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The act of writing and the act of attention

Abstract:

Is writing, including creative writing and its teaching, inevitably on the other side of the natural environment and ecological systems? Is writing, by definition, an action of a mindfulness and inventiveness which implicitly creates a cognitive separation between the world of the text and the world of ecological systems? A number of critics have recently been trying to propose modes and structures which merge this divide, or minimise it borrowing from biology, cognitive theory and probability theory. The paper considers a variety of such formal structures but argues especially for a particular mode of attentiveness in our concept of language and proposes its centrality in the teaching of a contemporary ecologically mindful writing.

Biographical note:

Poet and essayist, Martin Harrison's most recent book *Wild Bees: New and Selected Poems* (UWAP 2008) was shortlisted for the Western Australian and South Australian Premier's awards as well as the ACT Poetry Prize. His work regularly appears in journals in Australia and in the UK. A further selection of his poems, *A Kangaroo Farm: Selected Poems*, translated in parallel texts of Mandarin and English, appeared in Nanjing in 2008. A French selection of his poems is currently in process. His essays and talks mostly are about poetry, writing poetry and the relationship between art and the environment. Some of these were collected in *Who Wants to Create Australia*, nominated as a Times Literary Supplement Book of the Year in 2004. He is a founding member of the Kangaloon Group for Creative Ecologies. He lives in the Hunter Valley in New South Wales and is a Senior Lecturer at University of Technology, Sydney, where he supervises in the areas of poetics and philosophy and teaches writing and poetry.

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By action, I make myself responsible for everything ... the meaning of the action does not exhaust itself in the situation which has occasioned it, or in some vague judgement of value ... It opens a field. Sometimes it even institutes a world. In any case it outlines a future (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 72).

1.

Pieces of writing set up a separated-out imaginative space as soon as they are completed. This separateness occurs as soon as we can imagine the piece as a textual event: this separateness might, for instance, occur as soon as we start calling the work a poem, a story, a novella, a script – in short, make an assumption about a textual space and a possible area of theme or content. But this setting-up of an imaginative space can happen at other levels of segmentation, for example, when we start describing parts of the writing as a paragraph or a passage or a scene or an episode and so on. Separating out an imaginative space occurs regardless of the genre of the work, regardless, that is, of whether we are talking about Julian Barnes' memoir-like novel, *The sense of an ending*, or of a poem of mine or indeed even of an email I have just sent to a friend. Writing and reading constitute this separateness as one of the ways in which we can see the work as independent, referential and inter-textual in relation to larger dimensions of the world. Even with a piece of writing like the one you are reading here and now – this essay on writing and the environment – a set of features has, within only a few sentences, been determined which mark out the outlines of a voice and a literary topic within a quasi-geometrical play of metaphorical terms to do with separating and segmenting: what has been set up is in an admittedly non-specific and fairly colourless way is, in short, an imaginative space.

There is nothing remarkable about this: all texts, whether at the micro-level of the sentence or at the macro-level of the assembled work, set up what the literary theorist Roman Ingarden long ago referred to as a kind of natural potentiation in written language, namely, that in understanding written language we understand more than the obvious meanings. This field of potentiation is, as it were, a space for a further zone of potential meaningfulness. We arrive, in reading, at what he calls intentional correlates which, acting as more than just elucidated meanings, are the consequences of following through on meanings and then, as he puts it, carrying them out. Thus, for Ingarden, we can say that:

in actively thinking a sentence we constitute or carry out its meaning and, in so doing, arrive at the objects of the sentence, that is, the states of affairs or other intentional sentence correlates ... We can grasp the things themselves which are indicated in the sentence correlates (1973: 40).

We fill in gaps, we fill in what Ingarden terms spaces of indeterminacy in the text, and in doing so we establish key senses of reference to a larger experiential world, *the world as it were* i.e. the world as it momentarily comes into being as an instance intensely implicated in textuality.

There is nothing wrong with placing this concept of textual integrity or textual eventuality at the centre of our idea of writing, as in various ways the study of writing

usually does. One consequence, however, which is not always remarked on but which is clear, for instance, from the cast of Ingarden's remarks is that much of what we say about writing as a creative practice is, in fact, the sort of statement which is probably more appropriate to the concept and practice of *reading* than of writing. Indeed writing reduces to being so indistinguishable from the moment of reflection or self-reflection in which I look back at what is now the text – namely, a more or less automatic and spontaneous act of reading – that the act of reading can even seem to be what produces the writing. It is as if in the very act of writing, of committing words into a textual format, one might say: I have never written, I have only ever read what I have just written. For without Ingarden's 'active thinking' of each sentence, how can I write it, how can that meaning be constituted and carried through as a passageway towards the sentence's correlate? Quite simply, how can I write unless I am also reading what I write?

