude appeared to me as the only fit state of man." Benjamin does not mean solitude in a room - he was often sick as a child - but solitude in the great metropolis, the busyness of the idle stroller, free to daydream, observe, ponder, cruise. The mind who was to attach much of the nineteenth century's sensibility to the figure of the flâneur, personified by that superbly self-aware melancholic Baudelaire, spun much of his own sensibility out of his phantasmagorical, shrewd, subtle relation to cities. (Sontag 386-7)

Although Agamben does not deal with Benjamin in Stanzas, he does so in the later essay "The Melancholy Angel", noting in Benjamin's reading of Paul Klee's "Angelus Novus" similar concerns to those Agamben finds (in *Stanzas*) in Dürer's "Melencolia" and which he then develops further in the essay. Return to article.

Note 5 And if this tracing is historical, the tradition abides, for example, in Lacan's "the symbol is the murder of the thing", (cited, Shaviro 16) in Wittgenstein's "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (cited Shaviro 4) or Barthes' belief that "there is no reality except where it is intelligible" (4). Return to article

Note 6 An astonishment which, too, reverberates with not only the meaning but also the process of what Blanchot calls fascination. Blanchot unfolds the term in the context of the image [just as Bachelard does here] but, importantly, adds that to write "is to arrange language under fascination, and, through language, in language, to remain in contact with the absolute milieu, where the thing becomes an image again, where the image, which had been allusion to a figure, becomes an allusion to what is without figure…" (cited, Wall 116). Return to article

Note 7 See, in this context, Agamben's remarks after tracing the medieval conception of spirit (as pneuma) as a circulation between body and soul:

> In a pneumatic culture, that is, in a culture founded on the notion of spirit as quid medium between corporeal and incorporeal, the distinction between magic and science…is of no use. Only the obsolescence of pneumatology and the consequent semantic mutation that has brought the word "spirit" to identify with the vague notion now familiar to us (and which acquired such a meaning only in opposition to the term "matter") will make possible the dichotomy between corporeal and incorporeal that is the necessary condition of a distinction between science and magic. The so-called magical texts of the Middle Ages (such as the astrological and alchemical ones) deal simply with certain aspects of pneumatology (in particular, certain influences between spirit and spirit, or between spirit and body) and,

> in this regard, are not essentially different from texts like the poems of Cavalcanti and Dante, which we would certainly not define as "magical." (Agamben 1993a: 99) Return to article

Note 8 See, in particular, "November 10, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics" in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Return to article

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