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The Tenth Muse: Teaching and Writing Poetry

Her words often come back to me when I think about issues to do with teaching poetry. She was not the first person to express such an opinion, but the firmness of the manner in which this elderly, world-travelled woman said: "It is impossible to teach someone to become a poet" was unforgettable. She was a distant relative I "acquired" in the years I lived in New Zealand during the 70s. Her existence had been a rumour till then. As fate would have it, she is also the only person I have ever met who knew D.H. Lawrence personally. Inevitably there were anecdotes and lovely stories to listen to, some about Lawrence's banned painting exhibition, a few about his life in the USA. There was another side to Kate's past life too: she had at one point in the 1920s worked for Chanel. Here - but it was not just the passage of time which made her reticent - she was less forthcoming: the life of a successful Parisian model and heroin addiction were themes closely associated in her memories of the time back then. Even that was enlightening to a would-be young poet since I had not realised such an addiction existed back then, so early in the century. I still had much to learn about the secret histories of the time I was living in.

Of course, like all writers I found a lot of these secret histories already inside me. But many of them were adduced, were brought to the light, by a group of people who, like the elderly English woman living in Auckland, haphazardly chanced in on me.

The list could go on. I met a lot of such people in my early years; one day I will perhaps feel able to fully honour their influence and write about them in detail. They are, for instance, the people often unacknowledged in biographies largely because their presence is fleeting. They are, for example, the people who open up their art collections, their translations, their houses, their previous reading and, most important of all, their memories to a forthcoming writer. Sometimes they had been there in the painter's studio, on the set, at the meeting; or they had been the backers, the publishers or the rescuers of what we now think of as major modernists. Often they were just people who carried the temper of their times, being still able to give you the street-detail, the angle of the light on a particular day. Just as important as the work or the idea, they provided, so to speak, the mood or atmosphere in which the work or the idea were achieved. In other words they were the people who pass on the hidden detail; they were the ones who open up windows on a past not found in books. Perhaps most valuably, they dispel much of the idolatry with which art-practice and the artist's life are regarded these days (especially in the media) and report instead on an existence which is local, human, domestic. Almost inadvertently they are the people who show how so much which seems new to the new artist or new writer is in fact no more than this period's repetition of times, ambitions and life-styles long gone. For they show how, despite difference of age, place and circumstances, we are always making the same attempt.

For reasons, as I say, yet to be fully honoured, the words of an elderly relative who died nearly twenty years ago recur when I think about teaching poetry. To remember them is partly a way of reminding myself of some self-evident truths about learning. These are obvious truths to do with sources of information, with influences and friendships - mainly, that if these factors bode well, then you teach yourself what you need to know. Partly, however, I remember them because they state some basic facts to do with the way that any young writer acquires for better or worse that world-sense or worldly sense (this is the preferable phrase) by which an art or craft is indelibly marked. Anecdotally, at the level of contacts and reading, the ways that past work ingrains a practice in the new writer is as random and haphazard and exciting as any everyday encounter with a stranger or a peer group. Yet, at another level, it is fated: it is to do with meeting those people who, dead or living, understand something of what you are trying to do. It is a question, in other words, of gaining knowledge whatever its sources may be and of gaining this knowledge in a way which is appropriate to you and maybe not to anyone else. In this sense, all writing is handed on. It is not taught.

No doubt, then, this matter of the acquisition of necessary knowledges could be re-phrased very simply as one of the immediate consequences of that most indispensable of writerly gifts - an obsessive pursuit of your skill. Such obsession is not just about persistence in the sense that an athlete or an Olympic swimmer is obsessed with achievement even if it is true that, in regard of single-mindedness, physical skills are probably the closest allies of poetic ones. Poetic obsession works in a slightly different manner since it is also an attractor, a force field, into which the most everyday of one's own experiences - including other people, anecdotes, theories, books, newspaper clippings, cataclysms going on in the world as well as footnotes to obscure lives - are dragged or insinuated. You meet what you need, things reach themselves into your hand - a quality which Andre Gide (a hundred years or so ago) defines magically when he talked about such "obsession" as a kind of encounter, as a kind of permanent meeting. This meeting, he says in *Earthly Fruit*, is the poet's gift: it brings things to you. It brings you to them. Of course, like everyone, I have often seen brilliant young writers who lack this gift, or who are too impatient to acquire