This is the emphasis which Barthes also wants to give to the cathexis between reading and writing, conceiving reading as a form of writing, seeking to undo what he called the 'economy' of authority in which the author is 'regarded as the eternal owner of the work, and the rest of us, his readers as simple usufructuaries' (1986: 30).

The written sentence, we can concur with Barthes, is the read sentence or, better, the readable sentence i.e. the sentence where a reading can successfully derive itself from what Barthes calls 'trans-individual forms' such as codes, rules, stereotypes and other ludic play (1986: 31). For Barthes, reading becomes a kind of semi-conscious or subconscious sort of 'body work' ('to read is to make our *body* work' (1986: 31, italics in original) in which the reader:

does not decode, he *overcodes*: he does not decipher, he produces, he accumulates languages, he lets himself be infinitely and tirelessly traversed by them: he is that traversal (1986: 42, italics in original).

At the heart of this intertwining of writing with reading – this writing/reading/writing – is the reality of an act of carrying further the meaning of the sentence or passage; at the same time, the textual integrity of an event-structure is established as a key determinant of the concept of writing. It is not just the reader, that usufructuary garnering from the text's laden orchard-tree, who is a key agent in this determinant act, but obviously and arguably more importantly the matrix of writing/reading/writing in which the writing-ness of reading and the reading-ness of writing are both present. Writing and reading, to resume Barthes' contention, are trajectories or traversals. To write is to open up a plurality of actions, heading off into the future.

There is another element in the writing process, however, which I want to introduce here and which is not quite captured even by a term like Barthes' traversal. Here I am thinking about the moment (perhaps the moment *before* the moment) before the written text gets formed. In traditional terms we could see this moment as the moment where the pen is poised in mid-air or where the hand is flying over the keyboard before the sentence is fully settled on the screen. What I am trying to get at here, in other words, is an element, both practical and psychological, occurring in the middle of the thinking/reading/writing process and which seems to me to be the ground of the very possibility of Ingarden's correlate and of the potentiality for an expression to

reach beyond itself. For one consequence of the reflexive integration of reading and writing is that the written, or more exactly the about-to-be-written, must also be constantly perceived as operative, as potential and as implicitly available although permanently relegated to a state of threshold-ness. As we write, the text is literally coming into being. Literally: yes, because writing is to do with putting together a finished sentence or a successful line of verse as letters, words, marks, structures. And yes, there is more than just an act of transformation or representation because something – that separateness, that sense of an imaginative space – *emerges*. As such it comes into being. An ontological newness takes place. The text is never just after-the-event, it is also in the event. This is of course also Derrida's point, that no matter how we try to imagine or position a space before writing, that very act of articulation by which we posit such a space is itself a writing. Nor for Derrida can we even place this potential point of supposedly pre-linguistic origin, what he terms the supplementarity of writing, before or after the writing itself.

Clearly, 'threshold-ness' will not totally work as a word for this element any more than, in my view, does the term 'traversal'. The term must be employed carefully and always consciously. 'Threshold-ness' is, for instance, a way of describing that point of arrival in writing where the writer knows that there is something there, that something has been put down, or composed. But the risk with taking this formulation too narrowly is that once again an exclusive emphasis is placed on composing and not on reading and reflexivity, as if the cognitive moment of arrival is one-dimensional and univocal. Similarly, the threshold moment clearly has many connections with phenomenological approaches to emergent consciousness, connections that is, with the flux of inchoate, subtending perceptions which constantly inform awareness and which seem to be possessed of a multitude of latitudes and directions. In particular, these connections are animated by what Merleau-Ponty describes as a sort of 'intentional arc' made up of interlinked projections and attitudes, whether senses of past and future or senses of our precise physical situation by which we are placed in relation to the sensed world. This arc subtends cognition no less than it underscores what he terms 'the life of desire [and] perceptual life', bringing about 'the unity of the senses, of intelligence, of sensibility and motility' – namely, the very fact that we can have a thought or an imaginative idea or successful intention (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 136). Consciousness is, in this way, always immersed, always intending.

