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Anatomy of voice: the second partition

Biographical note:

David Musgrave lectures in creative writing at the University of Newcastle. His most recent book of poetry is *Concrete Tuesday* (Island, 2011) and his novel *Glissando: A Melodrama* (Sleepers, 2010) was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Award for Fiction. He founded the independent publishing house Puncher & Wattmann in 2005, where he is currently the publisher.

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They come in the dark to those that listen,
the dead and distant, enemies and friends
crowding the silence with their voices
conjured from nothing but parts of the flesh
and bone memory. Prodigal swarms
lost in the labyrinth of the ear
join us to their shuttering selves,
transporting us across space and time
while we remain as we are, alone.

1.



They come in the dark, to those that listen,
and then some, to my threads. Think silk, Cathay,
slit-nets, others' thought, eco-myths. Thin cards
of yachts listing in the shooting sea.
The crocodile is slime, the ten to one,
the toad in the shark has toes that glisten.

2.



The dead and distant, enemies and friends
saddened and frightened, menaced, thin and
instead of their demons, teddies. Indeed.
Maenads, dandies, their unedited fiends
danced and tended faded anathemas.
The deadened ives of dire mendacity.

3.



Crowding the silence with their voices,
the sirens were thieving their kill words,
drowning in weather. Thick slices of
cloud licensing wives on roids. The
swirling senses thrive. Either the crow
or crowns wreathe these slithering voids.

4.



Conjured from nothing but parts of the flesh.
In your pungent rhumbas, the shuffle of
injured tongues. From the book-trap of shelf
the jury thronged the prefab muff confits.
Bud Junior, of shopping tube country, films
the pledge of neuro-buffing comfort shunts.

5.



And bone memory, prodigal, swarms
among mad weasel domains. I probed
your problems: my words are in damage
mode, and yours are empowering emblems.
Magi bear emeralds, pomes and myrrh,
dance madrigals. No embers whimper.

6.



Lost in the labyrinth of the ear,
I inlay the stolen breath of the earth,
ethereal follies. The birth-torn
listen to either the blarney of
intel beneath the frail theories or
the last throb, thinly: 'Our father in...'

7.



Join us to their shuttering selves,
just as their loins gutter in shelves.
Sh! Enjoy the Vestals rutting! Two
thuggish elves stutter in joyous
joshing. Veterans, listen to
Grillus' voice. Urgent tushing.

8.



Transporting us across space and time,
our ants are tame. Crossing a streetscape
is no constraint. My august spite came
at a cost: no dancing, sport. My truss
is part costume. No spirit says grace,
nor poets escape our timing sands.

9.



While we remain as we are, alone
on email. We whine, wheeze our alien
lays. Women wow a new aerial
arena where wine is lower, amyl
will allow a nearer, new malaise.
Whales wallow near a main isle.



Endnote

1. Emblem Sources: The Second Partition

'Hand in Clouds'
Das Kurze leben

Das Lebens Ausgang ist auch dessen Untergang
Die Wiege selbst ein Grab
viel sterben
eh sie leben
Viel müssen vor der Zeit der Erden Ubschied geben
Das längste Leben ist nicht einer Spanne lang.

The Short Life

Life's rising is also its setting
The cradle itself a grave
many die
Before they live
Many must farewell the earth before time
The longest life is not a span long.
Joannes [Juan] de Boria, *Moralische Sinn Bilder*, Brandenburg, 1698 Nr. 19

1.

'Crocodile'
sibi nequam cui bonus

Jacob Cats, *Proteus ofte Minne-beelden Verandert IN Sinne-beelden Tot Rotterdam Bij Pieter van Waesberge boecercooper* An.º 1627 Nr. 34, at <<http://emblems.let.uu.nl/c162734.html>>

2.

Tanz

Jacob Cats, *Proteus*. Nr. 42.
Furentem quid delubra iuvant

Lehr und Kunst

Ist gegen die Natur umbsunst.

Ein Meister hatt' ehmahls Affen lernen springen

So wie sie hörten ihn auffpfeiffen oder singen:

Doch lieffen sie vom Tantz als einer Nüss' auswarff

War gleich mit seiner Zucht der Meister noch so scharff.

Ein Buhler war auch eins zum Tempel hingegangen

Vermeynend dass er loss von der / so ihm gefangen:

Des wolt' er dancken GOtt; doch wie die Liebst' auch da

Verliebt er wider sich so bald er sie nur sah.

3.

Les Grands Ne Doibuent Craindre La Mort

Gilles Corózet, *Hecatographie*, Paris, 1540 Nr. D vii b

Cette couronne enlassée de vers,

Monstre à chascun et mesmement au prince,

Que mort prend tout, qu'elle meurdrist et pince,

Et facit gesir les plus grans à l'envers.