it. There are writers too who will be denied it by circumstances beyond their control, that is to say by the Tenth Muse of their unpredictable future or of a hostile environment. Things quite simply do not work out as they should or could. The Tenth Muse takes on her role as guignol, as ill-health, as crippling anxiety, as unceasing external demands, as poverty of mind and spirit. Often she is the Muse who condemns the writer to an ever-present financial anxiety and job-insecurity, until the absence of these things becomes unbearable. Or she is the Muse who says: the world is elsewise, it is doing other things, it is not interested in you. Teaching poetry - around a university, for instance - will not answer her demands. Does she in fact have anything to do with poetry and the way that its skills and habits are acquired?

A few things, I think. For the Tenth Muse is also the muse of context, of placement and (though the term requires some definition) of reception. To explain what I mean by this it will be necessary to talk a bit more practically than poets are supposed to. It was, however, a very great poet, the late Harold Brodsky, who wrote that a poet "can always talk himself out of a jam." (After all, that's his metier, he adds.) And at this point I can clearly see that I am heading into one, a jam I mean. For I am already talking about primary gifts, about ur-conditions, about verities, about memory and experience, instead of talking about the context, about the placement of the poet's work in whatever are that work's immediate conditions of reception. In other words, already questions about origins and about a specific art's art-practice (derived, no doubt, via the stately figure of Biography and the blind-folded figure of Insight) have taken precedence over the art's critical context. This does not matter perhaps, apart from the fact that we end up ignoring precisely the issues which influence that essential context of encounter, obsession and response. Is it possible, however, to talk about, say, the natural conditions of a poet's formation and ignore the critical relationship between poetic imagination and the cinema, or between poetic writing and new multimedia interfaces? Is it possible to ignore the contemporary context of "writing" in its current form - in other words, to ignore precisely a set of conditions which strongly influence a poem's contemporary reception? Up to a point, then, all I am talking about is the connection between poetry and criticism, when you teach either or both of them. But the question here is not simply a critical one, for it is inflected by questions of context, formation and response which are not straightforwardly critical or poetic.

Given that many poets prefer to fudge the issue here - hoping no doubt that it will simply go away - let me somewhat overstate it. It can, besides, be stated very simply: There is no current criticism of poetry. Humanist styles of reading, namely those styles of reading which are about response, scholarship and evaluation and which have traditionally been the "field" in which poems have been talked about, have retreated to dusty quarterlies or to brief publishers' blurbs on back covers. Humanist values may well be the values of imagination, emotional engagement, precision, tonality, craft and feeling, together with all the matters which adjoin them such as the life-experience or views of the writer: further, these value-languages may well form the "discourses" in which the figures of insight, biography, inspiration and so on are best situated. But these languages are now more often the province of the public relations person seeking to find an "angle", or the literary agent seeking to find a publisher, than they are of the critic. In short, humanist study's revered themes have been reduced to the stock-in-trade of the writerly TV interview or the professional talk (delivered more or less unchanged in Toronto, Adelaide and Edinburgh) for the obligatory round of Festival appearances . Product of a marketing circuit, the main response to new work tends accordingly not to be how have you done it, or is it beautiful or what is it about, but how does it fit into pre-selected responses, and what does it tell us about you, or how does it represent us. Evacuated, the terms of humanist reading have become more or less the argot of market reaction. Mediatised, even the requirement that a work be authentic is all too often reduced to the marketing demand that its author should be dying of AIDS or cancer or, at the very least, is a naive spokesperson for a threatened minority group. Recently, for instance, we saw many of those features conspire in Australia to produce the "Demidenko" hoax.

The shameful fiasco just referred to should make me wary of holding to any belief that, in itself, this cult of the human "angle" plus a de rigueur naivety sufficient to allow the publisher to turn every new book into a publishing "event," is harmless and silly. Yet despite "Demidenko," this is the view which I still hold. The problem, however, is a critical one. For back at the institution when critical issues do often get very serious and very contemporary, the poet's work is ignored or undervalued in a blanket sense: largely, that is to say, it is treated as if it does not exist. Among the grand but often highly detailed themes of popular culture, media representation, sociology of art, post-Lacanian criticism, hybridity, tele-theory and the like, the poet's work often appears as not only very small fry indeed but also as mere after-effect, mere symptom, of a larger cultural identity question. The novel, perhaps even a novel as shoddy as Darville's, gets a look-in. But where poetry is concerned, the best criticism and the best poetry seem to part company on either side of an irremediable gap, on whose edges both are likely to stumble.