Writing/reading/writing moves in the same way as part of the horizontal space of consciousness while, simultaneously, changing and re-drawing its boundaries. In fact, the separateness talked about earlier is very clearly a feature of what was just called the phenomenological situatedness of thought and feeling: such separateness is to do with an implicit, mostly liminal consciousness of things and a no less implicit establishment of a place in the larger construction of the world. Such separateness is not just an objectifying, generic feature. This was the problem with my earlier definition of separateness, namely that it seemed to propose a simple, one level mode of classifying texts and their themes. But the truth is that compositionally the present and future meanings of the work all evolve as the writing progresses within an environment of meanings. No less clearly, once the open-ended and open-edged nature of writing and reading is recognised, style itself must be seen as a kind of

intuitive action, a way of moving around, more or less like a way of walking or glancing through time. Style is a operationality, a way of getting there in a field of potentially limitless directions. Merleau-Ponty indeed sees this issue of 'style' as not just a matter of drawing, painting and writing, important though such activities are in his thinking about language. Style for him is a matter of how we are, how we exist. As he puts it: 'I am a psychological and historical structure, and have received, with existence, a manner of existing, a style' (1962: 445).

Similarly, if there are challenges in offering singular definitions of traversal, threshold and style in our understanding of the act of writing, the act is itself so operatively *active* in perception, reflection and language structure that its transformational and self-transforming nature must be recognised.

2.

My reason for introducing this thought about time, threshold and integration in the context of writing in an ecological mode is to do with the following question: What happens to our idea and practice of writing once we start thinking of writing as itself situated, environmental and operative? For if there is no moment of replication, no imitative cognitive moment, somehow standing between writing's act of reflection-filled inventiveness and the moment of engaged conscious perception – the moment of attentiveness – how does this change our practice as writers?; What kinds of work follow on? and, indeed, what constitutes a work? Perception, consciousness, consciousness of consciousness are all in play within reading/writing/reading's epistemological system, overlapping at various points, all engaged in the creation of that potential field of meanings.

Of course this formulation will sound merely theoretical. One thing, however, it might serve to do is to make us less tempted to define writing in the ecological mode primarily through generic markers or themes. There may indeed be no obvious 'ecological' writing at all in the sense, that is, of appropriate mode or subject matter. In fact writing which relies for its ecological credentials on being 'about' an environment or descriptive of a place or even morally prescriptive of some practices over others may, in a curious sense, actually fail to be sufficiently operational as an ecological practice – which is to say, insufficiently engaged in the transformative and threshold nature of the act of writing itself. We may have in the poem or the essay all the static descriptors of nature but no sense of how the writing/reading is a part of an interlinked consciousness with and in the environment. Style – a style of talking, a style of feeling, a style of movement – never takes on the cognitively rich, temporally unstable and yet temporally emergent mode which the phenomenologist celebrates.

Let me try here to specify what must inevitably still sound a very abstract way of talking about writing. For instance, the American critic Angus Fletcher's concept of the 'environment-poem' comes to mind as a very interesting recent example (2004: 117 *passim*). Fletcher's is a complex, elegant approach to processual aspects of writing, and particularly poetry composition. His approach is especially pertinent to late modern and post-modern poetry including much language poetry. According to Fletcher, a variety of stylistic devices (probabilistic structure, a stress on phrasal

development in favour of sentence structure, non-overt forms of meaning making, length and large scale dimensions, to name a few) act as equivalences to the complexity which we find in natural environments.

All of these compositional devices make for very interesting understandings of poetic structure and, further, open up fascinating re-readings of writers with whom Fletcher has a close and insightful relationship like Whitman, Ashbery and John Clare. But none of these features, so carefully and insightfully delimited by the critic, can be seen as other than devices: they are textual structures, generic features, structures of narrative and thematisation. To elicit them under the rubric of the environment is to make a claim that the reading experience (not first off the writing) can be subsumed as in some way or other part of an environment. The reading takes place under a gigantic bracketing equivalence between the act of textual imagining and the placement of the meaning of the text in an environment. There is, so to speak, an over-riding 'as if' or likeness introduced between the immersive experience of reading and the presumed immersive situation of our minds and bodies in an environment. This 'as if,' in short, is the claim that the reading experience is somehow *like* the experience of being in an environment. The contention risks being reduced to the claim that somehow phrases and long accumulative structures are more environmental than sentences, or that because environments are large (boundless) and complex, then so will be the poems and writings that celebrate them. Those stylistic markers, those generic features, take on a role well beyond literary structure. At the same time there is the risk on the other side of the equivalence that the concept of environment gets simplified into meaning any sort of environmental context – and an all-inclusive sort of context too. But as we know environments are complex, overlaid multiplicities of systems, often not in stable or harmonious relations with each other. Nor does the observer have some sort of stable universal way of perceiving these systems or entering into them or being subjected to them. The very concept of environment is controversial.