4.

Tamen Discam

Gabriel Rollenhagen, *Nucleus*, Arnheim, 1611. I Nr. 75

Et licet in tumbam pes decidat alter, et alter

Vivat adhuc, studiis invigilabo tamen

5.

audito multa, loquitor pauca

Junius Hadrianus, *Emblemata* Antwerp, 1545

Nr.18

Aure concipit, parit

Mustela foetum postea in lucem ore.

Aure dicta concipe,

Diu at recocta parcius prome ore.

The weasel is impregnated through the ear and later brings its young into the world through its mouth. Take in words with your ear; but only after you have weighed them up let them emerge sparingly from your lips.

6.

Labyrinth

Guillaume de La Perrière, *La Theatre des bons Engins*, 1539

Nr. 35

En volupté facilement on entre:

Mais on en sort à grand difficulté.

Par trop vouloir obeir à son ventre,

L'on en est pire en toute faculté.

Ce beau propos avons pour resulté,

Du Labyrinthe auquel facilement

L'on peult entrer: mais si parfondement

On est desdans, l'yssue est difficile.

*En vain plaisir aussi semblablement
L'on entre tost: mais sortir n'est facile.*

7.

Gryllus

Petrus Costalius, *Pegma* 1555 Nr. 176
In Grillum
Voluptatem Immanissimus quisque sequitur lubens

8.

Guillaume de La Perriere, *Le Theatre des Bons Engins*, Paris 1539. Nr.100

*En ce pourtraict on peult veoir diligence,
Tenant en main le cornet de copie.
Elle triumphe en grand magnificence:
Car de paresse onc ne fut assoupie:
Dessoubz ses piedz tient famine accroupie,
Et attaché en grand captivité:
Puis les formis par leur hastiveté,
Diligemment tirent le tout ensemble:
Pour demonstrer qu'avec oysiveté,
Impossible est que grandz biens l'on assemble.*

9.

Guillaume de La Perriere, *La Morosophie*, Lyon, 1553. Nr. 19

*Comem le vin bon goust ne peult avoir,
Si puenteur d'aucun costé la touche:
Semblablement bon propos n'a pouvor,
S'il est sorty d'une méschante bouche.*

Guillaume de La Perriere, *La Morosophie*, Lyon, 1553. Nr. 23

*Coupant le pont, on mon corps se soustient,
le prens grand peine à faire mon dommage:
Mais seul ne suys, car tel erreur detient
La plus grand part de tout l'humaine lignage.*

If I saw through the bridge on which I myself stand, I am taking a lot of trouble to harm myself.
But I do not stand alone, for most people are stuck in such error.

Research statement

Research background

Current international developments in poetry have foregrounded the poem as a linguistic artefact which is relatively autonomous from its referents. As such, there has been increased emphasis on creating poems according to models which are in sympathy with this stance, such as homophonic translation or John Tranter's 'The Anaglyph' (2009: 105ff). This research uses phonemic rearrangements and an aleatory process to generate the poems of 'The Second Partition'.

Research contribution

'Anatomy of Voice' is a creative exploration of the metaphysical and phenomenological aspects of the human voice in the western tradition. It references the form of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* which, as a Menippean satire (Holland 1975), shares a common generic tradition with TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* (see Musgrave 2008, Nänny 1985), which is parodied in 'The Third Partition' (Musgrave 2014). 'The Second Partition' explores the relation between voice as a non-signifying, but necessary, component of the signifying aspect of speech. Here it follows Dolar's study in positing voice as that which binds subject to other, and is also the intersection of *phone* and *logos*, *zoe* and *bios* (2006: 103, 121) and Agamben's analysis of the connection made between the voice and the pneuma (spirit) of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* as being crucial to late medieval notions of love (see, Agamben 1993). Through reducing the lines of an original poem (the first stanza) to its constituent phonemes, I rearrange them in order to discover latent meanings in the original poem at the phonemic level and, by implication, in voice itself. I relate the phonemically rearranged poems (stanzas 2-9) to Emblems (Henkel and Schöne 1996), as a result of words which, through phonemic rearrangement, suggest in an aleatory way the emblems themselves.

Research significance

The significance of this research is that it suggests a new axis for poetic exploration, the phonemic level, and introduces a ludic and aleatory process to explore iconographic elements of the poetry. Its value is attested to by the following indicators: publication of parts of 'The First Partition' in *Snorkel* (Musgrave 2013), 'The Third Partition' in *A Slow Combusting Hymn* (Musgrave 2014) and this work in *TEXT*.

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