Brodsky, whom I just quoted, puts the problem better when he shifts it to you, to the audience, the readership. In that same address to the Library of Congress he speaks of "the plight of his audience" who cannot read enough of a poet because no publisher will publish and market enough of any poet's books. This audience is also the "you" who (to interpolate my own comment here) often do not know why or what you could be reading because significant work is no longer engaged by significant critics. They, the critics, are off at the movies, or they are staying at home watching video, or they are writing cultural history or they are designing a new multimedia project while reviewing the latest book on this month's current urban myth. True, both traditional and modern changes can be rung upon this distance between criticism and poetry. A traditional rejoinder - something along the lines of "It has been ever thus, dear Martin: remember Keats" - is at least worth bearing in mind: the critic no matter how intelligent (as Keats's critic

certainly was) can be wrong-headed and destructive. It is no less likely, however, that critical aporia is what made the space for "Demidenko" and it is hard not to think it is one of the reasons currently behind the depressing scene of an internationally celebrated poet declining into quirky, irascible bad form. The issue here, in other words, is a delicate one for though it is true that the reception of new work is in no ultimate manner "controlled" by the critic, it is also true that the absence of a relationship between poetry and criticism will inevitably lead to the sense that no-one really knows what they are doing. And worse, that it does not matter when they do. Is it surprising, then, that outside a childhood memory of the enforcement of the Higher School Certificate, very few philosophically-informed readers (who do read the history of theory, film criticism, urban studies, architecture criticism, novels, together with various forms of cultural study and the history of science) do not actively read the latest poems? Not really. But the loss is that the very people who are the best equipped to talk and write expertly about poetry prefer in the main to overlook it.

Is the work of the poetry class, then, just another form of criticism, just a form of "writing" in some latter day sense? Of course not. To think so is to trespass on that world-sense or worldly sense which I started off with. This is the "jam" - the design problem - mentioned earlier. That world will always be individual, and fruitfully mythological: it will always have its hidden or surrogate pathways. But equally it is delusion to think that the mythological world of verity, formation and life-experience has lacked links with older, humanist styles of criticism. Similarly, practices of "creative writing" - widely established in many American universities in the 60s and 70s, for instance - did not and still do not lack a critical relationship with those same, older forms of humanist (and practical) criticism. Nor, traditionally speaking, did the writers who are mainly identified as the ancestral "models" of contemporary creative practice lack in their own day a productive relationship with the criticism of their times. They were not confronted by, or passive victims of, critical aporia. D.H. Lawrence, whose name was mentioned earlier, reacted both with and against what we would nowadays term the advanced cultural theory of his period - namely its own version of critical truth and social identity. Similarly many of the poets of that same period (Pound, Eliot, Jarrell, Hulme, Yeats to mention a few) were so engaged with the abime of the criticism co-terminous with their own work, that they wrote pages and pages of critical essays and even (sometimes complex) poetic "theory.". A glance at Pound's letters or essays, for instance, is sufficient to remind one of what fervour and engagement look like when a poet gets critical. These writers felt that they had not just a part, but a major role, in the criticism of their day.

The issue, however, which interests me is not just about criticism , but rather more about context and reception. After all, the working languages of criticism are (like it or not) the languages which define what writing is, including what a poetry and its poetics are. Further, critical theory can define a poetics of writing without necessarily relating that poetics to actual poems. Urania, inspiratrix of analysis, maths and astronomy, was also the eighth daughter of Mother Memory and herself a Muse. Her current languages, it could be argued, are in fact very powerful languages which have remade or modernised terms no less primary, no less ur, than some of the poet's gifts just now referred to, those gifts of obsession, of meeting, of surrogate pathways, of myth and of practice. But it is important to see what these new views entail. Thus, the major critics these days seem to be telling us that the poem is no longer the central object of critical attention: the film, the CD-Rom, the historical document, the quotation have taken its place. Similarly if forward-thinking critics are now turning their attention to the world of the interface, they (or some of them) are also saying that thinking and mood and imaginative interaction - which have been the the poet's everyday concern - are now best exposed as multimedia trajectories between image and mind. Combinations of mood and image no longer in any obvious sense form a "poem." Besides, the practical writing of an artifact like a poem is no longer seen as a product of craft or of Brodsky's notion of metier, but rather is removed from its practical context: writing must - so we are told - be treated as permanently problematic instance of representation, never free from its status as a provisional moment in a theoretical schema where writing is a "philosopheme" a la Derrida. A piece of writing is just one molecule, so to speak, in a structure of appearance, meaning and unconscious drive. This new remodelling of the notion "writing" indeed is super-relativistic: writing is an after-effect, a supplement, whose relationship with the authenticity of its theme or of its authorship is itself another kind of after-effect. Writing just goes on, and never finishes or defines itself as a brilliant object. Finishing on a *bon mot* raises suspicions, not a laugh.