The separateness of the text subsists as a literary event quite apart from the delineation of any other lived moment in time or a moment in an ecological system. The threshold structuration of the constructed, emergent, written text is inescapable; and its effect is to maintain the moment of cognitive separateness in the literary experience. After all, when reading a long Ashbery poem or a long, accumulative passage in Whitman, the reader's sense of equivalence between the complex reading experience and the correlated world is an equivalence with what the poem envisions – indeed with what the poem *does* – and not just with all and any aspect of the world. This is the case even with writing such as John Ashbery's long poem, 'Flow Chart', which Fletcher writes about extensively and where, lacking many moments of literal descriptiveness, the poetry appears circuitous, self-referential and, so to speak, without an outside. To read this poem is challenging and enlivening: it is challenging because the work generates a demand that we read the repetitiveness and the length of the work as almost an exercise equivalent to the task of the writer writing it. It is enlivening because we are being asked to improvise and free-style with potential meanings and 'drifts' of meaning throughout a book-length poem. Fletcher's thought is fruitful and perceptive in drawing our attention to the aesthetics of length and wander and noise and drone. Though making a point well-nigh impossible to prove,

the critic is highly suggestive in asking us to consider that there is a convergence between immersive states of consciousness in poetry and an everyday immersive awareness of land and weather and space. But his mapping of large-scale, beautiful and highly musicalised forms in poems suggests exactly that, namely how finely made musical forms can operate associatively and affectively in the image-effect of certain mantric, or processual, long poems.

3.

Though often less aesthetically self-conscious than the poetic works which make use of the devices just listed, it is not surprising that many past and present classics of ecological writing take on board another core element of the threshold moment – that of memorialising and documenting. They do so in a literal, highly open way. Here in journals, diaries, scientific notebooks, travel notes and essays, the time-lapse is left explicit. Of course, the artifice of disguising artifice is not absent from works such as the English language's arguably most famous ecological literary work, *Walden*, nor is it absent from immaculate modern essayistic writing like Barry Lopez's. But these pieces of writing, like recognised classics such as White's much earlier *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, use the act of observation over time as an implanted structural element, borrowing from less-than-literary or minor literary formats like the diary, letters or the notebook. They set up the threshold moment at the core of text, treating writing as a kind of residue left over from observation. They usually explore a variety of different, jumbled up ways in which the act of describing can be conceived, for example, note-taking, sampling, mini-narrative, extended observation, lyrical description, exchanges of letters and so on. Borrowing generic markers haphazardly from such works, I might suggest that features like the following are formative in relation to this sort of ecological writing: repeated observation, observation and experience over long time periods, conscious focus on a particular cluster or level in an environment, analysis of note taking activities, recurrent moments of short term and never totally explanatory conclusiveness, episodic structure, dispersal of viewpoint across the conceptual terrain into potentially multiple viewpoints, temporal phase as a parabola of energy and convergence, relative absence of points of narrative convergence and the possibility of multi-authored texts. True, this list is, no less than the poetry critic's, a list of structural features but it is a list of features less embedded in literary structures of affect and more tied to specific acts of attention at a cognitive level.

Here in relation to the emphasis on specific acts of attention, we are beginning to border on another aspect of how we might treat the threshold moment – namely, the feature which was described as an inevitability of the 'writtenness' of thought in writing and a no less inevitable 'pastness' or *post hoc* positioning of writing. In this way, all writing is belated, it is always after the moment. This time, however, the issue is to do with how we set up connections between compositional categories and readerly effects. In other words, what do the tropes, figures, structural devices, scalar dimensions, processual modes, *do* in the mind of the reader? After all, my earlier brief account of reader-writer relations suggested (strangely) a rather anodyne transparency

between the two acts, as if the only cognitive connection was conceptual or intellectual. But the reality is that when we talk about reader relations we are also talking about imaginary embodiment, real affect, multiform senses of time, ontological fusion (to use Thomas Pavel's term for the way reading engages with merged world-senses as if what we read is as real as the real world) (1986: 138), emotional attachment, ethical judgment, sparked sensation, low level atmospheric awarenesses, sharp visual imaging, auditory echo, rhythmic response and so on. There is in other words an energetics of composition and reading; and presumably, ecologically speaking, there is a necessary reflection on energetics at work in the critical and meta-critical categories we bring to bear on how we categorise and think about what is effective writing (and reading). Very few of us writing at the moment can be unaware of the demand for new ways of thinking about emergent writing practices, though perhaps this strikes us in often elusive and indirect ways.