The oddity of all this, of course, is that the sort of post-structuralist critic which I have just been talking about is in fact pre-occupied with a poetics to an almost unprecedented degree. This poetics is what two or three generations of readers since the late 70s have come to know under the mystifying name of Theory. But the problem is that there is no follow-on by which this concern to define and theorise notions of "representation" and "writing," or to write about psyche and sign, obliges anyone to pay attention to poems. The entire space, the no-man's land, between poems and poetics seems to have been evacuated. Indeed, I would go further and suggest that it has been rigorously fenced off - in part by the complexity and philosophical nature of a criticism which forbids access to those who are unprepared to engage in a far-reaching intellectual study of the history of ideas; but in part, by the sheer internal coherence of the intellectual assault on those very notions of natural language, inheritance, voice, self and psyche which have been and remain the heartland of poetry. Indeed, the very fact you can make a thumb-nail portrait of a contemporary critical poetics as quickly as was just done above is interesting in its own right, for it suggests the degree to which critical theory has become a very compact engine. This no doubt is one of its attractions, namely, that there are only ever two or three themes which critics are centrally on about and these can usually be seized upon quite quickly. No bright student, no high-flyer, can avoid their influence. Intelligent and complex, such critical themes can even fire the

imagination. As a result they are having an enormous impact on what a contemporary generation, trained and influenced by them, comes to regard as significant or important reading.

One of the most important of these latter day critical themes has, however, not been mentioned yet For most tellingly of all, the life and experience of the writer are nowadays refutable: they are - according to some, they must be - reduced to their barest logistical and tactical supports, much like the body to its skeleton. To be sure, many contemporary writers (even a few of our novelists) struggle against what is often a dogmatic paradigm which acts as another "pre-set" on perception and subject-matter. Some strive to exploit the paradigm by announcing their membership in identity groups which are exotic, or unfamiliar, or simply too far away across the border to be noticed, as if to deny that any kind of reductive strategy could apply to them. Others rejoice in a sort of ficto-theoretical "identity" which allows for the hybrid writing which mixes journalism, theory and imaginative creation. Nor is there any doubt that the incorrigibility of the critic can quite properly be a challenge to the writer to be contemporary, to think hard and authentically: that is to say, to take on board the best ideas. But the danger is that, misapplied, a prevalent style of cultural criticism closes down what might be termed the writer's "short-term" memory (the feeling of the moment now) and accordingly damages access to the "long-term" memory (a capacity to appreciate significant past work.) For instance, many students, long before they get to the poetry class, have already made up their minds that their own lives and experiences are no more than arguable "reality effects" produced by the three gloomy, scissor-wielding sisters: gender, class and identity. And who are these novice writers' role models if not these very same three sisters who crop up in a myriad of appearances in cafe-readings and Festival events? Namely, the flock of "new" writers who (often Award-winning and freshly published) have no trouble in claiming their epoch's critical verities as a mask for a pluralist yet frighteningly self-assertive indifference to the qualities of the work. The poem and poetry writing seem to evaporate within the late twentieth century's critical furnace. They are nowhere to be seen. Poetry is like a ghost darting about in a burning house.