Thus we can ask how the older categories of individuation, verisimilitude, judgment and position within generic literary systems (including the multitude of subliterate systems prevailing at the moment) stand up in relation to animé, picture books or on-line novels, or indeed in relation to blogs and essayistic web-pages. I would offer the following comment: that there seems to have occurred an enormous compression – some would say collapse – of the understanding of tradition, while at the same time the accessibility of information, icons, data, images from the literary past is simply unparalleled both in its ease of transposition and its ease of application in contemporary writing. This is also a face of the ecological complexity of our time. Following more closely to the heart of composition, we can rephrase this matter in the way Aarseth does in drawing a distinction between emergent writing practices, mainly on-line, which are ergodic, interactive, citational and by definition incomplete i.e. lacking in conventional requirements for dialectical progression and termination, and on the other hand canonical forms of writing which are traditionally authored, printed and fixed i.e. are open to participation only at the level of interpretation. In interactive work, 'you are constantly reminded of inaccessible strategies and paths not taken, voices not heard' whereas canonical is woven and strategised (Aarseth 1997: 3). As Riffaterre has pointed out too, very different regimes of intertextuality operate in ergodic texts than in canonical texts: intertextuality is not a high order reading requirement in the on-line interactive conversation, though it should not be forgotten that a latent intertextual potential may be present in the minds of the participating writers. Intertextuality depends, as he puts it, 'on a system of difficulties to be reckoned with, of limitations in our freedom of choice' necessary for the sense of fullness in a text (1994: 781). A manifest absence of intertextualisation often robs interactive texts of a kind of literary richness – they seem to lack the reflective, back-of-the-mind atmospherics of conventional writing/reading – while at the same time the seemingly spontaneous, audio-visually capable nature of on-line text is both impactful, mesmeric and flexible. The truth is that writing is itself an energy management system, with competing forms and formats. Inheritors of the humanist tradition, we have grown accustomed to a subliminally tactile sense of the literary text as fixed within an idyllically stable, light-filled interpretive space. But the present moment is one in which a borderless writing is shaped and transformed by image-

flows, data-samples, responses and interactions – in short, by an energetic wildness unlike the ordered regimes of earlier forms of composition and thinking.

Further, as literary writers working in the second decade of the 2000s, we can imagine – thanks, largely, to a combinatorial of ecological thinking and new ideas about on-line practices – a very different range of metacritical terms for writing and its reception, namely terms like the term ecology, or sustainability, diversity, probability, emergence, recombination, recycling, statistical outcome. In other words, we can imagine a set of practices and ways of describing these practices more contemporary and more explanatory than the older terms appropriate to modernist process, recreative experience, the single ‘art work’ and so on.

No doubt in doing so, one is imagining at least a part of the future. This is a period of paradigm shift in which definitional terms for the concept of the object, the work, the finished text, need to be thought through carefully and argued for. There does not seem to be a single term now for the work, nor an unarguable idea of literariness: the boundaries between a writing as trace and a writing as recreative object seem to be permanently open and shifting. Writing as a recreative object can seem too artificial, and in a reductive sense merely theatrical – as if the scope of imagination is to ‘set up’ likelihood and already conventionalised sorts of life and scene. Such writing is often tied too narrowly to an ethical or political construction of the imagination i.e. the imaginative space of the everyday or of the futuristic or of fantasy. It seems almost as if there is too much imagination required of the contemporary writer, and as a consequence far too much obviousness and banality. Yet the other sort of writing, namely writing which is after-the-event or a semi-journalistic trace, can seem too journal-based, too randomised in its structure and too dependent for impetus on the figure of the writer ‘writing’. Writing set up entirely as incomplete interactivity risks that earlier mentioned lack of a crucial dimension of intertextuality in which complex zones of association, associated reading and of re-reading take place. I mentioned Julian Barnes’ *A Sense of an Ending* earlier, which explores equally these two facets of contemporary writing both in its memoirist and in its plot-complicated aspects. This short semi-fiction attempts to mould together a seemingly spontaneous diary writing with a situationally based, plot driven narrative and does so not entirely successfully or without tension. The work, as the novel expresses it early on, grows from how ‘remembering isn’t always the same as what you have witnessed’ (Barnes 2011: 3) and perhaps demonstrates how they can never be so. The unravelling of fictional artifice is to be found in a number contemporary works, such as Coetzee’s multilevel text *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007) where the three texts sit on top of each other in a deliberately not fully integrated way or in the hyper-self reflectiveness of fictions such as Brett Easton Ellis’ *Glamorama* (1998) and *Lunar Park* (2005) or in the equivocal, spontaneous, consciously never fully realised fictions of Hélène Cixous. Murray Bail’s *The Voyage* (2012) disorders, or perhaps better-phrased ‘un-orders’, time-phase in the narration of a fictionalised story by weaving backwards and forwards between the sentences, not marking where fictionalised time periods are different from each other. What results is a comic work which is neither psychological in the sense of tracing a character’s or the author’s thought-world nor a purely linguistic ‘experimental’ structure. It is a hybrid active work of thinking.

Possibly it could seem like what I am setting up here is a space for the consideration of a number of recent novels, say, an ‘environmental’ post-apocalyptic novel like Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* (2006) or, to my mind more interestingly, Don DeLillo’s *Point Omega* (2010). Both deal with a point of convergence between biological structure and environmental hazard. Both are hybridised, semi-essayistic responses to ecological catastrophe. As such, they too straddle the divide between writing as trace and as imaginative recreation. But I would prefer to end in a somewhat more technical way than in a literary critical way by asking what are the necessary criteria for a writing which in some measure fulfils an ecological requirement – which is to say, a requirement to be up-to-date in its understanding of the world around us and intellectually equipped to be meaningful in this decade. The assumption here of course is that if you are not working with the modes and forms which engage with and respond to ecological crisis, then your work is in flight from reality and, in that way, will never ultimately make sense. In other words, what are the requirements which work against what happens in so many writing programs, namely, the repetition of conventionalised expectation?

Given these reservations about defining an ecological literature and the sense of an ongoing, challenging and in fact generically creative problem to do with what was termed the threshold moment or ‘threshold-ness’, all that can be suggested here is a minimal technical program. That said, a piece of writing which fulfils some order of ecological requirement would have to have at least the three following conditions implicitly operative within its structure as a formal work and experientially operative within its aesthetic range (response, feeling, affect, judgement):

- an undetermined, evolving, ergodic or not fully resolved form resultant from the compositional energies of the work. In other words, the work leaves open how it is a work, possibly leaving the question never resolved. The work is an evolving act of attention and attentiveness. Each gesture in the work carries a truth value, observational, expressive. Each perception is an action, operating within its own closed perceptual system;
- a reference-level which explicitly opens up a field within an environment. In other words, if we take contemporary novels as an example, how do characters manage to live and look back on lives in which the sense of intervention and participation in the natural world is never raised? They do not: quite simply, where ecological denial is present, a complacent artifice seems to reign over so much contemporary literature. What I am getting at is the way that perception itself is like an energy capsule orientating within other fields of diverse energy. To understand interconnectedness with natural, biological and cosmological systems is now paramount in how we define ourselves as humans. Literary forms – attuned, partial, projective, often poetic – which proceed from recurrent and sustained attentiveness to these environments are currently emerging. Writers and critics are, equally, involved in forming and defining these new glittering, glancing structures – these new literary monads – which are the new literary works of our time; and,
- a way of positioning discourse outside of the discursive self. The literary work seems so inextricably caught up in Romantic and post-Romantic discourses to do with the

individual and with individual freedom that it becomes very hard to imagine how to unlace the tight connection between practices to do with freedom and self-realisation from the literary construction of the subject and subjectivity. It is hard to do because obviously there is a legitimate fear that without the concentrated freedom of the specific individual's sense of the world, we risk losing a major element in the broader discourse of social and political freedom. But new writing cannot be tied to the assumption that individuation is the main philosophical aim of acts of imagination because this emphasis on individuation and on the individual residing amid his or her imaginative, self-realised world predisposes us to think that only humans speak. More accurately phrased, it predisposes us to think that the primary zone in which Ingarden's space for the furthering of potential meaning is in the psychological underpinning of human language and not in meaningful intersections in the natural, environing medium of earth, land, weather, fauna, biology, medical discourses and so on.

In the current moment it is clear that we must listen to what is other than human and how it is speaking to us and that the act of attention between self and the environment is intertwined and interdependent and completely mutual.

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