The paradox, the oddity, gets all the more intense as soon the little reminder referred to once before is repeated: all of the critical or quasi-philosophical themes just sketched are part of a poetics. As such these ideas respond not just to an abstract idea of writing, or to the workings of a purely intellectual notion of conscious or sub-conscious ecriture. They are also part of a day-to-day practice, a practical matter, this is to say, of writing poems. Every tenet of the critical model which was just sketched can be related to a precise creative practice which the poet engages with, even if the attempt to map the connectedness of poems and poetics seems to oblige a difference of register between the critic's pre-ocupations and the poet's practices which still looks abysmally wide. The former's work looks so confident, so well-referenced, so sophisticated in relation to its time; the latter's looks so home-made, so handicrafted, so small, so mute. Yet the cross-referencing between the two is omni-directional: the inflection of poem by poetics, and vice versa, is an inescapability. Thus, it is worth remembering that every poet knows the difference between the truth of "self" and the truth of the poem. Every poem is, in this philosophical sense, a symptom of an unconscious writing. (Significant detail: even the "Demidenko" hoax takes a line of a poem as its title i.e. as its key defining reference, even if the work itself cannot resolve poetically the peculiar "truth" of concealment and revelation in a poet's language.) Similarly no poet is unaware of the nature of a creative process in which he or she has not just to think about but to experience the differences between completeness and incompleteness in the resolution of poetic expression. Every poem is a molecule, provisionally positioned within a larger and unachievable "language" whether that language is that of the nation or the private mythological language of the self.

Further, poetic "thinking" is a "thinking" which goes on in a permanent state of suppressed audio-visual metaphor. In fact, half the problem of composing poetry is to do with the poet's on-the-pulse sense of the inadequacy of spoken or written language as a vehicle for experience. Thus, for instance, a poet's main critical question is rarely "Is it good?" but is usually some form of: How to get the words to "do" something they do not normally do? how do you get language to see, to hear, to taste and touch? such that the finished poem is a kind of tactical leap where one's responsibilities in terms of representing the world are concerned. Does it say enough? Does it speak both to and for its reader? Do you "see" the world differently when you read it? Do you know what "seeing the world" actually is? The making of poetry, whether teachable or not, asks an engagement with these questions. You could not write unless these questions were vitally important.

The practices just listed (there are more) can of course easily be made into theoretical questions, by which yet again the critic stands back and schematises an ideal "writing." The poet's job is to compose. It is to link up bits of the net, or to find the secret threads between appearances. To work out the reasons for this, however, is not the objective. The objective is that of any contemporary style of knowledge, namely it is do with putting things together afresh. Every member of the poetry class knows that these "questions" are experiential matters - obsessive matters - which bring into play the higgledy-piggledy array of thoughts, references, and memories which you deal with on a day-to-day basis. Writing, no matter how well-formed and no matter how self-consciously achieved in terms of genre, is still a sort of provisional strategy (just like a post-structuralist theorist says it is) amidst this flux. Likewise, though such an opinion may be shocking to some readers, the humanist model of reflection and reading has never really been an exact analogue of poetic experience: there has always been tension between the meditative and re-creative impulses of reading and the performative aspect of poetic language. A poem is something which always starts and stays in the here and now: poetry which emphasises its performative or lyric dimensions partly by-passes the evaluative, readerly concerns of the old-style critic. This is also why every member of the class knows that good work is always relative

and that the poem is like a mini-moment in a designer logic for experience. Unpoetic and pragmatic though it is to say this, a poem will do provided, against all the odds, it does.

Teaching poetry will never answer the dictates of the critic nor will it satisfy those who are convinced that it is impossible to teach poetry. It can readily be conceded that no poet who teaches, no teacher who is a poet, could ever misunderstand teaching to be so confident of its outcome. The gap between poem, writing, "writing," theory and so on is not stable; nor in fact is it as empty and disregarding as the persistent strain of complaint by poets would make it out to be. Critical disenchantment and the poetics of regret are constantly contradicted by new examples of interlinkage. For how does a poet respond to the fact that latest theories about interface logics directly spring from poetry's foundational practices? Or how does someone whose whole tradition has been about inventing imaginary places and travelling between them respond to the information theorist who is now arguing that such a model is foundational to thought practices in the oncoming period? Conductivity, metaphor, association, illogical voices combining separate levels of experience, writing with imaginary spaces, these are the new words of the new millennium. But these things are nothing new to us. They are Orpheus's new names. If such practices become the new Glass Bead Game which the next few decades of designers will refine as a model for new thought - a thought designed by designers rather than by critics - then poets, I suspect, could look forward to it and even feel that their metier has found a home.

A last comment, then, about the Tenth Muse. She is the Muse who controls not only extra-literary personal destiny but also the figure who controls the terms on which poems are received in their own time. She has a stake, though not a controlling influence in some of those surrogate pathways by which a direct knowledge of the tradition is handed on. The aging generation with their libraries, pictures and memories mentioned earlier were her devotees. Like them, however, one thing this Muse is not is a critic, not even a critic of the post-structuralist or post-modernist variety. Critics of all kinds, on the other hand, quite often refer to her: they look her up especially when adding footnotes of a historical sort and their writings, often forgotten as soon as they are published, certainly feed her altar's flames. In talking about the Tenth Muse, in other words, I was trying to find a way of avoiding phrases or names which mainly lead to confusion: these are the names like art-world, milieu, ancestry, poetic vision, identity, theory, critical theory, Australia, "Australian" (inverted commas are necessary for this one), avant-garde, international, bohemia. These are only a few of them: some of them clearly were unavoidable. I was trying nonetheless to avoid any of the obvious languages of critical verity and instead to present a simple, grounded "figure" for the way in which a poet necessarily responds, whether positively or negatively, to the critical, personal or even political context in which he or she makes new work. I did not want to invoke poetic hoodoo or make sublime claims. I hope this further comment will not create confusion. But it can easily be misunderstood.

The point is is this. When the gap between critical theory and poetry gets difficult to cross over (as has been the case in recent decades) these and other names for the imaginary of poetry all too often turn familial, introverted and pompous. They become the names of family and lineage, even of racial descent, by which the poet claims some fairly absurd pivotal position in the culture group or some special membership in a craft group or a political group. Worse, all sorts of critical mis-readings of the past can be brought in to fuel such claims, whether they are literal claims about one's own genealogy or claims of some sort of "special relationship" to a place or a self-announcement to do with a style or with an intellectual and cultural affiliation. We have had instances of all of these things recently, for instance, in Australian poetry. The self-justficatory terms which are used are mostly hollow; and mostly they slide uneasily along a continuum between being merely reactive to being downright reactionary. They usually come, as has been suggested, from a naive acceptance of earlier, already disavowed, critical theories and historical "maps" of the past, whether Parisian Bohemia a hundred years ago or cosmopolite New York forty years ago or bard-land a thousand years ago or squattocracy sixty years ago.

If, on the other hand, there were to be a single name for all the possible offerings of the Tenth Muse and all the possible messengers - living, dead, biographical, theoretical, imaginary, muse-like or god-like, whatever you will - which she can send then that single name would have somehow to be a word which combined the two terms of "oral context and history" and "readership." Of course, there is no such name though the medieval notion of fama - that mixture of news and instability - would be a possible contender. Perhaps this is because she can visit tragedy on the writer as well as good fortune. This is also why it is better to speak of her "effects" as a kind of messenger. Messengers, for instance, are people you have a relationship with, however fleeting. You do not automatically know who or what they are; and you certainly do not have to accept their influence on you. The Tenth Muse, in short, is that Muse who inspires you to reflect on your own context as objectively as possible and to work out what it means. Mostly this is a context of ideas and institutions. But if your influences really are real people whom you have met in New Zealand or in a poetry class or on a bus in the Moroccan mountains, they are usually not other artists or writers, who are in the main too busy or too eccentric or too self-protective in relation to the everyday politics of publishing and reputation to have much to do with younger writers. All of this applies to a class inside a university, I should add, as much as it might to a casual meeting.

The post-modern and the post-structuralist critic has had an uneasy relationship with the Tenth Muse, preferring in the main not to intervene in her workings. Besides, such critics are too pre-occupied with de-mystification to be concerned with the messages which could come either from real people or from imaginary beings. In constructing the institutional project of "writing" and "literature" it would be easier for him or her if they did not exist. These critics

have been more excited by various late-modernist forms of relativistic "explanation" borrowed from scientific models. In particular they have preferred to deal with effects, with mass products, with items delivered by informatic systems. Poetry has, so to speak, been the unknown (sometimes suppressed) limit case for this model of analysis. If there is occurring right now (as many philosophers are saying there is occurring) a kind of non-theoretical "second wave" of cybernetic geography in which the very notion of critical theory is compressed into an applied practice of multi-levelled writing, the effect of this on the poet who writes poems may be no more than yet another challenge to re-invent a genuinely contemporary art. The Tenth Muse will still have to be invoked and reckoned with. Yet what poetry teaches and how it works will almost certainly be central to this new, humane, imaginative project.

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